




Speech By
Aaron Harper

MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA

Record of Proceedings, 18 November 2021

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENT

Voluntary Assisted Dying

 **Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (2.59 pm): On 16 September this year this parliament passed one of the most compassionate laws, providing people at end of life the option to access voluntary assisted dying. I again thank everyone for their involvement. The health committee travelled the length and breadth of the state and heard from Queenslanders right around the state, particularly in regional and remote Queensland, that they did not want to leave their communities and wanted to be able to access VAD as a choice.

The committee made two additional recommendations: to amend the Commonwealth government's Criminal Code Act 1995 by inserting a definition declaring that suicide does not include voluntary assisted dying carried out lawfully pursuant to a law of a state or territory; and, as a matter of urgency, the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions issue prosecutorial charging guidelines indicating that the offences in certain sections of the Criminal Code Act will not be prosecuted where a doctor or other person is acting in accordance with the procedure outlined in state or territory voluntary assisted dying laws.

I have written to Senator Susan McDonald, and five weeks ago I wrote to Phillip Thompson. I asked them whether they would stand up for regional Queenslanders and amend the Commonwealth law. I table the letter.

Tabled paper: Letter, dated 6 October 2021, from the member for Thuringowa, Mr Aaron Harper MP, to Federal Member for Herbert, Mr Phillip Thompson, and Senator Susan McDonald, regarding the Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill 2021 [1970](#).

The federal member has not responded. In addition, 12 members of parliament have written to the Prime Minister asking for that particular law to be amended. I table a letter.

Tabled paper: Letter, dated 15 October 2021, from various members representing regional Queensland, to the Prime Minister, Hon. Scott Morrison, regarding the Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2021 [1971](#).

The Queensland Law Reform Commission said that the uncertainty around that law is unsatisfactory. It said—

It is inherently undesirable that health practitioners should be left under such an apparently unintended grey cloud. If the Commonwealth law is not clarified ...

It asked for this to be resolved urgently. We have a year to implement the framework around providing training, the oversight board and so on. I again ask the Commonwealth to amend the carriage service law so that people in regional and remote Queensland have access and equity. That is exactly what we need to do in this state to make sure everyone has fair access to this particular law. I again ask that the member for Herbert and Senator McDonald answer the letter and stand up for regional Queenslanders on this issue to make sure they have access and equity when it comes to VAD.