




Speech By
Hon. Yvette D'Ath

MEMBER FOR REDCLIFFE

Record of Proceedings, 2 December 2022

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Voluntary Assisted Dying

 **Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Minister for Health and Ambulance Services) (9.48 am): All Queenslanders have a right to a good death, free of suffering and with support for them and their loved ones. The Palaszczuk government went to the 2020 election with a commitment to provide Queenslanders with life-limiting conditions with choice—choice of when, where and how their palliative care is provided; choice regarding their place of death and, if they wish, when they die.

In just over one month Queenslanders can start making requests to access voluntary assisted dying on 1 January 2023, providing another end-of-life option for people who meet the strict eligibility criteria. In September last year, our parliament passed the Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2021, delivering on the promise Labor made to Queenslanders at the 2020 election. Since the legislation was passed, Queensland Health has been working closely with clinicians, health workers, aged and palliative care providers, unions, professional colleges and consumer and advocacy organisations to implement the necessary processes and safeguards needed to facilitate voluntary assisted dying.

In the past month, two significant milestones have been achieved. Firstly, the inaugural nine-person Voluntary Assisted Dying Review Board was appointed and the first meeting was held. The review board provides an important safeguard for Queenslanders by reviewing each completed voluntary assisted dying case to ensure the process complies with the Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2021. Secondly, the Queensland Voluntary Assisted Dying Implementation Conference was held on Saturday, 29 October. I would like to thank the over 2,000 people who registered to attend. It is reflective of the passion and commitment of many healthcare workers and the genuine support shown towards Queenslanders and their health needs at the end of life.

In addition to this, the Chief Health Officer has recently signed off the credentialing and defining scope of clinical practice health service directive. As at 28 November 2022, Queensland Health had endorsed 135 medical practitioners, nurse practitioners and registered nurses, within the public and private settings, to undertake mandatory training to become VAD practitioners. It means by 1 January 2023 all hospital and health service areas will have authorised VAD practitioners in place.

As an additional measure, the department is finalising processes that will enable authorised VAD practitioners to travel to a patient should one not be available nearby, thereby ensuring equitable access for people living in regional, rural and remote areas. This is needed until we get the changes to federal legislation that allow us to support people through telehealth as well. As I said during debate on the bill, the introduction of voluntary assisted dying will provide further choice and dignity to people who are suffering and dying, placing control back in their hands when it comes to the timing and circumstances of their death. It is an additional end-of-life choice for those who are eligible.

Voluntary assisted dying in Queensland does not and will not detract from an accessible and well-resourced palliative care system. At the 2020 election, the Palaszczuk government committed to improving palliative and end-of-life care across Queensland with an additional \$171 million investment.

On 28 October, I was pleased to launch our new Palliative and End-of-Life Care Strategy and Queensland Health Workforce Plan. This five-year blueprint will guide the Queensland government's approach to ensure that those Queenslanders who are suffering and dying are provided with compassionate, people-centred palliative care and end-of-life options no matter where they live. It is every Queenslanders' right to die with dignity, and it is the Palaszczuk Labor government that is delivering this for Queenslanders.