



We proclaim a crucified Christ

1 Cor 1.23

Statement from Most Rev Peter A Comensoli Bishops' Delegate for Matters of Life

Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill defeated in NSW Parliament

Last night the Legislative Council of the NSW Parliament defeated the Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill by a vote of 20-19.

This is a decision for the good of our common humanity.

In a matter of conscience, all sides of the political divide considered the questions that legalising euthanasia and assisted suicide poses, and decided that this is not a path that the State of NSW should venture down.

While all of us are rightfully moved by personal stories of pain and suffering too often experienced by our beloved at the end of their lives, none of us should think that a deliberate act of killing them is a genuinely human thing to do. The trauma of pain and suffering that might emerge in people as they are dying, cannot be overcome by eliminating them. May our better impulse always be towards compassionate care and sacrificial accompaniment of those who are dying.

I am extremely grateful for all the effort given to defeat this Bill. Our medical and nursing fraternity has been a particularly important voice in these efforts, by properly informing our Parliamentarians of the inherent risks legalising assisted suicide poses. I am also grateful to the many thousands of people who spoke up for human dignity by signing petitions, contacting their parliamentarians, and spreading the word to our communities.

The Bill has been defeated in NSW, but the issue has not gone away. Euthanasia and assisted suicide are national issues being played out State-by-State. As debate on assisted suicide continues in the Victorian Parliament, I hope that they will be attentive to the decision of their NSW counterparts.

I also hope that those who sponsored the Bill in NSW will acknowledge that legalising euthanasia and assisted suicide is not the path desired by their fellow parliamentarians. Now is the time for our legislators to concentrate their efforts on the real agendas leading to suffering in our society in a more appropriate and compassionate way.

There is a deep awareness within the Christian tradition – out of which came hospitals, hospices and palliative facilities – of the need to accompany with professional and pastoral care those who are suffering. Might we all do what we can to recover this precious gift of accompaniment, which we can each give to those who are dying: to sit beside them, to hold their hands, to soothe their minds and bodies; to pray for them; and to offer them the assurance of our abiding and healing love.

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