

15<sup>th</sup> September 2017**All correspondence to:**

Sydney Institute of Palliative Medicine,  
Gloucester House  
Royal Prince Alfred Hospital,  
Missenden Road  
Camperdown, NSW 2050  
Australia  
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EMAIL: SIPM@sswahs.nsw.gov.au

The Hon. Greg Donnelly  
Deputy Opposition Whip in the Legislative Council  
Parliament House  
Macquarie Street  
Sydney NSW 2000

**Executive Committee**

**Chairperson**  
A/Prof Ghauri Aggarwal  
Concord Hospital

**Committee**  
Dr Jan Maree Davis  
St George Hospital

Dr Jennifer Wiltshire  
Liverpool Hospital

Dr Melanie Lovell  
Greenwich Hospital

Dr Sally Greenaway  
Westmead Hospital

Janeen Foffani  
Royal Prince Alfred Hospital  
Email: janeen.foffani@sswahs.nsw.gov.au

**Consultants to SIPM:**  
Prof J Norelle Lickiss  
Sydney, Australia

Dear Mr Donnelly,

We, the executive of the Sydney Institute of Palliative Medicine (SIPM), are writing to you to express our serious concerns regarding the *Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill 2017*. The bill as we understand is expected to be debated in the Legislative Council shortly.

Our organisation has for some years played a significant role in the development of palliative medicine as a clinical science and specialist medical field in New South Wales, Australia and internationally. Its activities include registrar training, conducting annual symposia and participating in various international and humanities programs.

As co-ordinator of the palliative medicine training network across the state, SIPM is particularly concerned about how this bill, if passed into law, would impact on both the future development of palliative medicine and how palliative care is practised in this state. It is well recognised that palliative care services in this state are seriously under-resourced. In many parts of New South Wales, there is no access to a palliative medicine physician. People living in those areas need urgent access to expertise in palliative and end of life care.

Current training and the medical ethics that underpin palliative care are directed at providing the best care possible to patients at the end of their life. The legal framework that the bill would establish is specifically designed to create engagements with patients that are anathema to our profession. We are concerned about the impact of such a law on individual patients specifically and society in general. We believe that such a law would have a negative impact on the practice of palliative care in New South Wales.

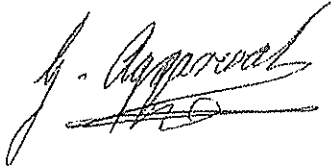
It is our view that the proposed legislation will compromise greatly the ability of palliative care specialists to deliver good end of life care to patients. In a most fundamental way it interferes with both the relationship and trust between doctor and patient. This can only compromise the ability of doctors to provide the best advice and care to patients experiencing suffering and pain. We submit that if the law is changed to permit doctors to end life, it will alter society's attitude towards the medical profession in a most profound way. Citizens will come to question, if not potentially fear, the very individuals who they believed were professionally trained to care for them.

Palliative care can achieve good symptom control in the overwhelming majority of patients. It is our view that so-called voluntary assisted dying is not necessary for symptom relief. It is our observation that distress increases symptom burden and that a focus on death, as happens when euthanasia is considered, increases distress and hence increases pain, breathlessness and other symptoms. In our repeated experience, focusing on living well rather than dying, improves people's wellbeing.

We would strongly urge each Member of Parliament to look closely at the proposed legislation and take into account our concerns with regards to the negative impact on society, the future practice and discipline of Palliative Medicine and safety of the vulnerable patients for whom we are entrusted to care for.

If there are any matters raised that you would like to discuss further please contact A/Prof Ghauri Aggarwal via email ([SIPM@sswahs.nsw.gov.au](mailto:SIPM@sswahs.nsw.gov.au)) or phone 02 9515 6424.

Yours faithfully,



A/Prof Ghauri Aggarwal  
Chair, SIPM

Yours faithfully,



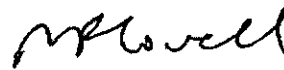
Dr Jan Maree Davis  
Education lead

Yours faithfully,



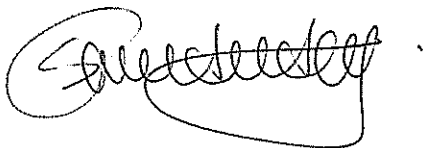
Dr Jennifer Wiltshire

Yours faithfully,



A/Prof Melanie Lovell

Yours faithfully



Dr Sally Greenaway