

VOLUNTARY ASSISTED DYING

The Hon. J.A. DARLEY (14:30): I seek leave to make a brief explanation before asking the Minister for Health and Wellbeing a question concerning the implementation of the voluntary assisted dying scheme.

Leave granted.

The Hon. J.A. DARLEY: According to SA Health, the implementation plan for the voluntary assisted dying scheme is likely to take 18 to 24 months; however, other states, like Victoria, were able to make their scheme accessible within 15 months of passing legislation. My questions to the minister are:

1. Can the minister provide further details regarding the implementation process of South Australia's VAD scheme?
2. Can SA Health safely expedite the implementation process?

The Hon. S.G. WADE (Minister for Health and Wellbeing) (14:31): I would like to thank the honourable member for his question. Voluntary assisted dying is not only a significant issue for many South Australians, both inside and outside this chamber, but it is also a policy with broad implications for the health system, both public and private. Fortunately, in South Australia, just as we were able to draw on the experience of other jurisdictions in drafting and debating our legislation, we are also able to draw on their experience in implementing the legislation.

In this respect, I am pleased to be able to advise that SA Health has been working with their counterparts, particularly in Western Australia and Victoria, to inform the process of implementation in South Australia. The consistent advice from other jurisdictions is that it is important to take the time you need to plan and implement such an important initiative.

The process of implementation has been divided into a number of work streams to focus on specific areas such as developing the necessary IT support, developing guidelines for clinicians and developing guidelines for consumers, carers and the community. The first step in the process is intended to be the delivery of regulations before the end of the year, providing the framework within which government can work towards implementation.

Also before the end of the year, I intend to appoint an implementation task force, bringing together experts from a range of fields, with the expression of interest calling for individuals with expertise in medical practice, nursing, pharmacy, social work, grief and bereavement support, information technology and the law.

The expertise of clinicians has been embedded in the voluntary assisted dying process. Last year I was fortunate to attend a clinical forum, which included a Zoom presence of a Victorian clinician. Clinicians will also be involved in the work streams.

Overseeing the process will be a voluntary assisted dying implementation task force. Its membership will go beyond SA Health, and it is expected the task force will be operational by early December. SA Health has developed an implementation plan which projects commencement by March 2023; that is, 21 months since the passage of the bill. The government advised parliament that implementation could take between 18 and 24 months.

I intend to ask the implementation task force to review the plan developed by SA Health and see whether SA Health can safely expedite the process. This will provide for independent oversight and testing of SA Health's proposal. I can assure honourable members that the government is committed to ensuring South Australians have access to voluntary assisted dying in as timely and safe a manner as possible.