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VICTORIA FIRST STATE TO PASS VOLUNTARY ASSISTED DYING LAWS

The Victorian Parliament this afternoon passed the Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill after a comprehensive, historic and passionate debate in both lower and upper houses.

The legislation will now go through an 18-month implementation period before it comes into effect in June 2019.

Victorians living with a terminal illness will have access to voluntary assisted dying after detailed deliberations resulted in amendments that strengthened the Bill, and maintained its vital integrity and compassion.

Some of the amendments include:

- Voluntary Assisted Dying will be limited to those whose death is expected in weeks and months, but no longer than six months – a reduction from 12 months. There will be exceptions for those who are suffering from a neurodegenerative condition and whose death is expected within weeks and months but for a period no greater than twelve months to access it.
- A person must have lived in Victoria for at least 12 months before being able to make a request
- A person with a mental illness must be referred to a psychiatrist for an assessment
- The assessing doctor must encourage the person to inform their regular doctor of their intention to access voluntary assisted dying, if the assessing doctor is not the person’s regular doctor
- The contact person is required to return any unused voluntary assisted dying substance within 15 days (not 30)
- The Review Board has a role to follow up with the contact person to advise on the safe return of any unused medication
- The coroner will be informed of voluntary assisted dying deaths
- Death certificates for people who have chosen voluntary assisted dying will record the manner of death as voluntary assisted dying.

This legislation is the result of two and a half years of extensive consultation and engagement with Members of Parliament, the community, health, palliative care and legal sectors, including the Parliament’s Legal and Social Issues Committee’s Inquiry into End-of-Life Choices and the Expert Ministerial Advisory Panel.

Quote attributable to Premier Daniel Andrews

“Victoria is the first state to pass voluntary assisted dying laws in Australia – giving Victorians with a terminal illness the compassion and dignity they deserve at the end of their lives.”

Quote attributable to Minister for Health Jill Hennessy

“After two and a half years of hard work and consideration by so many in our Parliament, the passing of the Bill will finally give Victorians more control, compassion and support at the end of their lives.”

Quote attributable to Attorney-General Martin Pakula

“We have ensured we have compassionate legislation while still giving Victorians the protections and safeguards they need – making this the most conservative and safest scheme in the world.”

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