

# Media Release

**The Hon Mary-Anne Thomas MP**

Leader of the House

Minister for Health

Minister for Ambulance Services



Thursday, 20 February 2025

## **VOLUNTARY ASSISTED DYING LAWS STILL THE COMPASSIONATE CHOICE**

The Allan Labor Government has accepted all recommendations from the independent review into Australia's first voluntary assisted dying (VAD) laws and will make further reforms to make them fairer.

Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas today tabled the review into the *Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2017*, which has given Victorians with a life limiting illness, dignified and compassionate choices since 2019.

The review found there was strong community support for VAD, with the service often accessed at the same time as palliative care. It also found that it is operating safely – with no reports of ineligible people gaining access to VAD.

Despite this, the review found areas for improvement including further guidance for health practitioners on how to deal with patients that want to access VAD.

It also found that the Victorian Government needs to continue to advocate to the Commonwealth Government for greater support to ensure VAD remains accessible, viable and sustainable into the future.

In response to this important review, feedback from the community and the recommendations made by the Voluntary Assisted Dying Review Board, the Labor Government will rewrite legislation to improve access to VAD, bringing it in line with other jurisdictions.

Subject to consultation– the Government will legislate to allow health practitioners to initiate discussions about VAD – acknowledging sentiments from stakeholders that it stops doctors from having important conversations with patients about end-of-life care and limits informed decision-making.

Changes may also require health practitioners who conscientiously object to VAD to provide minimum information to patients – with the review stating that such obstruction was inconsistent with person-centered care.

For Victorians with neurodegenerative conditions, many of whom are house or bed-bound at the time of application, proposed changes include removing the requirement for a third assessment – making the process easier and less complicated, as well as reducing demand on doctors who make these assessments.

Since 2019, 1,282 Victorians have accessed VAD services as a safe and dignified end of life choice.

The Labor Government will now begin work on this reform, starting with stakeholder consultation on how to improve the experience for those choosing to access VAD.

The full review is publicly available at [health.vic.gov.au/voluntary-assisted-dying/five-year-review](https://health.vic.gov.au/voluntary-assisted-dying/five-year-review).

### **Quotes attributable to Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas**

*“While our Australian-first voluntary assisted dying laws are giving Victorians the dignity of making their own decisions about the timing and manner of their death – we know we need to update them to ensure they remain fair.”*

*“Reforming our VAD laws to bring them in line with other states is critical to maintaining a service that is accessible to all Victorians, no matter where they live.”*

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