



The Hon. Greg Donnelly MLC
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
Sydney, NSW 2000

Dear Mr Donnelly,

Palliative Care New South Wales (PCNSW) is the peak body for Palliative Care in this state. We represent a broad membership that consists of specialist clinicians, nurses and allied health professionals, as well as volunteers and members of the general public who have an interest in Palliative Care.

I am writing to you on behalf of our membership which has expressed great concern regarding some misconceptions about Palliative Care in relation to the Public Consultation Draft *Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill NSW 2017*. As the peak body, PCNSW has a responsibility to its members and the broader Palliative Care community to participate in any public discussions relating to Palliative Care, and both comment on and critique any proposed physician assisted suicide and euthanasia legislation.

PCNSW wishes to take this opportunity to explain our position on physician assisted suicide and euthanasia and address some of the misconceptions in the general community regarding both the meaning and purpose of Palliative Care. We wish to also invite you to meet with a representative from Palliative Care NSW to discuss the implications and expected impacts of the proposed legislation on Palliative Care across NSW.

PCNSW is affiliated with the national peak body for Palliative Care, Palliative Care Australia. The following link will take you to Palliative Care Australia's Euthanasia and Physician Assisted Suicide position statement.

http://palliativecare.org.au/wp-content/uploads/dlm_uploads/2015/08/20160823-Euthanasia-and-Physician-Assisted-Suicide-Final.pdf.

It is important to clarify the following points:

- The practice of Palliative Care does not include physician assisted suicide or euthanasia;
- Palliative Care does not intend to hasten or postpone death; and
- When aligned with a person's wishes, withdrawing or refusing life sustaining treatment (including withholding artificial hydration) or providing medication to relieve suffering, do not constitute physician assisted suicide or euthanasia.

Consultation

In drafting this Bill there has been no specific consultation with Palliative Care NSW. This is concerning when you consider the detailed body of knowledge and expertise that is held by the sector in dealing with end of life care and support. We believe that there needs to be more consultation involving the broader medical and health sector, as this issue is not confined to Palliative Care.



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At what cost?

A recent report by the NSW Auditor-General highlighted significant shortcomings in the strategic oversight of Palliative Care in this state <http://www.audit.nsw.gov.au/publications/latest-reports/palliative-care>. This remains the case, notwithstanding the State Government's recent announcement to increase funding to the sector. Access to Palliative Care is not yet equitable across geographic boundaries or on prognosis. There is also poor death literacy within the community at large. In repeated community surveys, many people do not know or understand what Palliative Care is, yet, this bill assumes that the same people have the required knowledge to make informed choices about physician assisted suicide and euthanasia.

The Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill 2017

The Bill itself contains a range of shortcomings, deficiencies and gaps that PCNSW have identified in its submission to the working group. On the basis of these and the matters mentioned above, it is the position of PCNSW that the Bill should not be supported.

We believe that discussion and collaboration are the best approach for grappling with an issue that would so fundamentally change the way society deals with dying and death. We would therefore like to invite you to meet with a representative of Palliative Care NSW to discuss any questions that you may have.

To assist with the arrangement of a meeting, please contact Palliative Care NSW on (02) 9206 2094 or email Megan Burke at megan@palliativecarenewsw.org.au.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Linda Hansen".

Linda Hansen
Executive Officer
Palliative Care NSW

15th September 2017