

Media Release

17 May, 2017

Statement on the release of the voluntary assisted dying Interim Report

Dying With Dignity Victoria welcomes the release of the Interim Report by the Ministerial Advisory Panel. The work they have done over the past five months to aid in the development of voluntary assisted dying legislation has been outstanding.

DWDV notes the extensive consultation that the advisory panel has undertaken to provide expert insight into some of the more complex aspects of an assisted dying law.

Representatives and members of DWDV attended these consultation opportunities to provide our input on the requirement for practical and workable assisted dying legislation that is bound by comprehensive safeguards.

We believe the approach the Victorian Government is taking to develop legislation provides a very strong opportunity for success in finally delivering safe and compassionate laws that allow the terminally ill, and those with an advanced incurable illness, control over their deaths.

The Interim Report highlights the aspect of a time frame of how close a person is to death being applied to the eligibility of a request for an assisted death. The report places great emphasis on the variable trajectory of terminal illness and supports a flexible approach ranging from 6-24 months with strong support for 12 months based on end of life definition provided by the *National Consensus Statement on essential elements for safe and high quality end of life care*. This standard is also accepted by the Palliative Care industry.

DWDVs supports a flexible approach, noting the trajectory of people's illnesses progress differently, producing different effects and needs, and should be determined on an individual basis rather than an arbitrary and restrictive time period.

Having read the Report, DWDV President Lesley Vick, believes the Health Minister has taken a measured and responsible approach in establishing this Advisory Panel:

"The comprehensive consultation process it has undertaken is an important step in developing compassionate, safe and practical voluntary assisted dying legislation.

"The feedback reflected in this Interim Report confirms the already well documented community support for VAD laws and we look forward to the Panel's final report and recommendations in July."

DWDV Vice-President and spokesperson, Dr Rodney Syme stated: "It is gratifying to see the emphasis in the report on the necessity for a period of training and education for the medical profession in the implementation, and education for the public in their rights and responsibilities in what they can expect from their doctors."

We look forward to further engaging in discussion about this landmark piece of legislation in the lead up to the advisory panel's final report which is due at the end of July.

For further information or media enquiry, please contact Dying With Dignity Victoria (03) 9874 0503