



Go Gentle Australia Newsletter

Winter 2019

It has been a remarkable three months in the campaign for voluntary assisted dying (VAD) law reform. There have been significant advances in Australia and overseas, most notably the implementation of the VAD law in Victoria.

As we celebrate these milestones, we should also guard against complacency – we know there are powerful opponents working to ensure successes like Victoria's are short lived.

It is not overstating it to say the next few months will define the future of voluntary assisted dying in this country. The Western Australian parliament is preparing to vote on a VAD law – we are expecting the Bill to be tabled next month.

Getting an assisted dying law over the line in WA is crucial: not only will it create momentum for similar laws to pass in ALL Australian states, it will be fundamental to ensuring we can defend the law in Victoria.

Success in WA is not guaranteed. We're concerned that MPs are not listening to the clear evidence supporting the need for these laws, heard by the 18-month parliamentary inquiry. The vote in parliament is going to be very close and it's possible the legislation will be defeated.

Over the coming weeks we will be asking our Western Australian friends – and other like-minded people around the country – to come together as a community

to do everything they can to ensure the Bill passes. You can read more about some of the ways to do this below.

Finally, thank you to everyone who supported our recent end-of-financial-year fundraising efforts. Every contribution, no matter how small, helps us continue the fight for more compassionate end-of-life choices in this country.

Please do not hesitate to reach out via email if you have any questions.

Kind regards

Kiki Paul

CEO



Victoria makes history

Victoria carried the nation's hopes for more compassionate end-of-life options when it became the first Australian state to implement a voluntary assisted dying law.

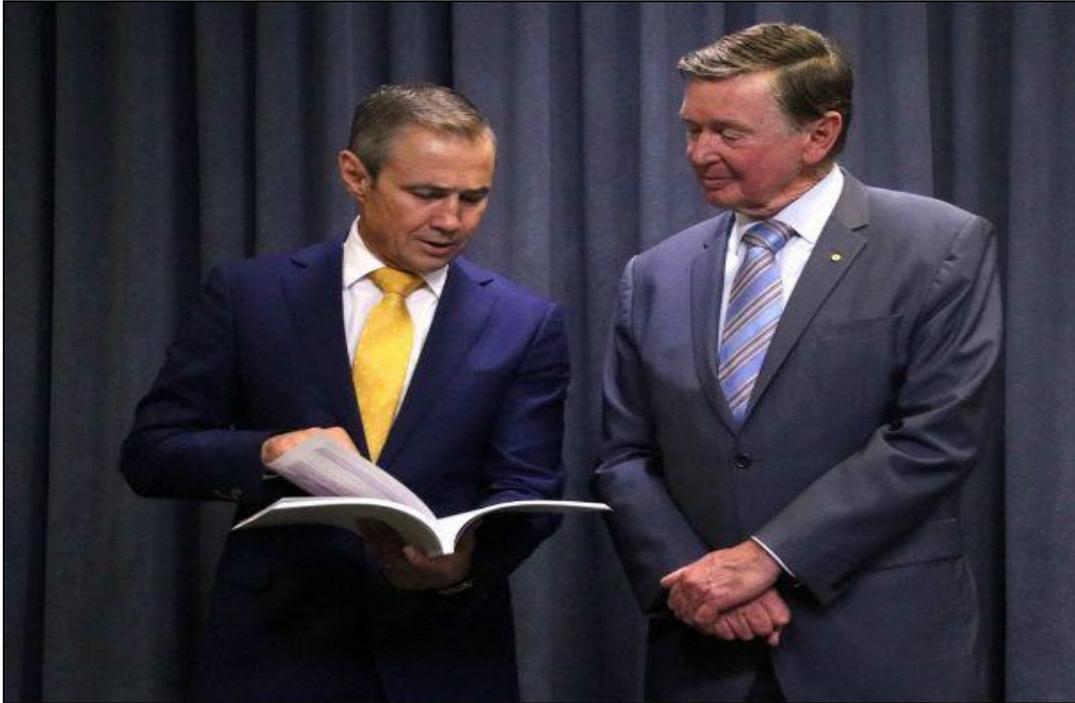
The legislation, which came into effect on 19 June, gives terminally ill Victorians who are suffering intolerably in the end phase of their illness a choice to end their suffering at a time and place of their choosing.

The government dedicated 18 months to create the resources, frameworks and processes to ensure a smooth implementation of the law, which was passed in November 2017.

Go Gentle marked the occasion by congratulating the people of Victoria for achieving what no other Australian state has been willing to do – implement a safe and workable voluntary assisted dying law.

“The Victorian Voluntary Assisted Dying Act has set the benchmark for how public policy should be designed and implemented in this country,” said Go Gentle’s director Andrew Denton. “The question now is not if but when other States will follow Victoria’s compassionate lead.”

[read more](#)



Focus on Western Australia

The campaign in WA has picked up pace, following the delivery of the Ministerial Expert Panel's Final Report on Voluntary Assisted Dying.

Led by former Governor Malcolm McCusker QC (pictured above with Health Minister Roger Cook), the 13-member panel made 31 recommendations on how the proposed bill should be framed.

Access to assisted dying would be limited to Western Australian adults who have decision-making capacity, with a terminal illness, and where death is reasonably foreseeable within 12 months.

As in Victoria, people with Alzheimer's disease and dementia would not be eligible.

The Bill's final makeup will be revealed in August when it is tabled in Parliament. Go Gentle is confident the government will craft a safe and workable VAD law that is written by Western Australians for Western Australians.

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WA nurses back VAD reform

In another significant development, the union representing WA's nurses released the results of a survey of its 32,000 members. Nearly 80% of respondents said terminally ill patients who are suffering intolerably should have the legal right to ask for medical help to end their life.

The announcement followed similar support from the nation's GPs.

Go Gentle's Andrew Denton described the nurses' backing as a potential game-changer in WA.

"It's no coincidence that nurses are the most trusted profession in Australia.

They've won this trust because of their care for their patients," he said.

“It would be a brave person who chooses to ignore their experiences of caring for people at the end of life.”

[read more](#)



Belinda's Brave Walk reaches WA

Many of you have been following Belinda Teh's journey across the country in support of VAD law reform in WA.

Since beginning her 'assisted walk' from Melbourne to Perth on 28 May, Belinda has covered more than 3,000 kms and spoken to thousands of people about the urgent need for change

She has been a constant presence on local and national radio, TV and print and her message – that if you have seen a loved one suffer, you are not alone – has reached millions of people.

You can follow Belinda on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) or by going to [BelindasBraveWalk.org.au](#)

Belinda is now in Western Australia and her call to action there is simple: [contact your local MP](#) and tell them you want them to vote YES to the WA VAD Bill.

Belinda is also collecting signatures on [a petition](#) to present to the WA Legislative Council and calling for people to register for [a public vigil](#) on the steps of Parliament House in Perth on 3 September.

[learn more](#)

National wrap

Elsewhere around the country, the Parliamentary Inquiry into Voluntary Assisted Dying in **Queensland** wrapped up public submissions in April. The cross-party committee received more than 5,000 submissions and is now conducting [public hearings around the State](#).

In **South Australia**, the parliament has established a Joint Committee to inquire into and report on the appropriateness of enacting a Bill similar to Victoria's Voluntary Assisted Dying Act. Public submissions are being sought before 2 August.

In **NSW**, Nationals MP Trevor Khan has indicated he intends to introduce a private member's Bill to legalise VAD by the end of the year.

In **Tasmania**, assisted dying supporters are adopting a similar strategy with a private member's bill planned also by year's end.

In the **ACT**, the issue of assisted dying gained national prominence when authorities decided it was not in the public interest to prosecute a Canberra man who helped his partner die. Neil O'Riordan's partner of 35 years, Penelope Blume, was suffering from the advanced stages of motor neurone disease when he helped her to die in March.

Mr O'Riordan told the ABC he was "relieved" and "grateful" that the charges had been dropped. He said assisted dying laws were "inevitable" and he "strongly" urged legislators to listen to the community.

"I think that voluntary assisted dying is a topic that's here to stay," he said.

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Overseas – campaigns for assisted dying law reform are gaining momentum in England and Scotland, and also in NZ where a VAD Bill has reached the second of three readings in parliament. In the US, two more states (New Jersey and Maine) have passed Oregon-style assisted dying laws, bringing to more than 200 million the number of people world-wide who now have access to voluntary euthanasia or voluntary assisted dying laws.

SAVE THE DATE

2 August	– Deadline for submissions to the SA Parliamentary Inquiry
6 August	– Belinda's Brave Walk arrives at Parliament House in Perth
3 September	– Public Vigil in Perth

says report



Widow's plea to ease

PETER DE KRUIJFF

Russell Quinlivan died in a hospice a day after the 2015 AFL grand final and only a month after he was diagnosed with a shocking form of cancer that gave him severe bone and nerve pain throughout his body.

Busselton teacher Peta Quinlivan, pictured with her husband, said while the palliative care for her husband of 30 years was outstanding, it was ineffective and did not ease the suffering that came from a cancer of his lungs that had spread to his bones.

She said there was a moral obligation on WA politicians to pass voluntary assisted dying laws so others had the choice of how they died, unlike her husband.

"We need voluntary assisted dying laws in this State," Mrs Quinlivan said.

"My husband would have chosen this if he had the option. His legacy

will hopefully live

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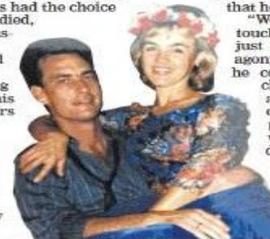
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Go Gentle Profile: Peta Quinlivan

Busselton woman Peta Quinlivan became the face of the voluntary assisted dying campaign in WA when she stood alongside the chair of the WA Ministerial Expert Panel, Malcom McCusker, to deliver the panel's final report to the WA government.

Peta called on WA politicians to heed the community's wishes and pass the VAD Bill when it reaches parliament.

She said she is still haunted by the last two weeks of her husband Russell's life.

"Three years on and I still can't sleep properly," she said.

Suffering from a rare form of neuroendocrine lung cancer, Russell was

"monstered by pain – physically, mentally and emotionally".

"The people of Western Australia should have access to medical assistance to die when the suffering becomes too much," Peta said.

"Anything less, is barbaric and immoral."

[read more](#)



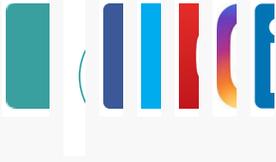
Vale Dorothy Reading

As the founder of Readings Books and through her service to community health, particularly to people with cancer, Dorothy Reading spoke truth to power.

Dorothy passed away suddenly in June.

Her gentle manner belied her fierceness as a political and social warrior. She will be missed.

[read more](#)



Go Gentle Australia is a registered charity. All donations over \$2 are tax deductible.