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MEDIA RELEASE

Dying With Dignity Victoria welcomes voluntary assisted dying reforms, calls for continued progress

Dying With Dignity Victoria (DWDV) welcomes the tabling of reforms to Victoria's Voluntary Assisted Dying (VAD) Act 2017, a vital step toward more compassionate, equitable end-of-life care for Victorians facing intolerable suffering. We commend the Victorian Labor Government for advancing this crucial legislation and reaffirming its commitment to dignity, autonomy and justice for those at the end-of-life.

These critical reforms are grounded in the recent findings of the Department of Health's independent five-year review of Victoria's VAD legislation, which confirmed the system is operating safely and as intended, while identifying key areas for improvement.

The proposed amendments are designed to remove some of the unintended barriers currently preventing eligible individuals from accessing care. The system will remain tightly regulated, with robust safeguards in place. These reforms include improving practitioner guidance, raising public awareness, strengthening workforce support and enhancing service delivery across the healthcare system. The passage of these changes would ensure eligible Victorians can access timely, dignified care at the end-of-life.

Since 2017, DWDV has been deeply involved in the development, implementation and review of Victoria's VAD laws. We have heard from families whose loved ones died while waiting to access VAD, those who were delayed by rigid eligibility criteria, administrative hurdles or institutional objections. These barriers have denied people the care they need, when they need it most. These proposed reforms are sensible, compassionate and backed by national and global evidence. We urge all parties to support their passage.

While each of these reforms is a milestone, they will not make Victoria a national leader in end-of-life care. We have advocated for additional reforms, including legislating clear provisions addressing the lack of guidance regarding institutional objections to VAD, as well as a commitment to a review cycle shorter than five years, to bring Victoria in line with national best practice and ensure our system remains safe, responsive and allows equitable access for all Victorians.

Quotes attributed to Dying With Dignity Victoria President, Jane Morris

"We're pleased to see these reforms tabled and we commend the Government for listening to the voices of patients, families, healthcare practitioners and advocates. These reforms will make a meaningful difference to Victorians facing untreatable, painful and terminal illnesses. But, there is more to be done. We must continue to refine Victoria's legislation to ensure it is fair, accessible and responsive to all eligible individuals. Our system must evolve to meet the needs of those it was designed to serve and these reforms will most certainly help in achieving equity, dignity and access, all of which remain at the heart of this legislation."

Quotes attributed to Dying With Dignity Victoria Board Member, Dr Nick Carr

“I’ve been involved in VAD in Victoria since day one, and I’ve seen firsthand how profoundly it can change the end-of-life experience for patients, families and clinicians. But I’ve also seen people excluded: a woman who travelled frequently in retirement and was deemed ineligible due to residency rules, a man with terminal cancer who died alone after struggling to navigate the system. These are not edge cases but real people who deserved better. The reforms passed today are a vital step forward, but we must keep going. Prognosis thresholds, residency rules, institutional objections and other barriers still stand between people and the care they need. VAD isn’t about choosing death, it’s about choosing how we die. And every Victorian deserves access to that choice.”

Quotes attributed to Dying With Dignity Victoria Young Ambassador, Eve Crotty

“I was 19 when I supported my mum through the VAD process. What should have taken a week dragged out for nine, filled with silence, stress and uncertainty. She was lucky to have been approved, whereas others have not. These reforms are about compassion, clarity and choice. And they’re not just for older people - young people care deeply about dignity at the end-of-life. We understand that choice and compassion go hand-in-hand and we want a system that reflects our values and treats people with respect. We want to talk about it, advocate for it, and make sure no one suffers needlessly because of outdated legislation or bureaucratic delays.”

Media contact: Eleanor Pallett, 0425 852 473, eleanor@socialchangeprojects.com.au

dwdv.org.au

Dying With Dignity Victoria

Founded in 1974, Dying With Dignity Victoria (DWDV) is a charitable organisation pursuing public policies and laws in the state of Victoria to enhance self-determination and dignity at the end of life. DWDV’s purpose is to relieve distress, helplessness and suffering for Victorians with untreatable, painful or terminal illnesses.