

To the Victorian Community,

As palliative care doctors and nurses we have sat at the bedside of many thousands of people who are dying. We have witnessed the sadness and loss, and at times the suffering of both the people dying and their families and friends.

We are a group of clinicians with considerable experience of this part of life, and feel a responsibility to share our thoughts with the community.

Our message is clear, improving palliative care services is the most effective and equitable way of reducing suffering for dying Victorians.

Additionally, we share three facts:

1. Very few people who we care for when facing death with advanced diseases are interested in euthanasia, in the order of 1-2%.
2. The majority of people who do request euthanasia change their mind when they have access to high quality palliative care.
3. Access to palliative care in Victoria is currently very patchy, and largely a matter of luck. Access is highly variable and far from equitable. The deciding factors are your diagnosis, your postcode and your doctor. Worse still, our data shows that even for those who are able to access palliative care, they do so too late in their illness trajectory to receive the benefits purported by evidence based world best practice.

If the Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill passes, Victorians will be able to access assisted suicide, yet at the same time many thousands will struggle to access the high quality palliative care they deserve.

Ready and equitable access to high quality palliative care is the effective and just response and will benefit ALL people who are dying in Victoria and their families.

Names of signatories: Jennifer Weil, Jennifer Philip, Karen Quinn, Beth Russell, Jo-An Seah, Helen Keen, Kim Ching, Launa Booth, Peter Poon, Esther Lin, Natasha Smallwood, Becky Chapman, Leeroy William, Kathryn Bennett, Maria Coperchini, Sadie Dunn, Mark Boughey, Scott King, Chi Li, Aaron K Wong, Julie McDonald, Carmel Smith, Tom Whelan, Sharon Bover, Tracy Harrip, Peter Hudson, Julie Lawrence, David Halliwell, Peter Martin, Katrina Holmes, Martin Kaltner, Kathryn Tham, Janet Walker, Francis Hogan, Lucy Kernick, Emmelina Finigan, Kylie Draper, Maria Pisasale, Susan Howes, Sandeep Bhagat, Katrina Holmes, Cathy McCormick, Regina Kendall, Rowan Hearn, Rosetta Hart, Brian Le, Bambie Lee, Lynette Garrick, Cathie Nowak, David Kenner, Adrian Dabscheck, Annette Cudmore, Kaye Walsh, Bronwyn Lee, Steven Pitman, Lisa Mounsey, Michelle Gold, Jo Kuropatoff, Melina Villani, Amanda Vo, Michele Meachen, Grace Walpole, Narelle Graham, Juli Moran, Leanne Batty, Kylie Montgomery, Brigid Hughes, Devi McAlpine, Rachel McKenney, Claire Kemp, Claire Choi, Gail Hessel, Akshay Kulkarni, Lyle Oates, Jennie Sutter, Indrajith Jayasinghe, Eleanor Flynn, Sivakumar Subramaniam, Fiona Runacres, Hilary Hodgson, Anita Haines, Sarah Charlton, Toni McKann, Julie Langridge, Annie Chiu, Nicky Ronayne, Kerith Hogan, Krystie McDonald, Danni Ko, Odette Spruyt, Tamsin Bryan, Rosalie Hudson, Kelly Koschade, Peter Eastman, Irene Murphy, Alison Giles, Helen Farrell, Georgina Whittaker, Ha Tran, Jessica Mather-Hilton, Alexandra Bourke, Robert Molennar