

Letters to the Sydney Morning Herald Editor sent 28 August 2017 in response to the SMH article published on 28 August 2017: '70 per cent of Coalition voters support assisted dying: poll'

Letter from Vice President, Dying With Dignity NSW

The Editor SMH,

Assisted dying laws are safe and compassionate

If some members of the upper house have concerns about the safeguards within the proposed voluntary assisted dying legislation (70 per cent of Coalition voters support assisted dying: poll, 28/8) they need only look at the evidence from the six US states, where it is legal to be reassured.

There has not been a single case of abuse in Oregon where the Death With Dignity Act has operated for twenty years and Californian physicians have reported an unforeseen benefit to their new law, saying it has improved medical care for sick patients, even those who don't take advantage of it.

With 81 per cent of those over the age of 55 believing a terminally ill, competent adult, with less than 12 months to live who is experiencing unbearable suffering should have the right to request a more compassionate end-of-life option, isn't it time our elected representatives showed them the respect they deserve?

Shayne Higson
Vice President, Dying With Dignity NSW
Paddington NSW

Letter from member of Doctors for Assisted Dying Choice

The Editor SMH,

Opponents of the Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill cite the impossibility of preventing "abuses" as a reason for voting against this measure, which is clearly supported by a majority in the community. But the non-specific use of words like "abuses" does not help us to develop a system which will help those patients who wish to take advantage of it, and relieve their suffering in this humane way. The potential dangers in such legislation have been thoroughly explored in several overseas countries, and the 20 years of experience in Oregon shows that the concerns are without foundation.

The provisions of the NSW Bill are stringent enough to protect us, and our discussions should focus on the effective implementation of those provisions.

Professor Rufus Clarke
Doctors for Assisted Dying Choice
Kirribilli NSW

Letter from National Coordinator Christians Supporting Choice for Voluntary Euthanasia

The Editor SMH,

So Karin Sowada, spokeswoman for the Anglican Sydney Diocese, says: "There is no safe 'assisted dying' regime that can protect the vulnerable. The Anglican Church will continue its long-standing role in this debate, joining like-minded community groups to oppose [it]."

Yet at least 70% of Anglicans support voluntary assisted dying. The hierarchy of the Anglican Sydney Diocese need to check the facts from Oregon, USA, where 20 years of experience clearly shows the alleged 'vulnerable' are well protected. The assistance is used by very few but provides great comfort to many who are terminally ill.

Ian Wood
National Coordinator
Christians Supporting Choice for Voluntary Euthanasia
Mittagong NSW