

# Media Release

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## **New laws give patients more control over their treatment**

The Victorian Parliament has voted to pass the Medical Treatment Planning and Decisions bill that will give Victorians greater powers to set directives about their future medical treatment, including end-of-life care and wishes.

Advance Care Directives are important for people to be able to state their medical treatment preferences, for receiving or refusing treatment, should they no longer have the capacity to communicate their wishes.

To support the introduction of this legislation, the Department of Health and Human Services will develop a comprehensive training program for GPs and their staff to start the conversation with patients regarding future medical treatment preferences.

The result of the new legislation is that patients can plan for treatment with confidence that their preferences, if correctly documented in an Advance Care Directive, will be recognised as legally binding.

DWDV Vice-President, Dr Rodney Syme, is pleased to finally see Parliament pass these laws:

“This new law from the government to give statutory recognition to advance directives is the culmination of nearly 20 years of advocacy on this matter.”

Dr Syme believes that the legislation will close a serious gap on the previous Medical Treatment Act, which in theory only allowed for refusal of treatment for a ‘current condition’.

“Victorians will be fully protected in regard to refusal of future treatment as a result of this law,” he said.

Since 2004, Dying With Dignity Victoria has worked in the community to educate people about their medical treatment rights. DWDV workshops provide practical information about Advance Care Directives and their role in providing people with control over their treatment options.

### **Stepping stone towards assisted dying laws**

The new laws to give Advance Care Directives statutory recognition are also an important step towards securing voluntary assisted dying laws in Victoria.



Recommendations for advance care directives and assisted dying laws both featured in the recent report to come out of the Inquiry into End of Life Choices that was released in June, 2016.

The two aspects share the common goal of providing people with end of life choices and control. Both are important for people who are irremediably suffering from a terminal or advanced incurable illness.

If you would like comment or interviews with Dying With Dignity spokesperson, Dr Rodney Syme, please contact our office on (03) 9874 0503