

**STATEMENT BY THE WORLD MEDICAL ASSOCIATION (WMA)
ON THE VICTORIAN VOLUNTARY ASSISTED DYING BILL 2017**

The World Medical Association (WMA) is the global federation of National Medical Associations representing the millions of physicians worldwide. Acting on behalf of patients and physicians, the WMA endeavours to achieve the highest possible standards of medical care, ethics, education and health-related human rights for all people.

The WMA and its national member medical associations, which includes the Australian Medical Association is adamantly, unequivocally and uniformly opposed to Physician Assisted Suicide-Euthanasia (PAS-E) on the basis that it constitutes the unethical practice of medicine.

The WMA asks the Victorian Upper House to reject the **VICTORIAN VOLUNTARY ASSISTED DYING BILL 2017**.

The WMA's *Declaration on Euthanasia* states that "Euthanasia, that is the act of deliberately ending the life of a patient, even at the patient's own request or at the request of close relatives, is unethical. (Adopted in 1987 and reaffirmed in 2005 and 2015).

The WMA's *Statement on Physician-Assisted Suicide* provides, "Physician-assisted suicide, like euthanasia, is unethical and must be condemned by the medical profession. Where the assistance of the physician is intentionally and deliberately directed at enabling an individual to end his or her own life, the physician acts unethically." (Adopted in 1992 and reaffirmed in 2005 and 2015).

The WMA *Resolution on Euthanasia* (adopted 2002 and reaffirmed with minor revision 2013) was precipitated by the WMA noting that the practice of euthanasia with physician assistance had been adopted into law in some countries. It resolves that:

The World Medical Association reaffirms its strong belief that euthanasia is in conflict with basic ethical principles of medical practice, and The World Medical Association strongly encourages all National Medical Associations and physicians to refrain from participating in euthanasia, even if national law allows it or decriminalizes it under certain conditions."

The WMA is concerned that should the **VICTORIAN VOLUNTARY ASSISTED DYING BILL 2017** be passed into law it will create a situation of direct conflict with physicians' ethical obligations to patients; will harm the "ethical tone" of the profession and the institution of medicine in Australia and will expressly contradict the Australian Medical Association's opposition to PAS-E; that vulnerable people will be placed at risk of abuse; and that a precedent will be set that PAS-E is ethically acceptable.

The impact of such a dangerous precedent will not be limited just to individuals, but will extend to harming fundamental societal values and damaging the "ethical tone" of Australian society. Moreover, that impact will not be confined to Australia but will be felt in other countries, especially Australia's geographic neighbours in Asia and Oceania, some of which do not have the same standards of respect for human rights as Australia.