

# MPs warn on dying

## 'Don't rush euthanasia bill'

ELIZABETH HENSON

FORMER Labor ministers and a past premier have joined forces to warn state MPs against making any hasty decisions about legalising euthanasia in South Australia.

Former premier Lynn Arnold, past deputy premier Don Hopgood and ex-health minister Jack Snelling are among those who are urging parliamentarians against rushing the proposed Voluntary Assisted Dying (VAD) Bill, describing it as “the most important piece of legislation MPs will decide during their careers in public life”.

“We ask that this legislation not be rushed through the Houses of parliament but be fully debated and amendments be carefully considered on their merits,” they wrote in a joint letter.

“Further proper provision must be made for conscientious objection by individuals and institutions respecting deeply held beliefs surrounding the sanctity of human life.

“The life of every citizen of our state is too important to do otherwise.”

Other signatories on the letter were former education ministers Greg Craf-ter and Jennifer Rankine, former high-

er education minister Tom Kenyon and former attorney-general and speaker Michael Atkinson.

Meanwhile, a group called Health Professionals Say No, which represents 850 healthcare professionals from across Australia, has written an open letter to South Australians urging them to lobby against the Bill and instead call on the government to address health-care and residential care inequities.

“Good laws make it easier to do right and harder to do wrong – but VAD legislation only makes coercion and abuse more likely,” it reads.

The proposed VAD legislation was introduced in the upper house by Labor’s Kyam Maher and was passed by the Legislative Council in March.

It was the 17th time a Bill to legalise euthanasia had been introduced in state parliament and the first time it has passed a chamber of parliament.

The Bill was introduced and passed in the lower house in May. Further debate will occur on June 9 before another vote is required to take place.

The legislation would allow euthanasia to be available to people over 18, who have an incurable disease that is expected to cause death within months.



Guy Warren in front of his portrait by Peter Wegner, which won the Archibald Prize. Picture: AGNSW

## TON OF REASONS FOR ARCHIBALD PRIDE

ELIZABETH FORTESCUE

A CALL from a stranger set the ball in motion for Friday’s \$100,000 Archibald Prize. At home in Sydney’s leafy Greenwich, artist Guy Warren picked up the phone. On the line from Melbourne was Peter Wegner.

Warren had never heard of Wegner. Besides, he was frantically busy with a slew of exhibitions to do with his centenary – he turned 100 in April.

Wegner, 67, is a celebrated portrait painter and six-time Archibald finalist with a project to paint 100 centenarians.

Wegner recalled that Warren was reluctant to sit for him.

“He said, ‘oh, I’m just too busy, I’ve got three shows coming up this year’,” Wegner said with a laugh. But Warren relented and Wegner flew to Sydney to draw him in his studio at home.

For Warren there was nothing novel about being painted for the

Archibald. He’s one of its most popular sitters and won the prize in 1985 when he painted his sculptor friend Bert Flugelman (creator of the “Mall’s Balls”). This year, as the prize, too, turned 100, Warren was painted four times.

Wegner was locked down in Melbourne and couldn’t attend the announcement of the winner.

“I was speechless,” the artist said. “It’s the culmination of years of my time in the studio and validation of my work.”

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