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Friday 4 December 2020

CATHOLIC HEALTH AUSTRALIA MAKES SUBMISSION TO LAW REFORM COMMISSION ON VOLUNTARY ASSISTED DYING

Catholic Health Australia has lodged its submission to the Queensland Law Reform Commission's consultation into voluntary assisted dying legislation.

The document outlines the response by CHA and its members in Queensland to the Commission's task of developing an appropriate legal framework for voluntary assisted dying.

A working group of CHA Queensland members was convened to write a submission in response to key questions posed in the Commission's paper which outlined legal issues in the review.

The Queensland VAD taskforce is chaired by Mater's Chief of Mission Madonna McGahan and comprises 16 CHA members.

CHA's submission is prefaced with the re-statement that voluntary assisted dying legislation is not consistent with the ethical framework and enduring commitment to compassionate end of life care provided within Catholic health, community and aged care services.

CHA's response makes the following points in its submission:

- VAD is contrary to the legal, regulatory and ethical frameworks that govern medicine and that medical practitioners should be able to practice medicine within the Hippocratic ethical frameworks which enjoins them to do no harm to and not to kill a patient - a position supported by the Australian Medical Association and the World Medical Association;
- Any proposed legislation would need to recognise that hospital and aged care staff working in facilities owned and run by religious organisations that prohibit intentional killing or facilitating a patient to take their own life would not be bound to participate in VAD;
- It would be wrong if the law were to present VAD as an alternative to high quality palliative care, as the former has a direct intention to end life while the latter is still intent on improving quality of life and remains within the healing tradition of medicine by providing accompaniment in end of life care;
- If there remains unequal access to high-quality palliative care across Queensland for chronically ill patients then some might be forced down the path to VAD, which deprives them of the key tenet of autonomy;
- Legalisation of VAD introduces a tacit recognition by the State that some lives are not worth living.

Catholic Health Australia CEO Pat Garcia said: "We welcome the opportunity to respond to the Commission's call for submissions and we are grateful that we are able to communicate



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comprehensively why our members believe there should be no legal basis for voluntary assisted dying laws in Queensland.

“We believe that in Australia, with our high quality health system supported by a well-resourced palliative care sector, that there is no place, and indeed no need, for voluntary assisted dying.”

“Whilst we have faith in the Commissioner’s stated aims to listen to interested parties the Government has made a clear commitment to table a bill by next March - we hope that leaves enough time for everyone’s views to be taken into consideration before the Government proceeds to the next step.”