

Voluntary Assisted Dying 34th Synod 2019 Resolution

GENERAL PROPOSALS

19.70

It was RESOLVED by Formal Majority that the Synod:

(a) receives the Final Report: Voluntary Assisted Dying Queensland Synod 2019.

(b) affirms the following position:

The Uniting Church in Australia – Queensland Synod seeks to witness to the God given dignity and worth of every human life. We are committed to ‘All that Jesus began to do and teach’ (Acts 1.1) by working towards a society characterised by love, compassion, justice, inclusion and reconciliation so that all people, at every stage of life, can experience ‘life in all its fullness’ (John 10:10). We seek to witness to God’s good gift of creation and the intrinsic worth and dignity of all people in every circumstance that is grounded in a reality that is untouched by the circumstances of our lives or death. In our compassionate care we seek to remain with people, in both lament and hope, bearing witness to God being with us in every circumstance of life.

In recognition of this, we do not support the legalisation of voluntary assisted dying in Queensland. If legalised, our facilities will not provide this as a service and our staff, in the course of their employment, will not participate in medical acts to end a life through voluntary assisted dying.

We recognise that in some situations, the experiences of end-of-life can cause significant distress for the person dying, their families and care staff. While we do not support voluntary assisted dying, if it is legalised, the Church is committed to offering a compassionate and pastoral response to people and families who choose this path.

We also recognise that there will be people, who in good conscience and in light of their faith in God, make a decision to undertake voluntary assisted dying.

A compassionate and pastoral response in the Synod agencies includes working with people and families who choose and access voluntary assisted dying to offer emotional, psychological and social support, spiritual and pastoral care, and minimising physical suffering. This response does not include medically participating in acts intended to end life through a voluntary assisted dying process.

(c) That in the case of the legalisation of voluntary assisted dying in Queensland, to request Wesley Mission Queensland and UnitingCare to develop a policy and practice approach in light of the Synod’s position and any legislative requirements.

(d) Affirms the critical importance of high quality, well-resourced and accessible palliative and end-of-life care that responds to the physical, psycho-social and spiritual needs of people at the end-of-life. The Church undertakes the following actions:

1. advocate for a well resourced and flexible system that consistently meets people’s needs and preferences for care;
2. continue to provide high quality and accessible palliative care, responsive to the pastoral and spiritual needs of the people we serve, as central to our mission as the Church.

(e) That in advocating to government regarding the Church’s position, the Church strongly recommends provisions for conscientious objection, for both individuals and organisations, be included in any proposed legislation.

(f) Encourage congregations to engage in conversations around end-of-life and to encourage members to consider completing Advance Health Directive.

(g) Thank the Consultation Group for their work.

The following persons requested that their dissent be recorded:

- Rev Heather Allison
- Mrs Kate Barton
- Mr Bruce Binnie
- Rev Lyn Burden
- Rev Jennifer Coombes
- Mr Peter Coombes
- Rev Moira Dodsworth
- Ms Trish Mann
- Rev Neil Storey.