

Media Release

The Hon Martin Foley MP
Minister for Health
Minister for Ambulance Services
Minister for Equality



Wednesday, 3 March 2021

VICTORIANS CONTINUE TO ACCESS COMPASSIONATE VAD OPTIONS

Access to Victoria's historic voluntary assisted dying laws continues to grow, with more medical practitioners being encouraged to train and register to support a compassionate choice for the terminally ill.

Minister for Health Martin Foley welcomed the fourth report of the independent Voluntary Assisted Dying Review Board, led by former Supreme Court Justice Betty King QC, which was tabled in Parliament today.

The latest report shows in the six months to 31 December 2020, 233 people were assessed for eligibility to access voluntary assisted dying – a total of 581 since 19 June 2019.

The report also shows there have been an additional 174 permits issued, bringing the total number of permits issued to 405 – with an average age of 71 years.

More than 450 medical practitioners are now trained to support voluntary assisted dying, with a 25 per cent increase in the number of practitioners actively supporting at least one case.

The Board found six cases to be non-compliant with the Act, although these issues were not related to the eligibility of the applicant. The errors were related to a misinterpretation of the Act and to the timely return of the medication, but there were no concerns for public safety.

The Statewide Voluntary Assisted Dying Care Navigator Service continues to provide support to those seeking information and access to voluntary assisted dying.

In January 2020 the service was expanded throughout regional Victoria, providing a Care Navigator within each of the five Victorian health regions to ensure regional and rural Victorians have timely access and support.

The Board has again requested the Commonwealth to reconsider restrictions on using telehealth for conversations about voluntary assisted dying, particularly for those who live in rural and regional Victoria.

The report is available at bettersafecare.vic.gov.au/vad.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Health Martin Foley

"Our voluntary assisted dying laws continue to provide compassion and relief to Victorians with an incurable disease, and to their closest friends and family, who love them and have stood by them during their illness."

"We thank everyone involved and encourage more medical practitioners to train and register to offer Victorians with an incurable disease a genuine and compassionate choice at the end of their lives."

Quotes attributable to Voluntary Assisted Dying Review Board Chairperson Betty King

"The Board continues to be humbled by the personal stories of applicants who feel so comforted by having choice over the timing and manner of their deaths."

"It's pleasing to see the number of doctors supporting them gradually increasing. The Board is hopeful the number of doctors involved in voluntary assisted dying, especially specialists, in regional Victoria will continue to grow."

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