

WORLD MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

News Release

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WORLD MEDICAL ASSOCIATION REITERATES STRONG OPPOSITION TO PHYSICIAN ASSISTED SUICIDE AND TO AUSTRALIAN BILL

The WMA and its national member medical associations, which include the Australian Medical Association, have strongly reiterated their long-standing opposition to physician assisted suicide and euthanasia on the basis that they constitute the unethical practice of medicine.

The WMA calls on Australia's Victorian Upper House to reject the Victorian Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill.

The Association cites its Declaration on Euthanasia which states: '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'.

It also refers to its Statement on Physician Assisted Suicide which declares: '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'.

And further it quotes its Resolution on Euthanasia, which notes that the practice of euthanasia with physician assistance has been adopted into law in some countries and that 'The World Medical Association reaffirms its strong belief that euthanasia is in conflict with basic ethical principles of medical practice, and 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'.

Finally, the WMA has expressed its concern that should the Victorian Bill be passed into law, it will create a situation of direct conflict with physicians' ethical obligations to patients and will harm the "ethical tone" of the profession. It also warns that vulnerable people will be placed at risk of abuse and that a precedent will be set that physician assisted suicide and euthanasia are ethically acceptable.

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