



**RATIONALIST
SOCIETY OF
AUSTRALIA**

PATRONS
Hon. Michael Kirby AC CMG
Prof. the Hon. Gareth Evans AC QC
Dr Rodney Syme AM
Prof. Fiona Stanley AC

To all NSW parliamentarians

7 October 2021

Dear MP,

Re: Voluntary Assisted Dying in NSW

On behalf of the [Rationalist Society of Australia](#) (RSA) and our members and supporters throughout New South Wales, I am writing to urge you to support the proposed voluntary assisted dying (VAD) bill.

The RSA, which is Australia's oldest freethought group, supports individuals' right to die with dignity. In a humane and compassionate society, people suffering intolerably with terminal disease and illness should have the option to end their life in a dignified way, so long as it were entirely voluntary and subjected to appropriate safeguards.

We urge you to not let this crucial bill be delayed by the state's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The people of NSW deserve to have the same access to VAD as Australians in other states, where VAD laws have been introduced in both Labor and Coalition controlled parliaments with the overwhelming support of their citizens.

Most NSW citizens support legalising VAD. Unsurprisingly, the main opposition to VAD is being driven by religious clerics and highly motivated religious lobby groups that represent a tiny proportion of the population.

As was revealed in Neil Francis' [Religiosity in Australia: Personal faith according to the numbers](#) research report, released in June, religious clerics are wildly out of touch with the people they claim to lead.

Francis' Australian Religious Identity 6-Factor (ARI6) model, based on Australian Election Study (AES) data from 2016-19, [showed that](#) the vast majority of Australia's religious people *were supportive* of VAD – 84% of 'Socialisers', 90% of 'Notionals' and 80% of 'Occasionals'. Even among Australia's most religious, the 'Devouts', nearly one in three (30%) were supportive of the reform.

According to the same data, 74% of Catholics in 2019 said they supported VAD, while only 15% opposed. If a Catholic Archbishop did not wish to access VAD, he would be free to choose not to access it. But it is clear -- most of the Catholic flock *do* wish to have the choice provided by VAD.

We also urge you to reject the demands for special carve-outs for faith-based institutions.

While we support conscientious objection for individual health practitioners, such conscientious objections should not be extended to institutions – especially those that receive large sums of taxpayer money.

Religious hospitals and aged-care homes should have to provide access to *legal* healthcare services – which would include VAD, once enacted into law – if they wished to qualify for government funding.

The time has arrived to legalise VAD in NSW. Terminally ill people should have the same rights as other Australians. Please respect the wishes of the overwhelming majority of the community and pass this law.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'M. Doig', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Meredith Doig,

President, Rationalist Society of Australia