

Submission into the Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill 2021

Submission No.: 656
Submitted by: Jerath Head
Publication: Making the submission and your name public
Position: I/We support the Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill
Comments in relation to: Eligibility criteria* ,The request and assessment process
Attachments: No attachment

Submitter Comments:

I support the draft Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill 2021 as it currently stands.

After the introduction of voluntary assisted dying in Victoria in 2019, there were four initial points that stood out: 1) that more people accessed it than expected; 2) that many people didn't end up filling their script—the process of application was more about them having the choice, about feeling empowered at the end of their life; 3) for those who did fill their script and have the substance administered, the feeling of the families, in addition to obvious sorrow, was generally positive, as they were able to see a measure of peace in their loved one who had exercised their agency in this most crucial of decisions; and 4) there was significant shortcoming in that people living in more rural areas were not able to access the service due to the in-person requirements for assessment and an absence of trained doctors in regional/rural areas.

As such, I would strongly encourage the Committee to ensure that doctors are able to use electronic means to communicate with each other and their patients regarding voluntary assisted dying, so that Queenslanders who live in remote areas have access to the program. The major risk is not in people abusing the program: voluntary assisted dying programs are well established in many other jurisdictions, the requirements and oversights are rigorous, and the benefits are obvious. The major risk is in denying access to people on technicalities that need not affect the implementation of the program, and increasing suffering disproportionately based on where a person lives. This is deeply unfair, and I trust the Committee will do its utmost to prevent this from happening as the Bill is progressed.

* Demand that doctors must be able to use electronic means to communicate with each other and their patients regarding VAD so that Queenslanders who live in remote areas have access to VAD.

* That people who own their own home in a retirement village must be able to access VAD in their own home.