



CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE  
OF MELBOURNE

# media release

29 November 2017

## **A STATEMENT FROM THE ARCHBISHOP OF MELBOURNE, DENIS HART ON EUTHANASIA AND ASSISTED SUICIDE IN VICTORIA.**

The passage today of the Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill through the Victorian Parliament is deeply regrettable and most disappointing for it facilitates Assisted Suicide and Euthanasia.

Victoria becomes the only place in the world this year to have legislated for Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide – almost fifty other places have, this year, rejected such legislation.

Sadly, Assisted Suicide and Euthanasia expose the most vulnerable in our society and undermine centuries of care and clinical practice. Experience in other countries clearly demonstrates that Victoria is now at the beginning of a dangerous pathway where more and more people's lives will be placed in jeopardy.

Catholic health and aged care providers will continue to accompany those who face death, always striving to provide the best care to them and their loved ones. Assisted suicide and euthanasia are not part of their practice and are incompatible with the provision of quality palliative care.

The Archdiocese will strongly advocate that the Victorian Government honours its promise of increased palliative care, particularly in regional areas. At the same time, I exhort the Government to substantially increase the funding for palliative care so that all Victorians requiring this care are aware of its availability and have access when the need arises. Only last week, Pope Francis said that palliative care is “proving most important in our culture as it opposes what makes death most terrifying and unwelcome: pain and loneliness.”

I remind all people, health professionals and patients alike, that no one should ever be compelled to act against their conscience – we will continue to strongly assert that right.

I am grateful to our parishioners who joined the many voices including doctors, nurses, carers, lawyers and politicians who actively campaigned and advocated with passion and conviction for the defeat of this legislation.

May those dedicated to the care of the sick and dying, shine forth as instruments of the healing power and love of God, who leads us through the shadows of suffering with the promise of love.

At this critical time in the history of the State of Victoria, I pray for a renewed commitment of all Victorians to the sick, oppressed, marginalised and vulnerable of our society.

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