

# An Open Letter from Christian Leaders to the Premier of Victoria regarding the Proposed Victorian Assisted Suicide and Euthanasia Bill

31 July 2017

Dear Premier

We, the undersigned leaders of faith communities in Victoria, commend much of the work of the recent Victorian End-of-Life Choices Inquiry, which identified the need to improve the quality and accessibility of palliative care for all Victorians.

However we strongly reject the proposal to legalise assisted suicide and euthanasia in Victoria.

## Better care - not killing

Human dignity is honoured in living life, not in taking it. Even though an act of euthanasia or assisted suicide may be motivated by a sense of compassion, true compassion motivates us to remain with those who are

dying, understanding and supporting them through their time of need, rather than simply acceding to a request to be killed. It is right to seek to eliminate pain, but never right to eliminate people. Euthanasia and assisted suicide represent the abandonment of those who are in greatest need of our care and support.

## Mistakes and abuse are impossible to avoid

No 'safeguards' will ever guarantee that deaths under the proposed laws will be completely voluntary. There will always be a risk of error, fraud or coercion. Victoria abolished the death penalty because we recognised that in spite of our best efforts, our justice system could never guarantee that an innocent person would not be killed

by mistake or by false evidence. The same is true of health care. Mistakes happen and the vulnerable are exploited. We ask you to consider especially the risks to those whose ability to speak up for themselves is limited by fear, disability, illness or old age.

## Government endorsed suicide

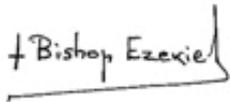
Endorsing suicide as a solution to pain and suffering sends a confusing message to our society, particularly to the young and the vulnerable. Suicide is a tragedy that impacts not just the person whose life is lost, but also their family and community. It would be counter-productive to legally endorse any form of suicide when our governments and community groups are working so hard to persuade others that it is not a solution to take their own life.

## Undermining trust in our doctors

Once the fundamental principle to do no harm and never to kill is removed from medical practice, the integrity of our health system is compromised. It will affect the confidence that seriously ill patients nearing the end of life can have in the treatment and the quality of care that they might otherwise have expected. When euthanasia or assisted suicide is an ever present – even if unspoken – option, how long will it be before the option becomes an expectation?

We ask you and your government to think again and reject this legislation.

Yours sincerely



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Bishop Suriel  
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