



CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE  
OF MELBOURNE

# media release

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## **Statement of Archbishop Hart Ministerial Advisory Panel Report on Voluntary Assisted Dying**

The Archbishop of Melbourne Denis Hart has expressed dismay following the release today of the Ministerial Advisory Panel Report into the legalising of Physician Assisted Suicide in Victoria.

Archbishop Hart said “I urge all Victorians to look closely at what is being proposed. I am proud to be a Victorian but this report makes me very concerned for the future of our elderly and most vulnerable citizens. We need to see this report and its recommendations for what they are and so I am taking this opportunity to bring this vital matter to the public’s immediate attention.”

Archbishop Hart said “I commend efforts to strengthen and better resource Palliative Care but that is a minimum necessity. While the report recommends what it calls safeguards, the truth is that these safeguards are never going to be enough and that there are no flawless medical procedures. All procedures and interventions can have complications. I have watched supporters of this proposal and they are going out of their way to convince us that assisted suicide is acceptable, seeking to lessen our human, moral and natural distress because of suicide.

It seems that on the one hand we are seeking to lessen suicide in our society – an admirable aim – but here we have this report looking to normalise it. When viewed from the perspective of the whole Victorian community these two objectives cannot be reconciled

Evidence world-wide is that once such legislation is passed, that is only the beginning of the impact and the far-reaching effects extend even further.

The legislation will impose extraordinary and unreasonable responsibilities on our medical professionals who will be called upon to determine which patients are eligible and how the safeguards are to be applied. This then becomes a matter for decisions by medical practitioners and not the patients for whom they are required to care.

The report while making clear the number of individuals whose assistance will be required for each case of “assisted dying” including two and in some circumstances three medical practitioners, two independent witnesses, a contact person, pharmacist and a further witness if the lethal medication is administered by a medical practitioner fails to properly consider the impact and support required by all those whose assistance is required in each case.

While such legislation has passed in a small number of places around the world, the overwhelming majority of efforts to pass this type of legislation have failed, including more recently in the United Kingdom, in the States of Maine, Hawaii and Maryland in the USA and closer to home in South Australia and Tasmania.

My fellow Victorians – please seek out the facts on this matter and I am confident that once you have carefully examined the issue, you will see that here we have a situation where we will be asking doctors to assist someone to commit suicide. A doctor is there to promote health and protect life – not to fast-forward death.

I am deeply saddened that this matter is before us at all and I hope and pray that Victorians will urge their MPs to reject the Bill when it comes before the Parliament.”

Regards,

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Director  
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