

## DECLARATION

I have experienced enough of aging and old age to be certain that I myself don't want to get old, and any number of years ago I've already decided to end my life in time, or at least attempt to end it. An attempt at the age of 75 was foiled by circumstances, and in the meantime I've turned 77: it has therefore become necessary to approach this task purposely, while I still possess sufficient mobility, physical freedom and mental clarity to make a sensible decision in this regard and to execute it successfully.

Over the last year or two I have realised that the research and writing that have kept me busy for so long have become a burden, and I have abandoned it with a certain relief. During the same period the deterioration of my physical and mental capabilities also started becoming clear to me. In all probability, what lies ahead of me is, humanely spoken, a process of slow degeneration and growing helplessness and dependence, in which I'm increasingly becoming a burden to myself and to others.

According to current South African legislation it is possible to control the ending of one's own life to some extent by using a so-called "living will" to, for example, decline any assistance that the medical profession would want to provide in the case of a life threatening condition.

It is also allowed to voluntarily forego the consumption of drink and food, to end one's life through a process of so-called "expiration" ["versterwing" – it is not clear what was intended here], which in practice comes down to dehydration. This is the method that I, in the absence of dignified alternatives, initially decided upon.

It is a protracted form of dying, not necessarily without discomfort or pain, in addition to the burden it places on those who are willing to provide assistance; still, at least it is a dignified way of ending one's life, which can't be said about of the alternative methods currently available in South Africa.

However, with the necessary knowledge or contacts it is possible to find other solutions, even with the current constraints, and eventually I was able to gratefully make use of these.

The decision to end one's own life remains, of course, a highly personal issue, which I don't want to recommend blindly; still, as for myself, I am thankful that the decision could be taken and also implemented.

As already mentioned, this hefty decision was already taken years ago, freely, without my consulting anyone about it, and nobody has ever tried to influence me in this regard. At a later stage, as it became necessary to broach the subject with those who would have to be become involved in it, I was surprised by the extent of the understanding and moral- and practical support I received, and my own impression is that the time is ripe to start discussing the issue of self-determination openly and widely in South Africa.

If I do succeed with my current attempt, all those who are involved are, as far as I'm concerned, fully free to talk to the outside world about it. In fact, I want to hope that my death will contribute to a wider discussion than is currently the case of the major problem of old age, as well as the general issue of self-determination, and above all that it might assist to bring about amendments to the current South African legislation pertaining to self-determination.

In this way it is enough.

[signed Karel Schoeman]

24/4/17