

## **AFPA's Position on the Voluntary Assisted Dying (VAD) Bill**

- AFPA supports the Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill 2023.
  - The Bill is considered well-drafted and balanced and includes appropriate safeguards.
  - It provides a compassionate option for terminally ill individuals to manage their end-of-life process with dignity.

### **Impact on Police Officers**

- Police regularly attend suicide scenes, which take a significant physical and psychological toll.
  - Officers must investigate each case on behalf of the ACT Coroner.
  - This involves handling the deceased, managing the scene, and supporting distressed family and community members.
- Exposure to trauma at these scenes has ongoing effects on officers' mental health and well-being.

### **Impact on Family**

- The last thing a family needs is police officers trampling through their house immediately after a loved one has passed away, nor do they want police vehicles parked outside their house.
- The time immediately after death is often a grieving time for families and friends of the deceased, and it's often a difficult time for attending police officers as they have a job to do while consoling the grieving attendees.
- With VAD, we can eliminate the long attendance of police at the scene.
- In cases of VAD, police may attend the scene. Still, their involvement primarily supports the coronial process and ensures the safety of the deceased and others, rather than investigating a potential crime.

### **Benefits of VAD Legislation**

- In cases of VAD, there is no criminal investigation, as the death is a result of a legal and voluntary choice. Police may attend, and perhaps all they need to do is confirm the identity of the deceased person and assist in securing the VAD medication, and that's about it.
- There isn't a need to interview people or witnesses, photograph the scene, arrange identification processes, etc, which can be traumatic for family members and often seen in the case of a suicide.
- VAD offers a structured, compassionate alternative to traumatic and often sometimes public suicides.

- VAD will also reduce the number of suicide scenes police are required to attend.
- Minimises the trauma for first responders, families, and the community.
- Some deaths currently recorded as suicide may in fact involve individuals with terminal diagnoses who might have chosen VAD if it were legally available.
- The AFPA views VAD as respecting individual autonomy and reducing harm for all involved.
- VAD is not about encouraging death—it is about offering choice and dignity at the end of life and reducing unnecessary trauma for families and first responders.

### **Closing Remarks**

- The AFPA appreciates the opportunity to participate in this meeting.