



## **EUTHANASIA (VAD) DRAFT LEGISLATION IN A.C.T. – “MISTAKEN COMPASSION”**

Dear Friends in Christ,

On Monday 29<sup>th</sup> January 2024, I represented the Catholic Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn at a public hearing of the Select Committee into the ACT Voluntary Assisted Dying legislation at the ACT Legislative Assembly.

In essence, the main points I articulated were as follows:

### **CONCERN FOR THE TERMINALLY ILL**

- All of us are concerned regarding our care for the vulnerable and terminally ill people of our region. It is a topic many feel uncomfortable to discuss.

### **VAD – POISON NOT HEALING**

- Extraordinarily, however, what is proposed in this Voluntary Assisted Dying legislation (Euthanasia) is to insist that the health and healing professions are to, under certain circumstances, offer our most vulnerable loved ones poison leading to their death rather than healing. This is always wrong. It is never right.

### **PALLIATIVE CARE – THE WAY FORWARD**

- Palliative care is the best and most comprehensive and compassionate way of responding to the vulnerable and terminally ill in our region. It is family centred, and draws the closeness, the kindness, the healing touch of Jesus to those that we are most concerned about. All other alternatives, in my mind, arise from a mistaken compassion. Yet palliative care is underfunded despite the ACT Legislative Assemblies promises to boost funding, especially to rural areas. Let us recall my earlier Pastoral Letter regarding Euthanasia: “Love does not kill.” (23/04/2023)

### **MY BODY/MY CHOICE ARGUMENTS AND HUMAN RIGHTS**

- Arguments for Euthanasia generally centre on the superficial mantra of, “My body, my choice.” This is a lonely and individualistic argument. It is often boosted by a very subjective and narrow understanding of Human Rights arguments. Such interpretations are not based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) which is the mother document for all Human Rights conversations. In this declaration fundamental rights are articulated but also the important duties and responsibilities that arise from asserting Human Rights.

**The Catholic Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn**



## CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION

- The issue of conscientious objection, mentioned in the draft legislation, is a very narrow understanding, from our Catholic view point regarding this important matter. Whereas the draft legislation does protect institutions that are opposed to VAD legislation, there is a criminal penalty if such institutions do not refer the petitioner to others that will provide Euthanasia alternatives. I made it very clear to the Select Committee that the Catholic Church has a far broader understanding of conscientious objection and will not involve itself, either directly or indirectly, in any cooperation with VAD.

Dear friends, such points need to be understood by us all in the important weeks ahead. I do encourage you to become more informed regarding this debate and respond accordingly to your local Political representatives. We need to raise this issue in a reasoned and confident manner. Compassion, as a word, means "to suffer with." This legislation is aimed to directly, through evil means, end the life of our most vulnerable and terminally ill citizens. It is a "mistaken compassion."

Let us be united in prayer and intercession that this legislation will lapse and that well-funded Palliative Care will become the priority of legislation.

**Archbishop Christopher Prowse**  
**Catholic Archbishop of Canberra and Goulburn**  
**30<sup>th</sup> January 2024**