

Labor MP revolts

Backbenchers cop raw deal

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VETERAN Labor MP Margaret Quirk has blasted her own side over the Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill, accusing Premier Mark McGowan and Health Minister Roger Cook of treating backbenchers "with contempt".

After speaking against the VAD legislation during nearly 72 hours of debate in the Lower House, when not one of about 20 amendments was approved, Ms Quirk doubled down this week.

Though Labor MPs have been granted a conscience vote on the contentious issue, Ms Quirk said there was clear "implicit" pressure on herself and her colleagues to support the Bill's smooth passage.

"Certainly I know of a number of occasions where members sought to speak in favour of the Bill and were asked (and agreed) not to speak to expedite the process of the Bill through the Lower House," Ms Quirk said. "It is a Government Bill (and) there has been an enormous amount of resources put towards it.

"The fact that all other legislation had to take a second place while this was being drafted, the fact that although there was no formal whipping in the House it was clearly evident there was informal whipping — it has never been properly explained to me why this was so important."

She also questioned why the draft legislation was only presented to Labor MPs one hour before its release to the media.

"I think it is treating the back bench with some contempt," she said.

Among the amendments Ms Quirk sought were stronger residency requirements to prevent VAD tourism and the introduction of a de facto "permit system" where the VAD board tasked with ensuring adherence to the legislation would be required to review every case prior to the administration of lethal drugs.

Ms Quirk also attempted to change the Bill so that it required at least one of the assessing doctors to have experience and expertise in the disease expected to cause the patient's death.

She also supported a proposed amendment from Labor colleague Tony Buti to prevent doctors raising the possibility of VAD with patients unprompted.

Debate moves next week to the Upper House, where Ms Quirk hopes to see many of her proposed amendments revived.