

Pain is real, not a myth

It is tragic that older people commit suicide (*The Age*, 17/1). The National Coronial Inquiry Service estimates that two people over the age of 80 are taking their lives every week. The most common method is hanging.

Ian Hickie suggests older people commit suicide because of myths and negative stereotypes about ageing, pain relief, hospitals and how the health system treats elderly people. Are these myths? Recently, an elderly woman living in an aged care home died in excruciating pain because no one was suitably qualified on the night shift to administer the prescribed morphine. The woman's daughter was so traumatised she could not remain at her mother's bedside to hold her hand.

We do not need motherhood statements about healthy ageing. We need political action to ensure older Australians are valued and receive the quality of health care that they deserve.

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