

ACT NATIONAL SENIORS POLICY

VOLUNTARY ASSISTED DYING

National Seniors supports the ACT Government in its work directed at achieving repeal of the Commonwealth Government legislation that currently prevents the ACT from legislating for voluntary assisted dying (VAD).

In view of the results of the survey undertaken amongst our members we ask the ACT Government to ensure that when legislation for voluntary assisted dying is eventually developed for the ACT, that it meets the needs of these three types of adults:

- (a) those who are *in extremis* - having a terminal illness and only a short time left to live; and
- (b) those who are not terminally ill or do not have a short time to live, but who have an intolerable serious condition; and
- (c) those of an advanced age who do not have a terminal illness or a serious condition, but whose quality of life is intolerable.

We propose that the ACT Government undertakes a survey amongst adults of all ages in the ACT to determine attitudes towards voluntary assisted dying.

Background

During 2019 the ACT Policy Advisory Group of National Seniors Australia (PAG) conducted a survey amongst the 250 registered members of ACT branches of National Seniors Australia.

A large majority of respondents endorsed this statement of need:

"Would it be comforting for you to know that when you will be approaching the end of your life and in declining health or experiencing intolerable pain or an unacceptable quality of life, then there would be a legal, peaceful and assured means available to end your life, at a time and location of your choice and in the company of caring people?"

A large majority of respondents agreed that adults should have access to provisions for voluntary assisted dying providing that the following preconditions are satisfied:

- *they are experiencing suffering that cannot be relieved to an extent and in a way that is acceptable to them;*
- *the suffering is a consequence of a terminal illness, or an intolerable health condition, or in the case of persons of advanced age, an intolerable quality of life;*

- *they are fully informed about the nature and causes of their illness, condition, suffering and quality of life;*
- *they are fully informed about and competent to evaluate all relevant current and treatment options and palliative care options;*
- *they have decided that no further current or likely future treatment option or palliative care option is acceptable to them;*
- *they are fully informed about the voluntary assisted dying process and procedures and able to evaluate the implications of their decision to undertake voluntary assisted dying;*
- *they understand what voluntary assisted dying is and the outcomes of taking the prescribed medication;*
- *they have access to counselling and other appropriate support;*
- *they have decision-making capacity;*
- *they have consistently and repeatedly communicated their decision to undertake voluntary assisted dying;*
- *the decision to end their life has been made freely and voluntarily and has not been influenced by coercion.*

Adopted on Friday 26 February 2020 by the Policy Advisory Group of National Seniors Australia in the ACT

Dr. William F. Donovan
Chair
ACT Policy Advisory Group
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