

## **DYING WITH DIGNITY VICTORIA – LOOKING TOWARDS THE FUTURE**

Over the past two years, Dying With Dignity Victoria members and supporters have seen their hard work come to fruition with the successful passage of the Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2017. On the 19<sup>th</sup> June 2019 this Act will come into force and Victoria will become the first Australian state to have voluntary assisted dying legislation implemented. Together with this significant achievement, the passage of the Medical Treatment Planning and Decisions Act 2016, which came into force on the 12<sup>th</sup> March 2018, for the first time gave legislative standing to Advance Care Directives in Victoria.

After more than 40 years of campaigning for end of life choices and achieving so much in the last two years, the question of where to next for DWDV has been considered by the Board.

The Board of DWDV believe that these two important pieces of legislation provide the foundation stones for ensuring all Victorians have good access to end of life choices, understand their legal rights regarding end of life choices and receive support for their choices at end of life.

To build on these foundation stones DWDV's aims will move from lobbying for legislative change to focusing on advocating for the rights of Victorians to access all end of life choices, including voluntary assisted dying. In addition to advocacy, DWDV will continue to develop and grow its end of life educational programs. DWDV will offer resources that will provide both members and the general public information about their legal end of life options, including the right to access voluntary assisted dying and the importance of advance care planning and documenting end of life wishes (Advance Care Directive and Appointing a Medical Treatment Decision Maker).

To achieve these aims the DWDV Board is currently undertaking a strategic planning process. On completion of this process the Board will provide all members with details of the plan and request feedback.

## **HAVE YOU SET UP YOUR MY HEALTH RECORD?**

Many of you will be familiar with the government's My Health Record (MHR); some of you may even be sufficiently organised to have set up your MHR already. If that's you, well done, and if you've also uploaded your Advance Care Directive (ACD) and details of your medical treatment decision maker (MTDM), read no further and skip to the next article! For those who have no idea what I'm talking about, or those who, like me, tend to be stronger on 'Must Do It Soon' rather than 'Done and Dusted', please read on.

MHR began life as an even more convoluted acronym; PCEHR - Patient Controlled Electronic Health Record. The emphasis on patient control is important, and carries through to the MHR. PCEHR started in 2012 and, despite over \$1 billion being spent in development and promotion, had a very low take-up. In 2015 it was revamped as the MHR, and finally it is getting to the point where we have a genuinely useful tool for helping manage our health information.

MHR is essentially a secure central database for whatever health information we, the consumers, each choose to have stored there. We have full control over not just what information is stored, but who can view and amend it. It's not so much Big Brother as a friendly auntie who does what she's asked to do, lets you choose whatever you want and doesn't mind you changing your mind. And she genuinely does have your best interests at heart.

Set up is easy. Either log into your myGov account (or set one up) and after verifying your identity, you can set up your MHR. You can choose multiple options for what data, and whether you get alerts when the data are modified etc. There's a simple drop-down menu that allows you to add your ACD and MTDM details.

So, now you know. The next step is to get around to actually doing it and making sure your ACD is there for any health professional to find. Then if you are unfortunate to have a stroke while on your caravanning holiday, the good folk at the rural hospital will know not just your health details, medications etc, but your detailed instructions about how you would like to be cared for.

**Dr Nick Carr – DWDV Board Member**

## REGISTER OF DOCTORS SUPPORTIVE OF VOLUNTARY ASSISTED DYING

The Voluntary Assisted Dying Act was passed in November 2017 and becomes operative in June 2019. It allows people with a terminal illness (likely to die within 6 months, or 12 months for a neuro-degenerative illness), who have intolerable suffering, have mental capacity, are making a persistent request and not under any duress, to request assistance to die (almost always this will be by self-administration). A second doctor must confirm this eligibility, and both doctors must be experienced (Fellows of a medical college).

A doctor may decline to be involved because of moral (usually religious) reasons, and most Catholic Health organisations will refuse to provide assistance. A doctor may also decline on general medical ethical grounds, or perhaps believe that the criteria are not (yet) met.

Thus some people may have difficulty finding two supportive doctors. DWDV is asking its members to have a discussion with their GP in regards to the legislation to determine their position **in principle** to a request if the criteria were met. It is certainly important to do this if you have been diagnosed with an illness with the potential to become terminal. Armed with this information, you might want to make changes to your medical care. It would also be very valuable to inform DWDV of your doctor's position, as this may well help us in advising other people about the attitudes of doctors in their locality. This would be an important service which DWDV wants to be able to provide to members and the public.

**Dr Rodney Syme – DWDV Vice President**



**RENEW  
YOUR  
2018/2019  
MEMBERSHIP  
NOW**

### Now is the time to renew your membership for the 2018-2019 year.

By renewing your membership now, you can take advantage of all the benefits available to DWDV members including

- Regular newsletter and information bulletin updates.
- Discounted rates for educational programs on end of life choices.
- Access to end of life choices documentation that meets the legal requirements.
- Assistance to navigate end of life issues under the new legislation (Medical Treatment Planning and Decision Act 2016, Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2017)
  - Advance Care Directives
  - Appointment of a Medical Treatment Decision Maker
  - Accessing Voluntary Assisted Dying.
- The monitoring of the implementation process of the voluntary assisted dying legislation.
- Identification of obstacles to access of voluntary assisted dying.

**ACT NOW** to renew your membership and if you can add a donation to support DWDV to ensure all Victorians have access to end of life choices including voluntary assisted dying.

## WORKSHOPS AND EVENTS IN 2018

Event	Dates & Times	Venue
<b>Medical Treatment Planning and Decision Act 2016</b> Find out about Victoria's legislation and how you can document your future treatment wishes. <b>Bookings are essential</b>	<b>Monday 30<sup>th</sup> July</b> <i>Morning: 10.00am – 12.30pm</i> <b>Monday 27<sup>th</sup> August</b> <i>Evening: 6.30pm – 9.00pm</i>	Kew Library (Phyllis Hore Room) Corner Cotham Road and Civic Drive Kew
<b>Meet &amp; Greet – Members Information Session</b>	<b>Saturday 18th August</b> <i>2.00pm – 4.00pm</i>	Balwyn Evergreen Centre 45 Talbot Avenue, Balwyn
<b>2018 Annual General Meeting</b>	<b>Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> November</b> <i>2.00pm onwards</i>	Unitarian Church, 110 Grey Street, East Melbourne