Additional document (2) as part of lan Wood evidence. VAD and 'suicide contagion'.

Email dated 20.11.2021 to A Henskens. MP for Ku-ring-gai from Ian Wood

Dear Mr Henskens MP and staff.

In your speech opposing VAD an initial claim you made was that the House would be voting for euthanasia instead of palliative care. If you read the Bill and the many letters of support for a legal VAD choice you would find this claim is not correct. A vote is to give patients approaching death, with suffering they find intolerable, an additional choice in the manner of their dying, still including the choice of palliative care.

Another of the claims you made was -

Medical journal articles reviewing relevant jurisdictions have found that when societies legalise euthanasia, rates of non-euthanasia suicides go up, not down. That is what has happened in the United States, the Netherlands and Canada, and the early data from Victoria is consistent with an increase.

Can you please provide the evidence for this claim?

My own research finds a different conclusion.

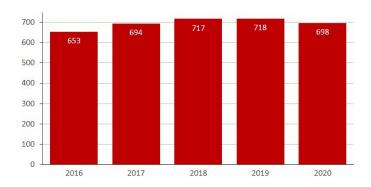
For USA, Reference: https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/sosmap/suicide-mortality/suicide.htm

State	2005 Suicide Rate/100,000 deaths	2019 Suicide Rate/100,000 deaths
Alaska	19.9	28.5
Oregon	14,9	20.4
Wyoming	17.3	29.3

Yes, Oregon, with a VAD law since 1997, has had an increase in suicides. but nowhere near as marked as Alaska and Wyoming, neither of which have a VAD law. Can you please explain this?

You claim that the early data from Victoria is consistent with an increase in suicide. Can you please provide your evidence for this claim?

My own research finds a different conclusion. Reference: Neil Francis research at https://www.dyingforchoice.com/blogs/anti-vad-suicide-gaffes-major-embarrassment



The Victorian coroner's 2021 report into suicides contains data for all years 2016 to 2020 inclusive. See above graph.. Page 1 of 2

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Official Victorian population figures by year and computed the standard official suicide rate statistic: suicides per 100,000 population. The Victorian suicide rates look like this (Figure 5):

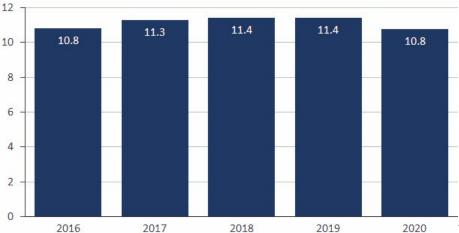


Figure 5: Victorian

suicides per 100k population by year

The data shows a rising suicide rate from 2016 to 2018, a levelling off in 2019 in which VAD was operational for half the year, and a <u>fall back to the 2016 rate</u> in 2020, the first full operational year of VAD.

Computing from the rate drop between 2018 (11.4 with no VAD law) and 2020 (10.8, first full year of VAD law), the *equivalent* count of suicide decrease in 2020 was 38 persons. And that's without assuming the general suicide rate would have continued its rising trend,, according to Mr Francis' research..

As I pointed out in my Presentation Folder sent earlier to you in support of VAD as an end of life choice, there is considerable evidence that seemingly paradoxically, many of those who are assessed and given the 'green light' for an assisted death actually live longer and have a better end quality of life, that those who do not request assistance. The knowledge that they do not need to suffer provides great peace of mind and is palliative in its own right. Why would you vote against the Bill to deny this peace of mind and this longer life?

>>>>> End of email.

Mr Henskens has not responded to my requests for evidence of the source for his claims.

Recommendation: That this Inquiry determine in their Report that claims of an increase in suicide in jurisdictions with legal assisted dying cannot be related to the fact that VAD is legal. Such claims are not supported by the evidence, which demonstrates there can be and there are higher rates of increase in suicide in many jurisdictions without VAD legislation.