

VOLUNTARY ASSISTED DYING — PRACTITIONER TRAINING

835. Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE to the Minister for Health:

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's commitment to providing dignity and compassion to terminally ill Western Australians. Can the minister update the house on the implementation of this government's historic voluntary assisted dying legislation, including how many practitioners have registered for training?

Mr R.H. COOK replied:

I thank the member for the question and for his care and compassion for his community. It was in December 2019 that we as a Parliament entered this legislation into an act, to provide a compassionate and dignified way for people to access end-of-life choices. Since then, the Department of Health and the Voluntary Assisted Dying Board have been working assiduously to bring that act to life, and they did so in July this year. For the past four months, the Voluntary Assisted Dying Act has been operational in Western Australia. Over this time, 169 practitioners across WA have registered to access and undertake the WA voluntary assisted dying-approved training. We have had 43 practitioners complete that course so far. I would like to take this opportunity to recognise and thank those 43 practitioners who have taken their time to access and complete this course, which is integral to the process. These healthcare professionals are now assessing patients and assisting them through the process of their journey. Their efforts in, support for and dedication to person-centred care is invaluable. I would also like to take the opportunity to express my gratitude to the staff of the statewide care navigator service and the statewide pharmacy service, which make sure that people, wherever they live in Western Australia, can access quality palliative care and the full range of voluntary assisted dying-related services, which we all envisaged in this place back in 2019. These are critical components of the ways in which our community is able to access additional choice at end of life. I have been informed that 288 first requests have been made by 211 people for access to voluntary assisted dying, and that of those, 125 first assessments have been completed. The majority of patients that have been assessed have been diagnosed with terminal cancer. Since 1 July, 50 people have completed the process under voluntary assisted dying.

When we started this journey under the guidance of the member for Morley as Chair of the Joint Select Committee on End of Life Choices, the Parliament undertook a very important process—a process to make sure that the Parliament listened to people who wanted choice at end of life, to make sure that we put in place a regime that showed compassion but also protected people along the way, and to make sure that, as a Parliament, we could enter into law very sophisticated and complex laws that really embrace all the values that we consider most dear at end of life. I am very proud of the work that has been done by the Voluntary Assisted Dying Board and everyone who has been able to bring these laws into being.