



## Have Your Say – End of Life Choice (EOLC) Bill 2019

### A Simple Guide to Advocacy for this Bill

#### Background

- MP David Seymour (ACT Party) put forward the EOLC Bill to Parliament in 2018.
- The Bill seeks to allow people to request assisted dying if they have a terminal illness or a grievous and irremediable medical condition. The bill defines assisted dying as “the administration by a medical practitioner of a lethal dose of medication to a person to relieve his or her suffering by hastening death”.
- A person would be eligible for assisted dying if they:
  - were aged 18 years or over
  - were a New Zealand citizen or permanent resident
  - suffered from:
    - a terminal illness that was likely to end their life within 6 months or
    - a grievous and irremediable medical condition
  - were in an advanced state of irreversible decline in capability
  - experienced unbearable suffering that could not be relieved in a manner they considered tolerable;
  - are able to understand the nature and consequences of assisted dying.

#### Current Situation

- The Justice Select Committee could not agree that the Bill be passed into its Second Reading in Parliament. But they still referred it back to Parliament and it will have its Second Reading.
- The Justice Select Committee published a report about their views and the public submissions to the Bill. Some of the key findings include:
  - About 36,700 of the written submissions contained a discernible view. Of these, about 90 percent opposed the bill and about 8.5 percent supported it.
  - Main views **opposing**:
    - Bill will impact negatively on vulnerable people, particularly the elderly, those with mental health issues, those with depression and disabled people;
    - Overseas experience and data not encouraging;
    - Bill undermines focus on mental health issues and anti-suicide efforts;
    - Puts unnecessary pressure on doctors and medical professionals;
    - The Bill breaches a long-standing societal and ethical understanding that doctors should not intentionally end a patient’s life;
    - Belief in the sanctity and dignity of life.
  - Main views **supporting**:
    - People should have the freedom to choose for themselves;
    - Some health conditions cannot be handled with palliative care
    - The system this Bill proposes is strong enough to protect vulnerable people.
- At the Second Reading, it will likely be a **conscience vote** where MPs vote according to their own conscience and not what their Party wants to vote for.

## Tips for Advocacy to Oppose the Bill:

1. Understand what your own views are on this issue. The clear position of The Salvation Army is to oppose any form of assisted dying, euthanasia or assisted suicide - [www.salvationarmy.org.nz/research-policy/moral-and-social-issues-council-masic/euthanasia-assisted-suicide](http://www.salvationarmy.org.nz/research-policy/moral-and-social-issues-council-masic/euthanasia-assisted-suicide). Do you agree and support these views?
  2. Check out the awesome resources on these websites to learn more about how to oppose the Bill:
    - <https://notoassistedsuicide.nz/>
    - <https://rejectassistedsuicide.org.nz/>
    - <https://carealliance.org.nz/>
  3. Contact your local MP. Because the Second Reading will likely be a conscience vote, your family, friends or even local church can consider contacting their local MP and encouraging to vote in opposition to the Bill. This can be done by;
    - Calling the Local Electorate Office for your MP;
    - Write to your MP via email or letter. A simple outline for your letter/email could be – *To XXXX (MP's name), I am writing to express my views about the End of Life Choice Bill coming before Parliament again soon. I strongly encourage you to vote in **opposition** to this Bill because XXXX (list down your reasons – they could be based on the points on Page 1 of this paper, or the websites listed above, or your own personal reasons). I believe one of the best ways to enhance and protect wellbeing in our nation is to oppose and reject this Bill so that it does not become law. Thank you for your time.*
      - It's important that you write to your local MP so that they are hearing from residents in their electorate.
      - Be as brief or as long as you want. Share personal stories (within reason) if you want. But be clear to encourage or challenge them to vote against this Bill.
  4. Share this information with family and friends. Talk to others and see if they would want to lobby to oppose this Bill with their local MP.
  5. Sign a petition against this Bill and encourage others to sign too - <https://euthanasiadebate.org.nz/>
  6. Pray for our Parliamentary leaders as they make crucial decisions for this Bill. And pray that God's will continue to be done in our nation.
-