

19 September 2017

Dear Victorian Parliamentary Representative

**We, the undersigned 101 Victorian Oncologists (cancer specialists), request that you vote AGAINST the proposed Victorian Assisted Dying Bill 2017.**

As 80% of those who access physician assisted dying legally overseas have cancer, we feel our perspective on this issue should be heard.

We add our voices to the 100 palliative care specialists who have already corresponded with you requesting that you oppose the passage of this bill.

We collectively represent a significant proportion of the oncology workforce in the state of Victoria.

We do not believe that it is possible to draft assisted dying laws that have adequate safeguards to protect vulnerable populations, especially those with incurable cancer, progressive neurological illness, the aged and disabled. These groups of people experience high rates of depression and isolation. The risks that such legislation poses for the majority of these outweigh any benefits for the few in our opinion.

Physician assisted dying places people at risk of coercion that is both active and passive. As a consequence of assisted dying laws, society re-assesses the value of life; and the individual is taught to devalue their own life. Those with serious illness may perceive that they are a burden on society or their carers and come to feel that assisted dying is appropriate for them.

Assisted dying laws are easily challenged from a human rights and equality perspective. Indications over time will be extended beyond adults with terminal illness, to those with mental illness alone, dementia, disability, children and the healthy elderly who have "completed lives". In Oregon USA in June 2017 the senate debated a bill that would allow demented patients and others with "mental incompetence" to be starved to death. Oregon is not a lead that we wish to follow.

Physician assisted death is not, by definition, medical treatment. It is not palliative care. We as doctors and medical specialists do not want to intentionally end the lives of our patients, or provide them with the direct means to do so. Assisted suicide is in conflict with the basic ethical principles and integrity of medical practice and undermines trust in the medical profession. We strive to eliminate suffering but not the sufferers themselves.

**Where cure of cancer is not possible, we seek optimal palliative care services to support and care for patients and their families at the end of life. Without easy access to quality palliative care, some may request physician assisted dying as they feel they have no other choice.** This is especially so for people who live in rural, regional and remote areas and for people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities who have less access to palliative care services.

We are very disappointed that discussion of the Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill has dominated the agenda to improve end of life care in Victoria. We are dismayed that the multiple recommendations made by the Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into End of Life Choices (June 2016) to strengthen palliative care have not been actioned. Until this is addressed, discussing physician assisted dying is premature.

In June 2017 the NSW government allocated an extra \$100 million to fund palliative care services over 4 years, particularly to provide extra funds for community palliative care services and for rural

and regional NSW. Need in these same areas has been identified by the Victorian End of Life Choices report. Palliative Care Victoria's figures demonstrate that an extra \$65 million per year is required to meet deficits and adequately cover future cost projections in these areas. Such funding is essential if dying Victorians are to be adequately cared for in their homes with adequate supports for both them and their families.

**We call for improved funding of palliative care services in Victoria, for the benefit of all Victorians, but especially those who live with incurable cancer and their families.** This will go some way to ensuring that fear of suffering does not dictate a person's final hours, nor the memories their loved ones will carry throughout their own lives.

The United Kingdom parliament resoundingly rejected an Assisted Dying bill in 2015 as there is no "safe system" and we urge the Victorian parliament to do the same.

Yours sincerely,

The undersigned 101 Victorian Cancer specialists.

The listed signatories support this statement as individual health professionals and not as representatives of any hospital or other organisation with which they are associated.

Contact person -Dr Marion Harris M: 0410689112 E: [marion.harris@optusnet.com.au](mailto:marion.harris@optusnet.com.au)

Alamgeer ,Dr Mohammed Medical Oncologist Monash Health  
Amarasena, Dr Isuru Radiation Oncology Trainee Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre  
Bae, Dr Susie Medical Oncologist Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre  
Bahzadigohar, Dr Ramin Medical Oncologist Monash Health  
Barnett, Dr Frances Medical Oncologist Northern Health  
Bond, Dr Rodney Medical Oncologist Melton Health  
Boolel , Dr Vishal Medical Oncologist Ballarat Health Services  
Brady, Dr Benjamin Medical Oncologist Cabrini Health  
Brown, Dr Stephen Medical Oncologist Ballarat Health Services  
Carden , Dr Craig Medical Oncologist Ballarat Cancer Care  
Cebon , Professor Jonathan Medical Oncologist Austin Health  
Chong , Dr Geoff Medical Oncologist Austin and Northern Health  
Chong , Dr/Mr Chilton Surgical Oncologist Monash Health  
Chu, Dr Julie Radiation Oncology Trainee Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre  
Chua , Dr Sue Medical Oncologist Eastern Health  
Coleman , Dr Andrew Radiation Oncologist Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre  
Collins, Associate Professor Ian Medical Oncologist South West Reg. Cancer Centre Warnambool  
Cooray, Dr Prasad Medical Oncologist Eastern Health  
Croagh , Dr/Mr Daniel Surgical Oncologist - Gastrointestinal Surgeon Monash Health  
Cullinan, Dr/Mr Mark Surgical Oncologist - Gastrointestinal Surgeon Monash Health  
David , Dr Steven Radiation Oncologist Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre  
Davis, Professor Ian Medical Oncologist Eastern Health  
Dawson, Associate Professor Sarah –Jane Medical Oncologist Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre  
Delahunty, Dr Rachel Medical Oncologist Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre  
Doughton, Dr Jacki Radiation Oncologist Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre  
Dwyer, Dr Mary Radiation Oncologist Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre  
Faisal, Dr Wasek Medical Oncologist Ballarat Health Services  
Fallah, Dr Ali Medical Oncologist LaTrobe Regional Hospital  
Fleming , Dr Shaun Malignant Haematologist Alfred Hospital

Fox, Dr/Miss Jane Surgical oncologist/ Breast Surgeon Monash Health  
Francis , Dr Heather Medical Oncologist Ballarat Cancer Care  
Francis, Associate Professor Prudence Medical Oncologist Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre  
Ganju, Associate Professor Vinod Medical Oncologist Monash Health and Peninsula Health  
Geddes, Dr Katherine Medical Oncologist St Vincents Hospital  
Goss, Dr Geraldine Medical Oncologist Eastern Health and Ringwood Private Hospital  
Grant , Associate Professor Peter Gynaecologist Oncologist Mercy Hospital for Women  
Green, Professor Michael Medical Oncologist Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre  
Grossi, Dr Marisa Medical Oncologist Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre  
Hafeez, Dr Umbreen Medical Oncologist Austin Health  
Haines , Associate Professor Ian Medical Oncologist Cabrini Health  
Harris , Dr Marion Medical Oncologist Monash Health  
Haydon, Dr Andrew Medical Oncologist Alfred Hospital and Cabrini Health  
Hayes , Dr Terri Medical Oncologist South West Reg. Cancer Centre , Warnambool  
Jamal. Dr Shafaet Medical Oncologist LaTrobe Regional Hospital  
James , Dr Philip Medical Oncologist Ringwood Private Hospital  
Jefford , Associate Professor Michael Medical Oncologist Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre  
Joshi, Dr Sachin Medical Oncologist LaTrobe Regional Hospital  
Kannourakis, Professor George Medical Oncologist Ballarat Oncology  
Kwan, Dr Edmond Medical Oncologist Monash Health  
Lee , Dr Belinda Medical Oncologist Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre  
Lickliter, Dr Jason Medical Oncologist Alfred Hospital  
Liew , Dr Sem Medical Oncologist Monash Health  
Lim, Dr Lionel Medical Oncologist Eastern Health and Ringwood Private Hospital  
Lim, Dr Ming Sheng Malignant Haematology advanced trainee Monash Health  
Lipton, Associate Professor Lara Medical Oncologist Cabrini Health  
Loi, Associate Professor Sherene Medical Oncologist Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre  
Lundy , Dr Jo Medical Oncologist Peninsula Oncology  
Manolitsas, Dr Tom Gynaecologist Oncologist Monash Health  
Mathai, Dr Jared Medical Oncology advanced trainee Cabrini Health  
Menon , Dr Sid Medical Oncology advanced trainee Monash Health  
Michael, Associate Professor Michael Medical Oncologist Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre  
Mileshkin, Associate Professor Linda Medical Oncologist Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre  
Ngan ,Dr Sam Radiation Oncologist Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre  
Ooi, Dr/Miss Corinne Surgical oncologist/ Breast Surgeon Monash Health  
Parente, Associate Professor Phillip Medical Oncologist Eastern Health and Epworth Hospital  
Pellegrini , Dr Laura Medical Oncologist Eastern Health  
Phillips , Dr Claire Radiation Oncologist Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre  
Phillips, Prof Kelly-Anne Medical Oncologist Melbourne  
Pook, Dr David Medical Oncologist Monash Health and Cabrini Health  
Pope, Dr Kathy Radiation Oncologist Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre  
Rajasooriyar, Dr Crishanthi Radiation Oncology Trainee Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre  
Rowe, Dr Catherine Medical Oncology advanced trainee St Vincents Hospital  
Ryan, Dr Gail Radiation Oncologist Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre  
Semira , Dr Christine Medical Oncology advanced trainee Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre  
Shackleton, Professor Mark Medical Oncologist Alfred Hospital  
Shapiro, Associate Professor Jeremy Medical Oncologist Cabrini Health  
Spilias, Dr/Mr Dean Surgical Oncologist/ Bowel Surgeon Monash Health  
Stefanou, Dr Greg Medical Oncologist John Fawkner Oncology , Coburg  
Stewart, Dr Jo Medical Oncologist Austin Health  
Strach, Dr Madeleine Medical Oncology advanced trainee Austin Health

Strickland , Associate Professor Andrew Medical Oncologist Monash Health  
Sycamias , Dr John Medical Oncologist St John of God , Ballarat  
Tamjid, Dr Babrak Medical Oncologist Goulburn Valley Health and Peninsula Health  
Tan , Dr Jennifer Radiation Oncologist Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre  
Tatarczuch, Dr Maciej Malignant Haematology advanced trainee Monash Health  
Teoh, Dr/Mr William Surgical Oncologist /Bowel surgeon Monash Health  
Tie , Associate Professor Jeanne Medical Oncologist Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre  
Tiong, Dr Ing Soo Medical Oncologist Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre  
Tiu , Dr Crescens Medical Oncology advanced trainee Eastern Health  
Tran , Dr Ben Medical Oncologist Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre  
Tsan, Dr/ Mr Cyril Tsan Surgical Oncologist /Breast Surgeon Monash Health  
Tseng, Dr Michelle Radiation Oncology Trainee Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre  
Voskoboynik, Dr Mark Medical Oncologist Alfred Hospital  
Warren , Dr Mark Medical Oncologist Bendigo Health  
White , Associate Professor Shane Medical Oncologist Austin and Northern Health  
White, Dr Karen Medical Oncologist Barwon Health Cancer Services  
Wong , Dr Jonathan Malignant Haematology advanced trainee Monash Health  
Wong, Dr Vanessa Medical Oncology advanced trainee Ballarat Health Services  
Woodruff, Dr Roger Medical Oncologist Austin Health  
Wu, Dr Min Medical Oncologist Monash Health  
Zalcborg, Professor John Medical Oncologist Alfred Health