

Health and Environment Committee

From: Scott Muir [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, 1 July 2021 8:24 PM
To: Health and Environment Committee
Subject: VAD Submission

Categories: Submission

SUBMISSION ON VAD BILL, 2021 (QUEENSLAND)

Thank you for considering my submission concerning the Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill, 2021.

I am opposed to this bill becoming law and do not believe it is a human right to end one's own life if they choose. I do believe that palliative care is an important area of healthcare providing humane and dignified care for those who are dying. Medical staff working in this area are providing all necessary assistance to patients who are dying and to their families. This is the kind of assistance in dying that a humane society provides. It is this area of medical care that should be supported and funding for it ought to be increased.

Human beings for millennia have recognised the value of human life, yet now, when we have incredible medical resources to support people as they die, we want to hasten death unnaturally. To me, these two things are impossible to reconcile.

I understand the fear and anxiety that arises when a person is in their last stages of life. Yet this ought not be a time when doctors are called upon to end a patient's life, but to provide medical care until that person passes away. Family members ought to see this time as precious as they too care for their loved one.

I am concerned that the VAD bill is being debated by stories, and a minority of stories at that. Of course, there are exceptional cases where it is difficult for doctors to minimise a patient's suffering. We hear a great deal about those stories, but we hear little of those many untold stories of families having precious weeks, days and final moments with loved ones, caring for them lovingly as they die. We ought to be very careful making laws that suit a very small minority of cases.

I realise that the proposed laws are designed to offer a choice and not mandate end of life. But there is a bigger issue at stake here concerning the message those who rule us send about the value of human life. This legislation sends a signal and lowers the bar about how we view a human being. Those who promote VAD use the word *dignity*, but I believe the proposed legislation demeans human dignity.

There is also the significant concern that while the proposed legislation attempts to insert safeguards into the process, experience shows that there will always be abuses when the door is opened. When a person's life is involved, such abuses will have disastrous consequences.

Finally, it disturbs me that our medical profession, which has always worked tirelessly to preserve life, will be asked to be complicit in ending life, in many cases, contradicting their own consciences. I note the AMA statement on this question from 2016 says, "doctors should not be involved in interventions that have as their primary intention the ending of a person's life." This foundational conviction ought to be respected.

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Scott Muir
Senior Minister

Office: 20 Limestone St, Ipswich, 4305
Phone: 07 3413 1050 F: 07 3413 1051
www.centralchurch.nef.au

 **CENTRALCHURCH IPSWICH**