



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

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**SELECT COMMITTEE ON VOLUNTARY ASSISTED DYING BILL**  
Ms Suzanne Orr MLA (Chair), Ms Leanne Castley (Deputy Chair),  
Mr Ed Cocks MLA, Dr Marisa Paterson MLA

## Submission Cover Sheet

### Inquiry into the Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill 2023

**Submission Number: 008**

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**From:** [LACommitteeVAD@parliament.act.gov.au](mailto:LACommitteeVAD@parliament.act.gov.au)  
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What is

your submission about? Processes for individuals seeking access to VAD, Eligibility criteria to access VAD, Health service provider obligations

Your

submission:

SUBMISSION TO ACT VAD DRAFT BILL, November 2023 by Christians Supporting Choice for Voluntary Assisted Dying Ian Wood, National Spokesperson and Co-Founder I commend the work done to produce this excellent and progressive ACT VAD Draft Bill. It is obvious that the Draft Bill is based on evidence now available from the other Australian states where the choice of VAD is available. It appears to contain all the necessary safeguards, and in that area it is similar to the VAD laws in the other states, however: 1. It does also contain one very significant and positive difference that would allow patients better access to this end of life choice by not having the requirement for a specific timeframe of prognosis until death. As I wrote in my initial submission to the inquiry preceding this bill - "It is surely inhumane for a health practitioner to have to say to a patient who already has suffering they find intolerable - "I am sorry you need to suffer badly for 'x' more months before I can determine you fit the time frame as decided by the politicians!" I note that research by highly regarded Prof. Ben White and Lindy Willmott from Queensland University of Technology, has found that because eligibility criteria work together, removing the timeframe to death is unlikely to affect which conditions will allow people to access voluntary assisted dying. Dr Linda Swan, Go Gentle Australia's CEO, has recently stated, "The Bill recognises that ideology should never be allowed to trump a dying person's needs." and "There was strong agreement from healthcare professionals at the inaugural Voluntary Assisted Dying Conference in Sydney that arbitrary timeframes are not a safeguard but a barrier to access for otherwise eligible people."([https://www.gogentleaustralia.org.au/act\\_govt\\_tables\\_assisted\\_dying\\_bill](https://www.gogentleaustralia.org.au/act_govt_tables_assisted_dying_bill)) 2. In addition to that, I commend the inclusion of Nurse Practitioners being involved in assessing eligibility under the conditions outlined in the bill. 3. I also commend the clear protections for patients in institutions that object to voluntary assisted dying. Andrew Denton, founding director of Go Gentle, urged Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) to set aside personal ideology in the upcoming debate and rely on the evidence from across Australia, where VAD laws have been operating for more than four years. "This evidence shows that VAD is operating safely and as intended, and that it has made a significant difference to the final months, weeks and days of those who have chosen it. This should give MLAs the reassurance they need to give dying people in the ACT the same choice at the end of life as other Australians," Mr Denton said. My hope is that the MP's of the ACT parliament will have the courage, compassion and empathy for people approaching

death in the circumstances outlined in the bill, to pass the draft bill without modification. This act, when passed in the ACT, will give that very Christian Choice outlined by Archbishop Tutu. One of the world's most highly regarded religious leaders, the Late Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu of South Africa stated in a video message: "People who are terminally ill should have the option of dignified and compassionate assisted dying, alongside the wonderful palliative care that already exists. I pray that politicians, lawmakers and religious leaders have the courage to support the choices terminally ill citizens make in departing Mother Earth with dignity and love."

(<https://christiansforvad.org.au/archbishop-desmond-tutu-gives-his-blessing-to-the-voluntary-assisted-dying-campaign-in-australia/#more-371>) I make this submission personally as spokesperson for the Australian group Christians Supporting Choice for Dying and believe that my views expressed here would be endorsed by the members of our group.

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