

LIFE ISSUES around Australia

FEDERAL

I have been advocating in Canberra against federal funding being used for abortions. I have also raised the issue of foreign aid funding being used to fund Planned Parenthood and related entities to set up abortion clinics across the world. I have been engaged in discussions on a federal level regarding how the states and territories can work with a National Pro-life voice on issues such as assisted suicide, euthanasia, abortion and surrogacy. An update on this work will be available in our next edition of All Life Matters.



NEW SOUTH WALES



The introduction of euthanasia legislation is pending in NSW. We are making a concerted effort to ensure that such legislation is never introduced. Signing our petition (enclosed) is one way of ensuring that the working group led by Hon Trevor Khan is discouraged from proceeding. A petition with just 500 signatures obligates the Minister responsible (usually the Attorney General when laws redefining murder are introduced) to submit a written response to parliament within 35 days of the petition being tabled. Having a negative response to the introduction of this legislation from the government would go a long way in shutting down the debate before it even begins. Submitting a petition with 10,000 signatures triggers a 30 minute debate from the floor of parliament where pro-life members of parliament can highlight resistance within the community.

Late last year the Voluntary Euthanasia Party in NSW rebranded as the Reason Party NSW. The Reason Party (formerly the Sex Party) is led by Fiona Patten in Victoria. Ms Patten was instrumental in pushing for euthanasia legislation in her state. The Reason Party NSW has vowed to campaign for euthanasia in the next state election should legislation not pass this term.

Regulations to 'complement' the abortion legislation have been published by the NSW Health Department, and data collection on abortion is well underway. We are yet to see the full effects of this legislation- especially on our pro-life pregnancy support services.

VICTORIA

The Voluntary Assisted Dying Review Board released its report into the first six months of operation on 19 February 2020.

This is what we learnt:

- 43 confirmed dead by means of self-administered medication (assisted suicide)
- 9 confirmed dead by means of doctor-administered lethal injection (euthanasia)
- 52 deaths in total - 75% more than first anticipated

Health Minister Jenny Mikakos, ¹ on behalf of the Victorian State Government, has expressed concerns about the difficulty of accessing the regime in regional areas. She is now advocating at a federal level to change their legislation to ensure that euthanasia can be available via telehealth.

And just a reminder: Victoria brought in Abortion-to-birth in 2008. In 2017 (the latest stats we have available): 323 babies were aborted post-20 weeks: 140 for psychosocial reasons (meaning the baby was perfectly healthy) and 183 for congenital abnormality (which means anything from a baby with a terminal condition to one with Down Syndrome) - 28 of whom were born alive. ²

We mourn loss
of the 52 people
who have died
under the
Assisted Suicide
& Euthanasia
Regime
in Victoria
in 2019.



This is Not OK

¹ www.theaustralian.com.au/nation/victorian-euthanasia-figures-released-for-first-time/news-story/7b2ae73ae595f7b3b719e8af77b83255

² These stats can be found in a summary from Real Choices Australia: realchoices.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Late-Term-Abortion-by-Year-CA-vs-PS.pdf

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

I had the privilege of MC'ing the recent Walk for Life in Adelaide which saw over 3,000 people rally against extending abortion legislation to birth. For comprehensive details on this legislation, see: <https://saabortionactionforwomen.com/>

In late February, the SA state parliament was once again debating 'safe access zone' legislation.

The introduction of assisted suicide and euthanasia in SA is rumoured to be part of the new government's agenda however abortion is a higher priority for them.

We stand with our pro-life friends in SA as they face the battle for life on all sides this year.

NORTHERN TERRITORY

NT decriminalised abortion with gestational limits and introduced 'safe access zones' in 2017. The NT Government funds abortion clinics to provide free services to residents. A review of legislation within 2 years of it coming into effect was promised- we must ensure that this territory is not pressured into extending the legislation to birth.

ACT

In 2019 the ACT government renewed calls for the restoration of the territories' rights to legislate on euthanasia. October 2020 is election time in the ACT - it is important to support pro-life MPs and candidates in this election. Closer to the election we will survey members and candidates to assist ACT pro-life residents to deliberately Vote for Life.

QUEENSLAND

The Parliamentary Committee looking into end of life issues reports in late March. This is just six months before the state election, leaving no time to form an 'expert panel' to consult on a government bill. A private member's bill is still possible but the closer we get to an election, the less likely this will be. The state election in October provides pro-lifers in Queensland with a unique opportunity to remember how their MPs voted on Life Issues and vote accordingly.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

The WA bill on assisted suicide and euthanasia which passed late last year is 'worse' than the Victorian regime. It allows for doctors and nurse practitioners to initiate conversations on access to assisted suicide and euthanasia for example. This law will come into effect next year. Currently the WA government is busy setting up the processes and employing the staff needed to administer the assisted suicide and euthanasia regimes. The WA government is now drafting a 'safe access zone' bill to block pro-life activity near abortion clinics. We anticipate that this will be debated later this year.



3,000 people rally against extending abortion legislation to birth in Adelaide.

TASMANIA

Euthanasia bills have been defeated three times in Tasmania's state parliament. This year another attempt will be made. Independent member Mike Gaffney is currently holding forums to promote his private member's bill on assisted suicide and euthanasia. Mr Gaffney has stated his intention to introduce his bill into the upper house in August.

CONCLUSION

As I was preparing the review of Life Issues around Australia for this newsletter a quote from Winston Churchill, speaking to the House of Commons during World War II came to mind:

"We shall go on to the end, we shall fight in France, we shall fight on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our island, whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight on the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender". - House of Commons, 4 June 1940

Does anyone else feel they can relate to this? We, in the pro-life community, are engaged in a battle where we need the same kind of commitment Churchill expressed: We need to fight, defend and never surrender!

The cost is sometimes great- it is economically costly, physically exhausting, spiritually challenging, emotionally taxing - but together we can make a difference for Life in Australia.

Thanks for standing with us,

Dr Rachel