



## MEDIA RELEASE

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# **HOSPITALS AND AGED CARE HOMES REACT TO VOLUNTARY ASSISTED DYING COMMITTEE – DON'T FORCE US TO ACT AGAINST OUR VALUES**

Private faith-based hospitals and aged care homes are calling on the Queensland Parliament to see sense and put in place protections to enable them to act according to their values and opt out of a voluntary assisted dying regime.

Today a Parliamentary Committee recommended a bill to legalise assisted dying in Queensland pass unchanged.

It would make Queensland the only state that uses the law to actively force hospitals and aged care homes to go against their values and beliefs and allow assisted dying on their premises.

In its current form the bill empowers doctors to go into hospitals or aged care homes and administer a lethal dose without having to inform or consult the facility.

Catholic and faith-based hospitals and aged care homes oppose assisted dying in its all its forms but they recognise the inevitability of the bill passing next month. Catholic facilities provide one in five hospital and aged care beds in Queensland.

Francis Sullivan, Chair of the Mater Group, said: "While the Committee's report is of no surprise we are still optimistic that our current discussions with the Government will ensure the integrity of our hospital service in both public and private sectors.

"We will not tolerate non credentialed doctors coming on site, nor will we assist in the provision of voluntary assisted dying in any of our facilities. There is a practical solution and it will work for all sides of this debate."

Toby Hall, Group Chief Executive of St Vincent's Health Australia – which runs private hospitals at Kangaroo Point and Chermside in Brisbane – said: "Allowing unaccredited doctors to enter hospital rooms, with no notice or permission needed, to assist in a medical procedure to help a patient die is a radical and dangerous undermining of patient safety and should be rejected.

"It's partly why the Queensland AMA is so strongly against the lack of protection for faith-based hospital providers. They know we are the 'honest brokers' in Queensland's health system.

"It's also about fairness. The Queensland Government is forcing Catholic hospital providers – against our values and beliefs – to open up our facilities to assisted dying. That's deeply unsettling and shocking to us."



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Mr Hall also spoke about the experience of St Vincent's in Victoria where assisted dying has been in operation for almost two years and where the organisation, the largest not-for-profit provider of health and aged care in Australia, runs a public hospital.

"This is unique to Queensland. No other state that has already passed these laws – Victoria, Tasmania, South Australia or Western Australia – has included such a measure.

"This is not about whether you do or don't support assisted dying. We are resigned to this Bill passing. This is about fairness. And I think most Queenslanders would feel what is being forced on us is deeply unfair and unbalanced. It must be fixed.

"The Queensland Government has included this measure to address a problem that won't exist in Queensland when its system is in place.

"St Vincent's runs several large hospitals including a public hospital in Melbourne and we've found a constructive and respectful way forward on this issue. We've not received a single complaint or encountered any controversy in Victoria."

Catholic Health Australia Director of Strategy and Mission Rebecca Burdick Davies said: "We are bitterly disappointed by this outcome, and we call upon all MPs to see common sense and change what is a radical and unfair bill.

"This bill forces those who conscientiously object to assisted dying to enable it. How is that a choice? How is that voluntary? No one should be forced to be an accessory to this scheme.

"Our nurses, residents and patients have chosen to work in hospitals and aged care homes that have a unique ethic of care. Their choices should be honoured."

### **Media contacts:**

**Catholic Health Australia** - Julian Lee 0422 343 086.

**St Vincent's Health Australia** - Paul Andrews 0409 665 495