

End of Life Choice



One year on: Victoria's voluntary assisted-dying law

Friday 19th June 2020 marked the first anniversary of voluntary assisted-dying (VAD) becoming available in Victoria. Nearly 400 Victorians have been registered as eligible.

Cancer has been the most common reason, followed by neurological disorders such as motor neurone disease, then cardiovascular and respiratory diseases.

While certain restrictive and cumbersome aspects of the legislation [highlighted in the peer-reviewed literature] has meant that the law is far from perfect, Dr Carr, a practitioner who has supported 15 patients through the VAD process highlights the positive aspects:

- Management of symptoms like pain and nausea is largely well-provided by palliative care and therefore has not been the main reason for people seeking VAD.
- Overwhelmingly it has been to regain some control and choice; to not have to suffer the indignities of further losses of bodily function; or having to wait for a possibly unpleasant event to finally end life. Instead, people can die comfortably on their own terms.
- There has been no suggestion of coercion at any point. Instead families may well be reluctant but supportive of their loved ones.
- Statewide VAD Navigators have been an invaluable resource for both the public and professionals in helping to navigate the system.
- Ultimately a small number of people have had the huge relief of being provided with a previously denied option; an even smaller number have proceeded with the medication; but for everyone else nothing has changed.

Dr Cameron McLaren, an oncologist who also assists patients through the dying process, argues 'It is not about life and death but the choice of death...In my mind forcing people to undertake suffering is harm'.

References:

- Carr N 'Choosing when to go: what the nation can learn from Victoria's embrace of voluntary assisted dying' *Crikey* 18th June 2020 <https://www.crikey.com.au/2020/06/18/voluntary-assisted-dying-laws-one-year-on/>
- Dr Cameron McLaren cited on *The Project* (Channel 10) 18th June 2020 <https://10play.com.au/theproject/episodes/2020/the-project-18-jun-2020/tpv200618nhx1k>
- Literature citing limitations of the Victorian law is available on request

Compassion for suffering
The freedom to choose
Add your voice to the call



SAVES was established in 1983 to campaign for legal, medically assisted voluntary euthanasia. The aim is to end suffering by providing choice in dying. SAVES works in the community and with Members of Parliament to achieve law reform.

SAVE-YA Syndicated Australian Voluntary Euthanasia Youth Advocates

Facebook: Support SAVE-YA Law Reform

A national youth lobby group which aims to provide a youth voice in support of legalising voluntary euthanasia in all States and Territories. Members between ages 18 and 35 are encouraged to join, make contact with their local MP and inform them of their support for voluntary euthanasia law reform.



Christians Supporting Choice For Voluntary Assisted Dying

christiansforvad.org.au

We are Christians who believe that, as a demonstration of love and compassion, those with a terminal or hopeless illness should have the option of a pain-free, peaceful and dignified death with legal voluntary assisted dying / voluntary euthanasia. This is strongly supported by the majority of Australian Christians.



South Australian Nurses Supporting Choices in Dying

facebook: SA Nurses Supporting Choices in Dying

We are a group of passionate nurses who believe in our patient's right to choose the end of life care they wish. The group provides a forum for the nursing voice and perspective on legalising voluntary euthanasia and other patient choices in end of life care.



MY BODY MY Choice-VE

facebook.com/pages/MY-BODY-MY-Choice-VE

MBMC provides a voice for people with disability in the VE reform debate. MBMC represents the interests of people with disabilities who wish to exercise choice in all aspects of their life, including choice at the end of life, with the view that choice and control are a fundamental human right for everyone.

MBMC argues that people with disabilities know how it feels to lose personal autonomy through their ongoing fight for self-determination, independent living and disability rights.

MBMC believes that people with disabilities, who have struggled to control their own lives and bodies, must be allowed to maintain control and autonomy throughout their life, especially at its end.



Doctors for Assisted Dying Choice

drs4assisteddyingchoice.org



We are a national organisation of Australian medical practitioners, both current and retired, who are committed to having a legal choice of providing information and assistance to rational adults, who, for reasons of no realistic chance of cure or relief from intolerable symptoms, would like to gently end their lives.

Assistance may be by doctor provision of medication for the patient to consume, or by doctor-administration.

Respecting rational patient end-of-life choices

Lawyers for Death with Dignity

https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/1062e1_dd077d6dd79648cbaec58200361f054a.pdf

Lawyers for Death with Dignity acknowledges the need for people with profound suffering to have the legal choice for a medically assisted and dignified death.



The current law says suicide is not illegal, but assisting suicide is. People in a terminal state may have profound, unbearable suffering and be in the undignified position of being unable to end their life without assistance.

Advances in medicine have improved life expectancy, but South Australian law has not changed to reflect the often forgotten deterioration in quality of life that a longer life expectancy may bring.

Paramedics Supporting Choices in Dying

facebook: Paramedics Supporting Choices in Dying



Paramedics Supporting Choices in Dying is an advocacy group promoting the rights of people to make decisions regarding their end of life wishes.

To go without pain, without trauma, without breaking the law, without endangering others and without suffering. To go gently, peacefully and with dignity.

We support good palliative care, encourage the use of Advance Care Directives and advocate for law reform to legalise the choice for voluntary euthanasia and voluntary assisted dying.