

Media Release

The Hon Daniel Andrews MP
Premier



Wednesday, 20 September, 2017

HISTORIC VOLUNTARY ASSISTED DYING BILL NOW IN PARLIAMENT

The Andrews Labor Government today introduced a Bill into Parliament to legalise voluntary assisted dying in Victoria, with a vote expected before the end of the year.

The Bill – prepared by Minister for Health Jill Hennessy and Attorney-General Martin Pakula – delivers on the safe and compassionate framework designed by the Ministerial Advisory Panel, chaired by former AMA president and neurosurgeon Brian Owler.

The legislation delivers on all 68 safeguards recommended by the Ministerial Advisory Panel to protect individuals and the community. The safeguards make Victoria's model the safest, and most conservative, in the world.

The Bill sets out a rigorous request and assessment process for access to voluntary assisted dying, and includes the establishment of a dedicated oversight body and protections. The safeguards protect the vulnerable from exploitation and coercion – and new criminal offences will be created to protect people from abuse.

The safeguards include:

- Only adults with decision making capacity, who are suffering and are in the final weeks and months of life, with an outer limit of 12 months, can access the scheme
- A person may only access voluntary assisted dying if they meet strict eligibility criteria, make three clear requests and have two independent medical assessments that determine they are eligible
- The request must always be initiated by the person themselves, with doctors who raise the issue subject to professional misconduct investigations.

The scheme will be self-administered, with doctor administration only available to those who cannot physically administer or digest the medication themselves.

Should the Bill pass Parliament, there will be an 18-month implementation period before access to voluntary assisted dying will start to allow for training and set up to take place.

All Labor Members of Parliament will be given a conscience vote on this legislation.

Quotes attributable to Premier Daniel Andrews

"Victoria will be the first state in Australia to legalise voluntary assisted dying should it be passed by Parliament."

"This legislation will deliver the safest model in the world, with the most stringent checks and balances. This means all Members of Parliament can have a respectful debate on the principles, instead of the technicalities."

Quotes attributable to Minister for Health Jill Hennessy

"Everyone deserves access to the very best end-of-life care. Sadly, the reality is for some people at the end of life, even the very best palliative care will not relieve their unbearable suffering."

Quotes attributable to Attorney-General Martin Pakula

"We have designed these laws to give genuine choice for Victorians with a terminal illness, while putting in place rigorous safeguards from abuse including a new oversight body."