



MEDIA RELEASE
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CATHOLIC HOSPITALS AND AGED CARE HOMES SAY INVESTMENT IN PALLIATIVE CARE SHOULD COME BEFORE LEGALISED EUTHANASIA IN TASMANIA

Catholic Health Australia rejects the proposed euthanasia legislation and says its members remain more committed than ever in delivering compassionate end of life care to Tasmanians.

As the debate on the *End-of-Life Choices (Voluntary Assisted Dying) Bill 2020* in Tasmania's Upper House continues, CHA says the legislation is not only flawed but undermines a central tenet of the Catholic faith – to value human life above all else.

For that reason CHA members will neither offer the prescription of a lethal substance to a person to help them end their own life, nor administer a lethal substance to a person by a doctor to end their life.

Rather than allow such a law to come into place, CHA is calling for greater government investment in and higher public awareness of palliative care. Half of all private palliative care services in Australia are provided in Catholic hospitals.

CHA Chief Executive Pat Garcia said: "CHA does not believe assisted euthanasia is consistent with good medicine or the Catholic ethic of compassionate care which has marked the practice of medicine for millennia. We reject there is a need for this type of legislation."

"The Catholic health sector is committed to excellent end of life care and have been serving the Australian community in end of life care for nearly 130 years. We are not about to stop now."

CHA joins a growing chorus of voices that have expressed either concern about the legislation or outright opposition to it, including the state's former chief justice and governor, William Cox; and aged care provider and CHA member, Southern Cross Care chair, Stephen Shirley. Premier Peter Gutwein has asked the Department of Premier and Cabinet to seek feedback from government departments on "any implementation challenges" if the Bill is passed and becomes law.



Mr Garcia said Tasmanians should have access to palliative care, which is compassionate and humane compared to legalised euthanasia which is what the Tasmanian Parliament is considering.

“We know that half of the people who would benefit from palliative care are able to actually access it, and this is particularly so in regional Australia. More than one in ten people die at home, even though studies suggest as many as five times that figure would wish to do so.,” Mr Garcia said.

“If high quality palliative care was available to all, the level of suffering which proponents of this Bill rely upon to press their case would be eliminated and with it the need for an assisted suicide Bill. Real choice for compassionate care at the end of life can be assured if governments invest in palliative care for all citizens.”

Media contact: Julian Lee 0422 343 086