



UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL 12:01 AM TUESDAY 11 AUGUST 2026

Media Statement

11 August 2026

Kate Chaney to suspend Government business to force debate on Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill

Independent Member for Curtin Kate Chaney will today move to suspend standing orders in the House of Representatives, seeking to force debate on her Private Members' Bill to **fix the Commonwealth Criminal Code anomaly** that prevents doctors from using telehealth to provide lawful Voluntary Assisted Dying care. This outdated law particularly disadvantages Australians living in rural and regional communities – and people who are simply too unwell to travel.

Ms Chaney first brought this Bill to the Parliament in February 2024, tabling it on the Notice Paper again in May this year. It proposes a **simple, one-line amendment** to the Criminal Code provision, which was designed more than two decades ago to capture pro-suicide websites and chatrooms - well before any Australian jurisdiction had legalised Voluntary Assisted Dying. The Bill is **supported by Australia's peak body for doctors**, and a **13,000-signature petition** tabled by Ms Chaney on 2 July.

At last month's **ALP national conference**, Labor committed to removing federal barriers to end-of-life care, including telehealth access to Voluntary Assisted Dying, while maintaining appropriate clinical safeguards, and guaranteed a conscience vote on the issue for Labor parliamentarians.

Despite this, the Prime Minister has said the issue will go to Cabinet. Ms Chaney says that is unnecessary given this is **a parliamentary matter not a Cabinet decision**. Voluntary Assisted Dying is legal in every Australian State and the ACT, with the Northern Territory Parliament set to pass legislation this month. State and Territory laws include **extensive safeguards** including strict eligibility criteria, the requirement for multiple formal requests and independent clinical assessments, and independent oversight. But an outdated provision in the Commonwealth Criminal Code means doctors risk criminal liability and a \$300,000 fine simply for discussing VAD by phone, video conferencing or email.

The result is that terminally ill patients — often in unbearable pain, in the final weeks of their lives — are forced to travel long distances even for short, in-person consultations, while doctors have described having to speak in code over the phone for fear of prosecution. In regional and remote Australia, some patients have died before they were able to access the process at all.

Comments attributable to Independent Member for Curtin Kate Chaney:

"City-based Labor MPs represent people who already have full access to VAD healthcare. They should not block MPs standing up for their regional and rural communities who deserve the same access to healthcare. This change is about making VAD care fair and accessible for everyone.

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Kate Chaney MP

FEDERAL MEMBER FOR CURTIN

“Today I am giving the Government the opportunity to make good on the commitment made at the ALP National Conference to remove barriers to the use of telehealth for Voluntary Assisted Dying.

“Labor says this is a matter for a conscience vote. And there is no reason for further delay, which only extends the needless suffering for people seeking dignity and choice at the end of their lives. The Parliament should be allowed to debate and vote on my Bill that is ready to go.

“This is not a decision for Cabinet to make – or delay. It is a decision for all parliamentarians, each exercising their own conscience. A vote on fairness of VAD access needs its day on the floor of Parliament. The Labor party's own membership has already resolved this should occur; the only remaining obstacle is whether the Government allows the Parliament to vote.

“Together with Dr Ryan, Member for Kooyong, I have written to all Members of Parliament and Senators setting out the case for my amendment and explaining that it does not alter any of the stringent safeguards established under state and territory VAD laws, or the clear clinical and professional standards for telehealth which exist at both a national and state/territory level.

“I have been raising this issue for more than two years. People in the final weeks of their lives should not have to wait any longer.

“This is a simple, technical fix — making clear that lawful Voluntary Assisted Dying is not suicide. It has the backing of the AMA, state and territory Attorneys-General and the VAD community, and it is now Labor's own official policy. All I am asking for today is the chance for the Parliament to do its job.”

[ENDS]

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