

Bishop Charles Gauci Responds to NT Voluntary Assisted Dying Report

MEDIA RELEASE

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Bishop Charles Gauci Voices Nuanced Response to NT Voluntary Assisted Dying Report

Darwin, NT – In a recent interview, Bishop Charles Gauci of the Catholic Diocese of Northern Territory provided his initial reactions to the newly released Voluntary Assisted Dying (VAD) report. As a leading voice in the community, Bishop Gauci emphasised the importance of a thoughtful and balanced approach to the sensitive issue of voluntary assisted dying, while highlighting several key concerns and commendations within the report.

A Collaborative Effort for Informed Decisions

Bishop Gauci began by stressing the preliminary nature of his comments, noting that a more comprehensive response will follow after thorough consultation with his advisory panel. This panel comprises medical professionals, social workers, and legal experts, underscoring the collaborative effort to address the multifaceted implications of the VAD report.

Commendable Aspects of the Report

Bishop Gauci acknowledged several positive elements within the report. Notably, he appreciated the proposal to establish dedicated facilities for VAD, separate from existing hospitals and palliative care units, to avoid potential conflicts and confusion. He also commended the respect for conscientious objectors within the medical profession, although he noted the need for further nuance in this area to ensure healthcare providers are not compelled to act against their beliefs.

Furthermore, Bishop Gauci expressed appreciation for the report's sensitivity to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural issues, highlighting the significance of this inclusion given the strong cultural opposition to VAD in many Indigenous communities.

Critical Concerns and Areas for Improvement

Despite the positive aspects, Bishop Gauci outlined several concerns that require further deliberation. He raised the issue of conscientious objectors being required to refer patients to VAD providers, which many medical professionals see as a violation of their conscience. Bishop Gauci called for more clarity and protection for these individuals to avoid forced collaboration with practices they morally oppose.

He also highlighted the need for robust education on palliative care options, noting that many people are unaware of the comprehensive support available, which could influence their decision regarding VAD. The report's recommendations on this front were seen as a step in the right direction, but Bishop Gauci urged for stronger initiatives to inform the public.

Bishop also pointed to potential complications in remote areas, where limited face-to-face consultations could lead to inadequately trained individuals overseeing VAD processes. Ensuring



universal training for all involved in VAD, regardless of location, is crucial to maintaining high standards of care.

Regarding Catholic Institutions

Bishop Gauci stated, "Regarding Catholic institutions, it is important to emphasize that they do not participate in Voluntary Assisted Dying (VAD), thereby offering people a clear choice. We strive to uphold our values and ensure our actions align with the broader ethical and moral framework of the Church. This commitment to our principles allows us to provide compassionate care while staying true to our beliefs."

A Call for Integrity and Reflection

Reflecting on the church's role in the public debate, Bishop Gauci firmly rejected the notion of running scare campaigns, as seen in past discussions on euthanasia. Instead, he advocated for transparency, honesty, and integrity in presenting the church's stance. He asserted the importance of protecting vulnerable populations and ensuring that societal decisions are made with wisdom and comprehensive understanding.

Looking Ahead

Bishop Gauci concluded by reaffirming his commitment to engaging in ongoing dialogue with stakeholders and the community. He underscored the church's dedication to respecting individuals' choices while advocating for the protection of life and the dignity of every human person. The bishop looks forward to further discussions and providing a more detailed response after consulting with his advisory panel.

Note: Previous comments, including video statements from Bishop Charles Gauci on this crucial topic of VAD/Euthanasia, can be viewed on the [Diocesan website](#).

About Bishop Charles Gauci:

Bishop Charles Gauci is the head of the Catholic Diocese of the Northern Territory, based in Darwin and has other roles in Aboriginal Ministry. <https://darwin.catholic.org.au/bishop/>

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