

# MY LIFE MY CHOICE

A newsletter produced for the purpose of educating and raising awareness of the need for voluntary assisted dying law reform in Queensland — No.28 21 August 2021

## COMMITTEE GIVES VAD BILL THE GO-AHEAD

### Next step is debate by our 93 state MPs

The legislative body tasked with reviewing the *Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill 2021* has endorsed it to proceed for consideration by State Parliament.

Since May the cross-party Health and Environment Committee comprising six state MPs has been reviewing the Bill developed by the independent and expert Queensland Law Reform Commission.

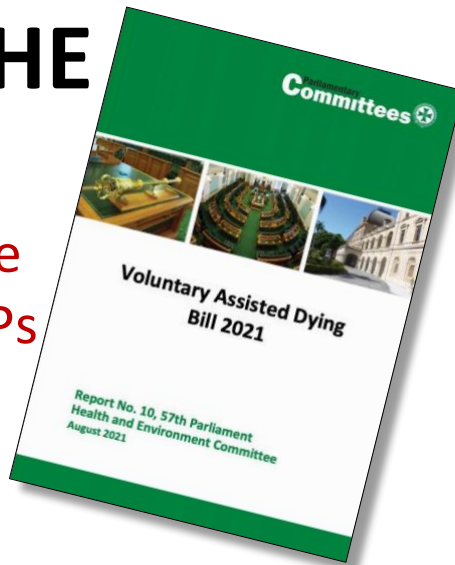
The former Health Committee in the 2017-2020 State Parliament conducted an extensive inquiry into end-of-life issues that culminated in a recommendation for VAD laws being introduced in Queensland.

The current committee was tasked with scrutinising the Bill and seeking public feedback through hearings, briefings, and submissions.

Its report tabled on 20 August endorsed the *Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill 2021* and recommended it to the Queensland Parliament.

Three MPs on the committee – chair Aaron Harper, Member for Lytton, Joan Pease, and Member for Pumicestone, Ali King, all supported the recommendation for the Bill to proceed.

The LNP Member for Southport, Rob Molhoek, did not give a clear endorsement



[CLICK HERE TO READ THE REPORT IN FULL](#)

of the Bill but did not oppose it either, instead issuing a statement of reservations detailing matters he said deserved further exploration.

Two committee members, the One Nation MP for Mirani, Steve Andrew, and the LNP Member for Oodgeroo, Dr Mark Robinson issued dissenting reports outlining their opposition to the Bill and voluntary assisted dying. Both cited discredited arguments previously dismissed by other inquiries.

### QH website explains new law

Queensland Health has established a special [website](#) to explain the *Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill 2021*.

The website explains voluntary assisted dying, gives background to the VAD Bill, and outlines why the Queensland Government has acted to implement VAD

## COMMITTEE MPs MAKE THEIR POSITIONS CLEAR

Which MPs on the Health Committee said “yes” to VAD and which ones said “no”.



**AARON HARPER**  
Committee chair  
Member for Thuringowa  
Labor

YES



**ROB MOLHOEK**  
Deputy chair  
Member for Southport  
LNP

STATEMENT OF RESERVATIONS



**JOAN PEASE**  
Member for Lytton  
Labor

YES



**STEVE ANDREW**  
Member for Mirani  
One Nation

NO



**ALI KING**  
Member for Pumicestone  
Labor

YES



**Dr MARK ROBINSON**  
Member for Oodgeroo  
LNP

NO

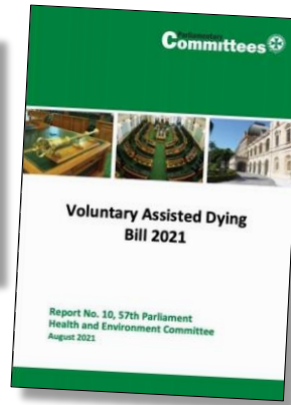
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# Historic debate set to start soon

This is an edited extract of comments made in the report by the chair of the Health and Environment Committee, AARON HARPER, who is also the Labor Party Member for Thuringowa



We are proud to have completed this journey, culminating in the consideration of the *Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill 2021*, which will soon be debated in the Parliament for the first time in its history.

During the committee's inquiry process, we heard the views of over 6,000 people and organisations through submissions and five public hearings in regional and south-east Queensland.

This was in addition to the more than 4,700 submissions received and evidence heard from 502 invited witnesses at 34 public and private hearings in the inquiry into aged care, end-of-life and palliative care and voluntary assisted dying undertaken by the former committee.

Some observers have said the work of the former committee and this committee must have been a heavy burden, listening to or reading thousands of deeply personal stories of loved ones suffering terribly with a terminal illness at end of life.

As chair I say, we were all privileged to have had the opportunity to hear from so many and whilst it was at times a challenging and emotional journey, it is nowhere near the burden of those dear souls facing end of life due to a terminal illness.

I can say with great confidence we have

listened to and heard from Queenslanders on the issue of voluntary assisted dying and on the Bill, which at its very core is aimed to give choice to people suffering at end of life in a kind, compassionate, safe and practical way.

After hearing from so many Queenslanders, who told us of their support for a voluntary assisted dying scheme, I can report, we are recommending the Bill be passed.

Such an emotive and sensitive subject will result in divergent views.

As a democratic society, we must respect that some will be opposed to a voluntary assisted dying scheme for a variety of reasons that are important to them.

From the outset, I wanted this to be a respectful process and we were able to achieve that outcome.

I want to thank every single person who contacted us or came before us, you have helped us shape a Bill that will finally provide a choice for those suffering at end of life.

It is my firm view that the issue of voluntary assisted dying is above politics and religion, this is about people.

## Dissenting MP must explain his stand to voters

By EVERALD COMPTON

Christians for Voluntary Assisted Dying Queensland

The dissenting report by Health Committee member Mark Robinson is not justified by the evidence.

It is clear to me that the Member for Oodgeroo didn't listen to the evidence, but had settled on his anti-VAD position even before the Health Committee began its recent hearings on the Bill.

If he had listened and understood the evidence given to the Health Committee, or the evidence presented to the inquiry held in the previous parliament, or evidence to any of the public inquiries into VAD in other states, he would be supporting the VAD Bill.

Even as a longstanding Elder of the Uniting Church I have never believed the issue of voluntary assisted dying is one in which choices, or lack of choice, should be imposed on those who are terminally ill by dogma, church hierarchies, or the individual religious beliefs of MPs.

The Member for Oodgeroo is ignoring the wishes of his constituents and letting his individual religious beliefs guide his anti-VAD vote.

But this entire issue is not about our MPs.

It is about their constituents and giving them the right to make their own legal end-of-life choices.

Voters in the seat of Oodgeroo need to be aware that their local MP wants to deny them the choice of seeking access to VAD if they are ever terminally ill and experiencing intolerable suffering at the end of life.

Mark Robinson needs to explain to his constituent that just because he personally doesn't want access to voluntary assisted dying, they shouldn't have it either.

## Anti-choice MPs ignore the evidence

The two dissenting Health Committee MPs must explain to their constituents why they have ignored overwhelming evidence and plan to vote to block the VAD Bill.

They have signalled they want to deny the people in their electorates the right to make their own choice about VAD if needed.

What is worse is that both MPs have relied on totally discredited claims such as that peddled by VAD opponents that VAD causes "suicide contagion". This is just one argument of theirs

that has been totally disproved both by experience in Victoria and overseas as well as by other parliamentary inquiries that found no evidence to support such a baseless assertion.

In addition there is no unfair burden on institutions with a conscientious objection to VAD. The Bill accommodates their view but also ensures patients' rights are respected, a fact neither MP acknowledges.

Dr Sid Finnigan  
Doctors for Assisted Dying Choice

JOIN OUR VIGIL FOR VAD

**SPEAKER'S CORNER**  
IN FRONT OF PARLIAMENT HOUSE,  
GEORGE STREET BRISBANE

**MONDAY 13 SEPTEMBER**  
ASSEMBLE FROM 5PM FOR 5.30PM  
START

Organised and supported by groups and individual Queenslanders supporting voluntary assisted dying laws.

See [www.dwdq.org.au](http://www.dwdq.org.au) for details

# Report backs individual choice

## MLMC partners say our MPs must vote for the VAD

The Health Committee's majority report reaffirms the correctness, and more importantly, the justness of the proposed new law and the stand taken by those who support it.

In coming weeks our 93 state MPs will exercise a conscience vote on the VAD Bill. Lawmakers in other jurisdictions where VAD laws have been considered and passed have been very clear that the deciding factor in their vote is the single word "choice" and that the decision to seek access to VAD was for individuals to make.

When South Australian MPs debated and passed VAD laws [Rachel Sanderson](#), a cabinet minister in the state's Liberal Party government said: "For me, a conscience vote is determined by the conscience of the people I represent." Other MPs in SA and in other states that have passed VAD laws have said they would not personally choose to access VAD but they would never deny the choice to their constituents.

MPs who vote against the VAD Bill will be voting to deny their constituents the choice the vast majority of them want – to have the right to choose to end their life under a safe and workable law with adequate safeguards that will never create a single extra death but which will eliminate a lot of suffering.



**David Muir AM**  
Chair  
The Clem Jones Trust

The Health Committee's report comes down on the side of doctors wanting to give patients more control over the end of their lives.

Some MPs have already expressed their opposition to the VAD Bill by citing the Australian Medical Association's official stand against VAD while others wrongly conflate VAD with suicide but now we have yet another report following another in-depth inquiry that shows there is no evidence to support either position.

The longstanding official position of opposition by the AMA, which represents only one in three doctors, does not account for all of its own members let alone all medical practitioners.

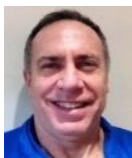
**Doctors for Assisted Dying Choice**

In fact, the AMA's Queensland branch is currently involved in the process for a VAD law in keeping with its internal polling showing widespread VAD supportive results.

In addition, in October 2016 leading medical publication *Australian Doctor* reported poll findings of 65% support for VAD law reform. Even the AMA's own internal polling found more than half of its members believed VAD could form a legitimate part of medical care.

We have also seen doctors like the past national president of the AMA, Dr Brian Owler, [advocate for VAD laws](#). He said: "Voluntary assisted dying is not about a choice between life and death. No. Rather, it is about respect for a dying person's choice, about the timing and manner of their death."

Our state MPs now need to give that choice to Queenslanders.



**Dr Sid Finnigan MBBS, FRANZCO**  
Queensland Convenor  
Doctors For Assisted Dying Choice

The report by the parliamentary Health Committee clearly states that the proposed *Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill 2021* is a necessary and workable law and contains necessary safeguards.

This comes as no surprise as it draws upon, but also improves upon, laws previously drafted and passed in Victoria, Western Australia, Tasmania, and South Australia.

The VAD Bill is one of the final steps in an exhaustive process of consultation, evidence-based inquiry, drafting, and scrutiny. The remaining step is the coming debate and vote in the Queensland Parliament.



The question MPs must ask themselves is this: If the law is safe and workable why wouldn't I vote to give terminally ill people the right to use it if they themselves meet the legislated criteria and make that free and informed choice?

The coming vote in parliament is not about the personal attitude to VAD held by any of our 93 MPs.

It is all about the need to give a safe and legal choice to Queenslanders when they need it most.



**Jos Hall**  
President  
Dying With Dignity  
Queensland

The Health Committee's assessment of the *Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill 2021* endorses the draft law and the choice it will give those facing intolerable suffering at the end of their lives.

Even as a longstanding Elder of the Uniting Church I have never believed the issue of voluntary assisted dying is one in which choices, or lack of choice, should be imposed on those who are terminally ill by dogma or church hierarchies.

The individual religious beliefs of MPs, while deserving of respect, should not guide their vote on the VAD Bill. This issue is not about our MPs. It is about their constituents and giving them the right to make their own legal end-of-life choices.



MPs in other states and overseas who hold a deep faith have had no trouble in delivering that choice to those who elected them.

Debates on VAD laws in other Australian parliaments have contained contributions by MPs, including some self-described strong Catholics, who have declared they may never choose VAD for themselves but they would never deny such a choice to those who voted for them.

The fate of the VAD Bill must not be decided on the faith of MPs but must be decided by considering what is best for those who elected MPs to our parliament and the choices they deserve.



**Everald Compton AO**  
Christians for Voluntary  
Assisted Dying Queensland

# Clear guide to VAD

## Experts deliver key information

Two Brisbane-based experts in end-of-life laws have released a simple guide to voluntary assisted dying laws.

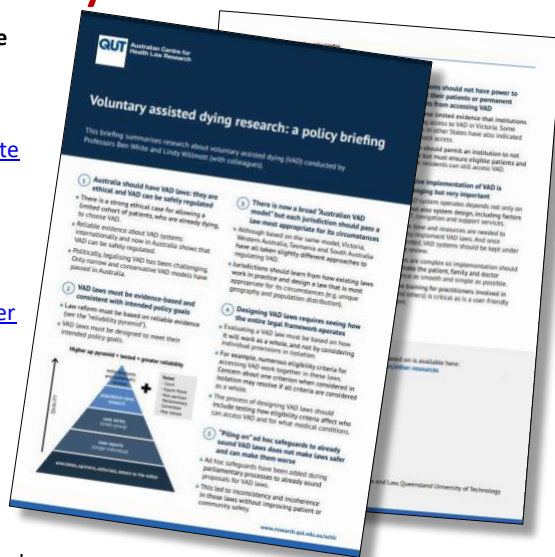
Research conducted by [Professor Ben White](#) and [Professor Lindy Willmott](#) from the [Australian Centre for Health Law Research](#) at QUT has played a key role in the development of VAD laws in Australia.

The publication is a [two-page briefing paper](#) on VAD laws which outlines key features and principles.

It is distilled from their published research over almost the past 20 years.

A model VAD Bill that was developed by professors White and Willmott was submitted to the inquiry into VAD conducted in the last term of parliament by the cross-party Health Committee.

It was recommended by the inquiry as the starting point for work by the Queensland Law Reform Commission on developing the VAD Bill presented to the state government and recommended by the current Health Committee.



Prof Ben White



Prof Lindy Willmott

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## In their own words.....

*Here is just a small sample of the submissions received by the Health Committee in favour of the VAD Bill.*

The Queensland parliament must do what the vast majority of citizens are demanding and allow us to choose when and how to die, should we need to. These possibilities have been in place in dozens of European and American states for decades and are working well. There have been no reports of "slippery slope" actions or bad events. It is way past time that those of us who are suffering are given relief. And palliative care, while a good adjunct, isn't always sufficient. We need the security of knowing we won't be forced to suffer because some people believe it is their right to override my wishes.

**Robyn Manoy – [submission #1166](#)**

I fully support the assisted dying law as do a huge majority of the community. I am a practising Catholic and am horrified by the church's opposition to this law. It is purely ideology and more about control than compassion. I have seen a terrible death, prolonged and inhumane. Palliative care was provided but they could not put a dent in the pain or other symptoms – drowning in their lung fluids and struggling to breathe.

**Damien Ahern – [submission #402](#)**

I am a Queenslander who feels very strongly that I should be able to make my own choice

about how the final stages of my life will pan out. To me this is a very personal decision that I should be able to make on my own behalf. I therefore appeal to you to vote in favour of this law or abstain from voting if you feel strongly that you can't vote in favour of this law.

**Joan Tucker – [submission #1342](#)**

It's all about freedom of choice for me. Nobody has the right to make me or my loved ones suffer a long and painful death. I abhor the arrogance of some people who try to inflict their beliefs on others.

**Howard Deards – [submission #1109](#)**

My view is, that if I find myself with a terminal illness, I would most likely never take advantage of this law, but it would give me great peace of mind to know that option was there if I needed it.

**Cheryl Laizans – [submission #347](#)**

I have watched both my father and partner die from terminal cancer. When a patient gets to the point that strong doses of morphine are used to help with pain and they are unable to eat or drink, they should not be made to suffer until their body finally gives out. They should be able to make the decision to skip the really frightening, degrading and painful part of this lost fight.

**Deborah McPherson – [submission #295](#)**

## MY LIFE MY CHOICE

The *My Life My Choice* newsletter is produced by the Clem Jones Group, Dying With Dignity Queensland, Doctors for Assisted Dying Choice (Qld), and Christians for Voluntary Assisted Dying (Qld) for the dominant purpose of educating and raising awareness of voluntary assisted dying law reform in Queensland and other states and territories.



[admin@clemjonesgroup.com.au](mailto:admin@clemjonesgroup.com.au)



[enquiries@dwdq.org.au](mailto:enquiries@dwdq.org.au)

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[drs4assisteddyingchoice.org/contact-us](https://drs4assisteddyingchoice.org/contact-us)

Everald Compton's

**CHRISTIANS** for VOLUNTARY ASSISTED DYING

Queensland

[christiansforvadqld@gmail.com](mailto:christiansforvadqld@gmail.com)