

Private Office vs Public Domain

Is it better to send your opinion and requests regarding voluntary euthanasia to the media, or is it better to send them directly to your MP's office? The WAVES Committee urges you to voice your opinion to both, but for those with limited time or ability, here are some of the advantages and disadvantages of each strategy.

Expressing your views by writing, calling or visiting a politician directly

Advantages:

- Your views are addressed privately and directly to the person whom you feel can influence the situation.
- The politician may enter into discussion with you, which could be helpful to both parties. It will be your opportunity to influence the MP and the MP's opportunity to make his/her viewpoint understood.
- You can express your views anonymously; nobody else needs to know.

Disadvantages:

- The politician could respond dismissively to your communication.
- He/ she may deny having received your letter or call.
- He/ she can dispose of your letter without reading it, or can reject your request for a telephone conversation or a visit.

Expressing your views to the Media

(Newspapers, journals, magazines, talk-back radio)

Advantages:

- Your views will be read or heard by many, including the PR machinery advising the politicians.
- Once in the public domain, the record is permanent – a politician cannot "get rid of" your point of view.
- Public airing gives hope, support and encouragement to other like-minded people, who might otherwise have believed that they were alone in their opinion. This may encourage them to openly declare their support, which is how any movement gains momentum.
- You can express your views anonymously if you wish.

Disadvantages:

- Your submission may not be published.
- Your views will probably not be read or heard by the politicians directly (too busy to read the newspaper or listen to talk-back radio casually).
- Your publicly declared viewpoint may encourage opposite-minded people to respond critically with their own viewpoint – this may be hurtful.
- If you decide to add your name to your submission, friends and family, who are not in agreement with could be upset or angry with you.

Exposure is the lifeblood of the movement. Politicians and the public need to see numerous submissions from different people over time. The more the better. So whether you choose the media or the politician's office, your choice will be a good one.

Ed.: With thanks to Ann David