

**VOLUNTARY ASSISTED DYING BILL 2019**

*Second Reading*

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

**MR D.J. KELLY (Bassendean — Minister for Water)** [3.55 pm]: I started speaking before question time on the Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill. I want to summarise my position. I support this legislation. I do not believe there is any reason someone whose death is imminent should have to die a painful, undignified death. This bill will give people who find themselves in that unfortunate situation the opportunity to die with dignity. It will also allow families to avoid the painful experience of watching a loved one die a painful death. This bill will also prevent first responders, ambulance officers and police officers in particular, from having to experience discovering a member of the public who has committed suicide rather than endure an undignified, uncontrolled death. I feel strongly about the circumstances of ambulance officers and police officers in particular. They suffer greatly through things such as post-traumatic stress disorder, and this bill will reduce the likelihood of their having to attend unpleasant suicide events.

I believe this bill is compassionate. It is safe and it is conservative. It contains a range of safeguards that will ensure that the procedures will not be misused. I thank members of Parliament on both sides of the house and the bureaucracy and community who have come together to put this bill in place. This bill reflects the majority view of Western Australians. The overwhelming number of Western Australians support people being allowed the option of voluntary assisted dying if they find themselves in these circumstances. I do not see any reason this option should be denied to those people. People who do not support voluntary assisted dying, for whatever reason, should not stand in the way of those who do. They have the option of simply not choosing it for their own life. I am pleased and proud to be part of a government that has put this bill together and brought it before the house. I support it and I urge others to do the same.

**MRS R.M.J. CLARKE (Murray–Wellington)** [3.58 pm]: I rise today in support of this very important legislation, the Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill 2019, but more importantly to pay my respects to the lives of terminally ill patients who have passed in immeasurable pain and suffering, leaving their families traumatised, and to those who may in the future want the choice of medically assisted dying. I have had an open-door policy with constituents in my electorate of Murray–Wellington from the day I was elected. I have been approached about many issues in our community, their needs, arising issues and ways we can improve our community to become more resilient and innovative for our region's future. Voluntary assisted dying is an important subject, filled with high emotions and perspectives, stories of suffering and those of morality, and views of a vocal minority contrary to wishes of patients to have a dignified end to a great adventure. The emotionality of this subject, however, does not deter the conversation from occurring, nor should it. Many members of my community have questioned why we need a conscience vote on this legislation or a law to represent this topic. The reality is that without the right to choose, with careful and cautious safeguards in place, there is no protection and no relief for sufferers, health professionals and family members.

Hearing and learning about people's harrowing experiences around end-of-life choices has been a choice for representatives in Parliament. I have attended as many forums and briefings as were available. Throughout this process, it has become clear to me that terminal illnesses do not discriminate, and every person who suffers from these illnesses deserves the right to decide from what is available to them on their treatment and care. These choices and this right should be respected. I believe everyone has the right to a dignified end to his or her life.

On 23 August 2017, the Parliament established a joint select committee to inquire into and report on the need for laws in Western Australia to allow citizens to make informed decisions regarding their end-of-life choices. The Joint Select Committee on End of Life Choices was formed and its terms of reference included —

- a) assess the practices currently being utilised within the medical community to assist a person to exercise their preferences for the way they want to manage their end of life when experiencing chronic and/or terminal illnesses, including the role of palliative care;

Debate interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.

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