




Speech By
Joan Pease

MEMBER FOR LYTTON

Record of Proceedings, 14 September 2021

VOLUNTARY ASSISTED DYING BILL

 **Ms PEASE** (Lytton—ALP) (3.27 pm): I rise today to support the Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill 2021. In so doing, I give a voice in this place—the people's place, our Queensland parliament—to the hundreds and hundreds of people who have spoken to me and to the thousands who have written or made submissions on the bill. I give my voice to those in my community and across all of Queensland, but most importantly I give voice to those who have a life-limiting disease and to those who are sadly no longer with us. I have listened with an open heart and an open mind. I have cried with you, I have held your hands and I have listened. I want to thank you so very much for sharing your experiences with our committee and with me. While sharing those experiences was often very difficult, your honesty and words have enabled me to have a full understanding of your experience and their impact on you. I heard you, I support you and I support choice. I have been humbled and touched by the passion, love and kindness that has been on display at each and every hearing.

I thank our First Nations people who have spoken to us so openly and honestly, and I thank all of those who have and will speak for and against the VAD Bill today and in the coming days. For those who are opposed to the legislation, I thank you for your considered and respectful engagement with myself and the committee.

As always, I acknowledge the palliative care doctors and nurses and I thank them for their dedication, professionalism, compassion and genuine kindness. I thank them for speaking so openly and honestly either for or against the legislation. I also want to take the time to thank the dedication of my local GPs in my electorate who take such beautiful care of their palliative patients and end-of-life patients in the bedside.

I also acknowledge our faith based practitioners, our residential aged-care facilities and hospitals for your commitment to the health and care of Queenslanders and I thank you for your contributions to our society. I also thank the dedication of the many campaigners and specialists, the incredible professors Lindy Willmott and Ben White, and all those who have advocated for this legislation and the great work of the QRLC.

Importantly, I thank my government and the Premier, the Hon. Anastacia Palaszczuk, for introducing this bill and giving us an opportunity to have a personal vote.

Most, if not all, of us have experienced firsthand a loved one passing and, in my case, none of these deaths have been easy, even with the very best of palliative care, which they did receive. There was significant pain and their deaths were not good deaths. However, I also acknowledge that not all of them would have chosen voluntary assisted dying. Whilst my mother was screaming out in pain and begging for someone to ease her pain and end her suffering, my father was the complete opposite and he did not want to meet his maker. Therein lies the importance of this bill. It is voluntary. It is safe and offers choice. It also offers great comfort.

I would also like to acknowledge the great work of the current secretariat and give my regards to Jacqui and the team that have worked so hard in putting together all the submissions. I would also like to acknowledge the great work from Rob and the secretariat in the previous inquiry. It was a very

overwhelming and huge task that everyone pulled together and worked so hard on. As the member for Thuringowa mentioned, it was very difficult: a lot of the hearings were heart-wrenching and very sad and a lot of literature was very difficult to read through.

I would also like to give note to my staff in my electorate office who have worked with me and witnessed some of the heartbreak and heard the stories.

I would also like to acknowledge both committees and I would like to acknowledge Mark McArdle, the former deputy chair, and Barry O'Rourke, former committee member, and thank them for their kindness and work on the committee. I would also like to acknowledge the chair, the member for Thuringowa, who is incredibly passionate about this matter and he managed the committee business so well. Member for Pumicestone, it has been great working with you, as with you, members for Southport, Oodgeroo and Mirani. It was really good to work on this bill collaboratively—well, on the whole.

This bill is part of a long and considered process to weigh up whether Queenslanders who are dying should have a choice over the time and circumstances of their death. End-of-life choices are very personal and can be and are very often difficult for all those involved. I do believe, however, that supporting those in our community to have the right and opportunity to make an informed decision about how they die will provide great dignity at the end of life. For many, VAD may not be an option, but for others, if they are eligible, it will provide the comfort and an additional end-of-life choice alongside palliative care and that is why I am supporting voluntary assisted dying.

The VAD Bill, as I have said, will allow eligible people who are dying to choose the timing and circumstances of their death if that is what they want to do. Voluntary assisted dying and other end-of-life choices are extremely complex and deeply personal issues. The bill is to give people who are suffering and dying and who meet that criteria the option of requesting medical assistance to end their lives. It is not a way to end life for those who are not dying.

Today I am filled with hope. I have cried with, I have comforted and listened to so many Queenslanders over the last three years, and I am so proud to stand here today to support this bill, to give my voice and my commitment to the many supporters who put their trust in me. Quite simply, it is time. I commend the bill to the House.