

**Submission into the Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill 2021**

**Submission No.:** 1229

**Submitted by:** Riverlife Baptist Church

**Publication:** Making the submission and your name public

**Position:** I/We do not support the Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill

**Comments in relation to:** Eligibility criteria\* ,The request and assessment process,Safeguards,Conscientious objection by either individuals or entities

**Attachments:** See attachment

**Submitter Comments:**

**Submission to the Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill, on behalf of *Riverlife Baptist Church***

My name is Pastor Jo Leutton, and I am a part of the Senior Leadership of Riverlife Baptist Church. I am making this submission on behalf of our church leadership (see names below), and our church community. We are a church of over five thousand people in Seventeen Mile Rocks, Brisbane, drawing attendees from across the south-east corner of the state.

We are concerned with the Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill that was proposed to the Queensland Parliament on 25 May, 2021, for a number of reasons. Our concerns include our care for the wider community, the affected parties that are a part of our church community, and the moral and ethical concerns for the people of Queensland.

We value the autonomy of the individual to make choices concerning themselves. However, we object to the legalisation of the taking of human life in any form.

**1. The value of human life**

Human life is of great value. Indeed, our whole basis for human rights and equal rights are based on the value of human life. Humans are valuable and of worth not based on ability, function, or capacity for income generation. Human life is of intrinsic value. If Voluntary Assisted dying is introduced and is available for those with reduced capacity or function, then quality of life and functional/instrumental value becomes our diagnostic for who should be allowed to live and die.

Within our Christian worldview and framework we hold that the sanctity of human life is enshrined in scripture. From the emphasis on the prohibition on taking human life (Exodus 20:13; Leviticus 24:17; Matthew 5:21-26), there is a clear Christian imperative to object to any Bill that suggests the taking of human life.

**2. Human Rights**

Human rights have been hard fought and won across the modern era. These rights are such that individuals themselves cannot undertake certain activities or determinations. As a human's right to life is the basis of human rights, then to violate this by allowing another to take that life contravenes these rights.

**3. Financial Concerns/Financial Benefits**

It is common sense that the financial burden of ongoing care for someone with reduced capacity/function can be detrimental to families. Given the paucity of qualification in the Bill regarding the qualifications of the medical practitioners who are required to give sign-off on the assisted death, there becomes a financial incentive for those who carry the costs of ongoing palliative/high need care to seek alternative options for end-of-life and long-term care.

Oregon, in the United States of America, has assisted dying legislation, and have seen people undergo assisted deaths due to financial reasons.<sup>1</sup>

#### 4. Palliative Care Accessibility

Currently, access to palliative care in Queensland is limited in regional and rural areas. The current limit to funding and accessibility for all Queenslanders means that Assisted Dying could become a preferred option. There are records of people promoting assisted death due to the cost of palliative care.<sup>2</sup>

The current proposal from the Premier to use 'tele-health' to assess and approve Voluntary Assisted Dying increases the risk of abuse, increases the lack of thorough exploration of alternative options, and likely contravenes federal laws.

#### 5. Impact and Opinion of Medical Professionals

The impact on medical professionals required to act as an 'administering practitioner' has proven detrimental in nations that have adopted euthanasia and assisted dying laws.<sup>3</sup>

It is also the publicly stated opinion of numerous medical groups, both within Australia and internationally, that there is a greater need for effective and well-funded palliative care for all people than for assisted dying.

Local and national groups include: the Nurses Professional Association of Queensland, the Australian Medical Association, BaptistCare Australia, Catholic Health Australia, UnitingCare, and Anglicare.<sup>4</sup>

#### 6. Increase of Suicide

There is a documented increase in the rate of suicide in the general population when legal Assisted Dying laws are introduced. There are recorded increases in these states and nations<sup>5</sup>, particularly amongst women and the elderly.

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.oregon.gov/oha/PH/PROVIDERPARTNERRESOURCES/EVALUATIONRESEARCH/DEATHWITHDIGNITYACT/Documents/year20.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://abcnews.go.com/Health/story?id=5517492>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/20508549.2006.11877782>

<sup>4</sup> Cherish Life Winter Newsletter, 2021 -

[https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/qld/pages/454/attachments/original/1624270148/Anti-Euthanasia\\_Advocacy\\_newsletter\\_-\\_Cherish\\_Life\\_-\\_Winter\\_2021.pdf?1624270148](https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/qld/pages/454/attachments/original/1624270148/Anti-Euthanasia_Advocacy_newsletter_-_Cherish_Life_-_Winter_2021.pdf?1624270148)

<sup>5</sup> <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/26437189/>

Given the Queensland Government's own commitment to suicide prevention, this seems to be a foolish undertaking that will work against clearly established and funded goals.<sup>6</sup>

## 7. Historical Precedents

When prohibitions against the taking of human life are removed, there becomes both an increased opportunity and incentive to pursue more and more relaxed laws governing such practices. We have seen the abortion rate increase since legalisation, and the even negotiable definition of what constitutes 'life' that has given rise to late-term abortions.<sup>7</sup>

Once Voluntary Assisted dying is introduced, there is little to stop the changing of parameters and legal definitions when financial and practical concerns are raised (see point 1 on the intrinsic value of human life and its purpose).

Historically speaking, assisted dying, selective life and euthanasia has resulted from both ideological and financial concerns. Ancient cultures practiced exposure, leaving female and disabled infants exposed to the elements in order that they would die, as they were culturally and financially inconvenient.<sup>8</sup> Other movements such as the eugenics program in Nazism gave rise to euthanising people with mental and physical disability, along with those of undesirable heritage.<sup>9</sup>

## 8. Failure of Euthanasia in Other Countries

There is significant research showing the damage caused by Voluntary (and in-voluntary) euthanasia in nations such as Holland, Belgium, Canada, the United States (some states).

These nations have cited various reasons for people requesting assisted dying, and pain (as cited by the Queensland Government Bill) is not amongst the top reasons.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> [https://www.qmhc.qld.gov.au/sites/default/files/every\\_life\\_the\\_queensland\\_suicide\\_prevention\\_plan\\_2019-2029\\_web.pdf](https://www.qmhc.qld.gov.au/sites/default/files/every_life_the_queensland_suicide_prevention_plan_2019-2029_web.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> <https://calumsblog.com/2020/02/16/a-brief-case-against-euthanasia/>

<sup>8</sup> Stark, R. 1995. "Reconstructing the Rise of Christianity: the Role of Women", *Sociology of Religion*, Vol 56, No 3. Pp 229-244.

<https://roosevelt.ucsd.edu/files/mmw/mmw12/RodneyStarkReconstructingRiseofChristianityWomen.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> <https://calumsblog.com/2020/02/16/a-brief-case-against-euthanasia/>

<sup>10</sup> [https://organesdeconcertation.sante.belgique.be/sites/default/files/documents/8\\_rapport-euthanasie\\_2016-2017-fr.pdf](https://organesdeconcertation.sante.belgique.be/sites/default/files/documents/8_rapport-euthanasie_2016-2017-fr.pdf);

Thank you for taking the time to review this submission. We would be happy as a church to talk to any State Government member or representative concerning this matter. We can be contacted at: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Blessings,



Pastor Jo Leutton

*On behalf of:*

Senior Pastor John Robertson  
Scott Wilson (Operations Manager)  
Mark Hodgson (Church  
Administrator/Elder)  
Rob Boegheim (Elder)  
Marty Wauchope (Elder)  
Jonquil Burn (Elder)  
Marty Begbie (Elder)  
Dan Cowan (Elder)

Chris Taylor (Elder)  
Juli Robertson (Elder)  
Emma Bickerton (Elder)  
Dr Stephen Cook (Elder)  
Brad Close (Elder)  
Joel Kelder (Elder)  
Mark Page (Elder)  
David Drew (Elder)