

Dr Rodney Syme

“This law will not only end the intolerable and unrelievable suffering of a small number of Victorians, but in addition it will help all Victorians - doctors and public - to have valuable, open discussions about their end of life choices, and it will allow peace of mind for all those who don’t actually use the law.”



**Prof Brian Owler
Chair of Advisory
Panel**

“Today, we’ve released our final report, which sets out a roadmap for a safe and compassionate voluntary assisted dying framework.”

CLEAR PATH TO END OF LIFE CHOICES: VIC GOVERNMENT ACCEPTS MODEL FOR LEGISLATION

The month of July has seen a momentous step towards securing Voluntary Assisted Dying laws, with the Ministerial Advisory Panel releasing their Final Report. The comprehensive report summarised their work and provided a full model for legislation. The details of the model, including eligibility criteria; the process for requesting an assisted death; the guidelines for doctors and health practitioners; the oversight for monitoring the law; and the steps to be taken to implement the law, are laid out across 66 recommendations to the Government.

The Government acted quickly in responding, and on Monday, 21st July accepted the recommendations for the model in full.

DWDV is pleased to see the legislation take shape, with President, Lesley Vick saying that the legislation facilitates the Victorian Parliament to finally provide the community with End of Life Choices.

“DWDV believes this model will enable our state politicians to support a Voluntary Assisted Dying law that reflects modern community values and expectations,” Ms Vick said.

She continued, “The measured and responsible process preceding the report has led to a framework for humane and compassionate laws, and the work of both the Advisory Panel and the earlier Inquiry into End of Life Choices has provided a thoroughly researched basis for the proposed legislation.”

The Victorian Health Minister is leading the Government’s push for safe and compassionate Voluntary Assisted dying laws. She made many comments in the media following the Government’s acceptance of the model, including an interview with Neil Mitchell on 3AW.

“We know we need to do better and give those Victorians at the end of their life a choice – and that’s exactly what this safe, compassionate and considered framework will do.”

Ms Hennessy has the full support of Victorian Premier, Daniel Andrews, who detailed his support in a video released online:

“This will be the safest scheme in the world, with the most rigorous checks and balances. It means we can have a respectful debate on the principles – instead of the technicalities.”

“This is about compassion and choice, and giving Victorians the support and care they deserve in their final moments.”



Image: Health Minister Jill Hennessy

(continued on page 2)

"Our work is part of broader end of life reforms including enhancements to palliative care services in Victoria and advance care directives."



Victorian Premier Daniel Andrews

"This will be the safest scheme in the world, with the most rigorous checks and balances. It means we can have a respectful debate on the principles – instead of the technicalities."

"This is about compassion and choice, and giving Victorians the support and care they deserve in their final moments."

VICTORIAN MODEL FOR ASSISTED DYING

The Details

To qualify, a person must be of "sound decision-making capacity" and the condition they are suffering from must be expected to cause death within 12 months and be "causing suffering that cannot be relieved in a manner that is tolerable to the person".

Dementia patients will not qualify, and while a mental illness or disability is not a reason to access the scheme, it will not be a barrier to someone seeking an assisted death if they have a separate terminal illness.

Only the patient can initiate a request for assisted dying, and the person must be assessed by two doctors, one which must be an expert in the person's particular illness.

One doctor must also have at least five years post-fellowship experience and all will have to complete specialist training to be involved in the requests.

The Process

- The patient makes a request to their medical practitioner, who will make an assessment
- Another practitioner makes an independent assessment
- The patient then makes a written declaration of an enduring request. This is to be witnessed by two people, one must not be a family member or anyone who may be a beneficiary from the person's death
- Finally, the patient makes a third and final request to their medical practitioner. In most cases there will be a minimum of 10 days between first and last request before the medication is dispensed

The doctor must ensure the person is properly informed of the:

- Diagnosis and prognosis
- Treatment options
- Palliative care options
- Expected outcome of taking the lethal dose
- Possible risks of the lethal dose

CONTACT YOUR MP TODAY

DWDV has received reports that our Victorian MPs are being deluged by people who oppose Voluntary Assisted Dying laws, with some MPs reporting that for every 1 message they are receiving in support, there are 30 messages of opposition. 30-1!

Now it's time for us to take action and let Victorian MPs know that we want them to vote **YES** to these laws, and finally stop the needless end of life suffering.

HOW CAN I GET INVOLVED?

A **Visit** to your MP is great, additionally you can **Phone**, **Write** or **Email** if you are unable to visit them in person. Victoria has such a great opportunity to achieve our major goal of securing Voluntary Assisted Dying laws in Victoria. We can't let this chance pass us by, so please make sure you contact your MP today.

Unsure who your MP is? Call our office on (03) 9874 0503 and we will point you in the right direction!

Neil Francis responds to recent comments by Bishops in the Herald Sun:

The bishops claimed that assisted dying “represents the abandonment of those who are in greatest need of our care and support”. On the contrary: to ignore the deeply-held beliefs and rigorously-tested wishes of people at the end of life is to abandon their values and critical faculties in favour of the bishops’ own religious dogma.

OPPONENTS OF VOLUNTARY ASSISTED DYING OUT IN FORCE

Right to Life Australia have begun their campaign to use mis-information and unsubstantiated statistics to scare the Victorian Parliament into voting against the upcoming Voluntary Assisted Dying legislation. Last week, 270,000 flyers were distributed into people’s mailboxes, causing anger in the community. The flyers claimed “better patient care, not patient killing.”

Excerpt from The Saturday Paper:

In November, Right To Life celebrated the South Australian parliament’s decision to shoot down the state’s 15th attempt to legalise voluntary euthanasia since 1995. Lacking so much as an office in the state, the group took out newspaper ads and rallied local supporters to call and write to their local MPs. The bill failed to pass by a single vote, an outcome Right To Life believes it helped bring about.

“We just hammered and hammered,” said Rtl’s, Margaret Tighe “and that’s it, it was lost.”

This makes it all the more urgent for supporters of safe and compassionate Voluntary Assisted Dying laws to contact their state MP.

WHOSE CONSCIENCE SHOULD DRIVE A CONSCIENCE VOTE?

The Greens and the Sex Party have long supported the call for legislation to introduce voluntary assisted dying. Now both major parties have declared that they will allow their Members of Parliament a conscience vote on the forthcoming Voluntary Assisted Dying bill.

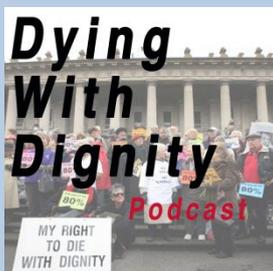
But the question arises according to whose conscience are MPs going to vote: theirs or their constituents? Often MPs can hide behind the fact that they don’t know what their constituents views are on a particular topic, so they make a judgement call based on their own views.

But this issue is different, because we have data that informs us! Thanks to ABC’s Vote Compass survey, conducted in late 2014, at the time of the last state election, we have data on what voters in every seat think about voluntary assisted dying. That survey asked respondents their level of agreement with the statement:

"Terminally ill patients should be able to legally end their own lives with medical assistance."

76% of those surveyed averaged across the state were in agreement with the above statement. For lower house Electoral Districts, the lowest level of agreement was about 70% of survey participants in the seat of Mulgrave, while around 20% of Districts had 80% or more agreeing. No Electoral District showed a level of agreement of less than 70% of participants. When the results from Electoral Districts were averaged over upper house Electoral Regions, the Region with the lowest level of agreement was Eastern Metropolitan (more than 70%), while the highest level of agreement was in Northern Metropolitan (more than 80%).

Now every state MP should know that her/his electorate is highly supportive of voluntary assisted dying, at least to the level of 70% support.



DWD PODCAST

To cover the increasing information and developments of Victoria's Voluntary Assisted Dying bill, Dying With Dignity Victoria are releasing a weekly podcast that covers the major aspects of the law, and reports on the progress and developments as we move towards legislation being voted on in the Parliament.

Visit <https://www.dwdv.org.au/news-information/dwd-podcast> to listen to the episodes

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL REMINDER

Renew by filling out the form included or by phoning our office on (03) 9874 0503.

And maybe add a donation if you can.



Don't forget to renew your DWDV membership for the 2017-2018 year.

We have had a great response from our members who have renewed their membership so far. With a great opportunity to finally secure Voluntary Assisted Dying laws in 2017, we need all of our members to renew their membership and support us in our fight for safe and compassionate Assisted Dying laws.

By renewing your membership now, you will be supporting DWDV to increase our advocacy campaign to ensure all Victorian MPs are aware of the level of support within their community and therefore persuade them to vote **YES** to Voluntary Assisted Dying laws.

ACT NOW renew your membership and help bring in laws that give real end of life choices to those who are suffering at the end of their lives.

REMAINING WORKSHOP AND MEETING DATES IN 2017

Event	Dates & Times	Venue
Death with Dignity in Dementia Learn about dementia, and how our Advance Care Directive for Dementia can document your treatment or refusal wishes.	Monday 28 August Evening: 6.30pm – 9.00pm	Kew Library (Phyllis Hore Room) Corner Cotham Road and Civic Drive, Kew
How the Law Applies to Dying with Dignity Find out about Victoria's legislation and how you can document your treatment wishes.	Monday 9 October Morning: 10.00am – 12.30pm	
Meet & Greet – Members Information Session	Saturday 9 September 2.00pm – 4.00pm	Balwyn Evergreen Centre 45 Talbot Avenue, Balwyn
2017 Annual General Meeting	Saturday 4 November 2pm	Unitarian Church, 110 Grey Street East Melbourne

DWDV OUT IN THE COMMUNITY

DWDV Spokespeople have been very busy over the last month, attending a number of public and industry forums relating to Voluntary Assisted Dying laws and end of life medical choices.

Dr Rodney Syme has been particularly active, attending forums and talks held by the Phillip Island Literary festival, The Bendigo Writers festival, the Victorian Liberal Party and The Greens.

Board Members Judith Hoy and John Hont held a talk for U3A Ballarat in regard to Advance Care Directives, as well as a range of community forums.

We hope that DWDV members will take the opportunity to be involved in community discussion about Voluntary Assisted Dying and end of life choices, as there is a focus on these issues in communities across Victoria.

Published by Dying With Dignity Victoria Inc. • ABN: 80 591 186 892 • Reg. No: A00006974B

E: dwdv@dwdv.org.au • W: www.dwdv.org.au • T: (03) 9874 0503

P: 5a/602 Whitehorse Road, Mitcham, Victoria 3132, Australia

Patrons: Mr Julian Burnside QC, Hon. Rod Mackenzie OAM, Hon. Ian Macphee AO

President: Lesley Vick; Vice-President: Dr Rodney Syme; Secretary/Treasurer: Mark Newstead;

Other Board Members: Meredith Doig, John Hont, Judith Hoy, Helga Kuhse, Carmel McNaught, Dorothy Reading, Hugh Sarjeant. Special Adviser: Lyn Allison