

**Submission  
No 60**

**INQUIRY INTO PROVISIONS OF THE VOLUNTARY  
ASSISTED DYING BILL 2021**

**Organisation:** Cancer Voices NSW

**Date Received:** 21 November 2021

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Cancer Voices NSW provides the independent voice of people affected by cancer in NSW and beyond. In the twenty years since our formation in 2000, Cancer Voices NSW has been influential in improving cancer care, information, support and the direction of cancer-related research in NSW.

Our members include people with cancer and cancer survivors, carers, cancer care professionals and interested organisations. As an active network, Cancer Voices NSW provides a forum for those affected by cancer to share their concerns, ideas and experiences. Our representatives offer broad, informed views on cancer issues at local, state and national levels – wherever decisions about us are made.

We are all volunteers of varying ages and backgrounds. Most of us have experienced one of the many different forms of cancer and its treatments. We are also people who want to make a positive difference to the cancer experiences of others.

Following extensive discussion by our Executive Committee in 2017, we have supported the introduction of voluntary assisted dying in NSW. Consistent with Cancer Voices' view that people with cancer have the right to understand all of the choices available to them, we have advocated for greater choice for people with cancer in relation to their treatment options that includes the right to access voluntary assisted dying at their end of life.

In March 2021, following extensive discussion throughout 2020, and consultation with the Cancer Voices membership through a survey in January 2021, the Executive Committee decided that Cancer Voices would join the NSW Voluntary Assisted Dying Alliance. In doing so, Cancer Voices supports the NSW VAD Alliance Statement:

'We support the guiding principle of autonomy as the first pillar of medical ethics and the right of competent adults to make informed decisions about their own medical care.

Voluntary assisted dying (VAD) laws, with clear parameters and strict safeguards, allow eligible adults who are in the end stages of a terminal illness and suffering intolerably, to end their suffering at a time and place of their choosing and in the presence of their loved ones, if they wish.

'This legal assistance to die must be voluntary for both the person and healthcare professionals. No-one is compelled to participate.

'We acknowledge that VAD is just one option among many at the end of life. We also support better funding and access for palliative care; however, we recognise that, while palliative care is excellent and can accommodate the needs of the majority of dying people, even the best-resourced care cannot relieve the extreme suffering that some people endure.

'More than 20 years of data — from overseas jurisdictions and now from Victoria where a VAD law has been in place since June 2019 — demonstrate that assisted dying laws operate safely and effectively.

'We note the widespread public support for choice at the end of life and we urge the NSW Parliament to adopt a VAD law based on the models passed by Victoria in 2017 and Western Australia in 2019.'

Cancer Voices NSW therefore urges NSW Parliamentarians to listen to their constituents, of whom an overwhelming majority are in favour of the passage of VAD legislation, to ensure that those constituents who have a terminal health diagnosis have the same rights as people in all other states in Australia.

#### **Cancer Voices NSW**

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