

Media Release

The Hon Mary-Anne Thomas MP

Leader of the House

Minister for Health

Minister for Ambulance Services



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A VOTE FOR COMPASSION AND DIGNITY AS VAD LAWS PASS

Victoria's voluntary assisted dying (VAD) laws are now clearer and more compassionate.

Amendments to the *Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2017* today officially passed the Victorian Parliament – bringing Victoria's laws in line with some other states and the ACT, while keeping the existing safeguards in place.

The changes will take effect within 18 months and pave the way for more Victorians to access VAD without added barriers, improve clarity for practitioners, strengthen safety measures and make the system fairer and more compassionate.

The reforms maintain the strong safeguards that have been a cornerstone of Victoria's approach, ensuring that decisions are always voluntary, the person has decision-making capacity, and they are free from coercion.

Key updates to the legislation include:

- Removing the 'gag clause' so that doctors and some registered health practitioners are allowed to raise VAD with their patients during discussion about end of life care
- Requiring doctors and nurse practitioners who conscientiously object to provide minimum information to patients
- Extending the prognosis requirement (life expectancy limit for eligibility) from six months to 12 months
- Removing the need for a third prognosis for people with neurodegenerative diseases (like motor neurone disease) if their expected lifespan is between six and 12 months
- Introducing a new administering practitioner role to expand the workforce able to support VAD.

The amendments follow the release of an independent review into the first five years of VAD in Victoria which found the service is working safely and as intended – however, it also identified challenges in accessing VAD.

Victoria led the nation in 2017 by becoming the first state or territory in Australia to legalise VAD – safely allowing 1,683 terminally ill Victorians to make their own decisions about their death.

Since then, other jurisdictions have followed suit and, in many cases, improved the service.

The amendments bring Victoria's VAD legislation into line with some other states where they have been operating safely and effectively for several years, and do not go further than those in other jurisdictions.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas

"Our new laws will now make it fairer and more compassionate for Victorians who are terminally ill and suffering in pain to live out their last days with dignity."

"These changes were not possible without the advocates, clinicians and families, who through their own stories, told us our once nation-leading laws needed updating to give terminally ill Victorians more choice."

"Doctors and nurse practitioners can now have open, honest conversations to ensure their terminally ill patients are making safe and informed end-of-life decisions."