



## MEDIA RELEASE

15 September 2021

### CHANGES NEEDED TO ELIGIBILITY OF DOCTORS IN VOLUNTARY ASSISTED DYING BILL

AMA Queensland has called for early career doctors to be exempted from the voluntary assisted dying (VAD) scheme.

Under the *Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill 2021* currently before parliament, doctors still training to become specialists could be requested to make sensitive and critical decisions about patients' lives.

AMA Queensland believes doctors must have completed their specialist training and had at least five years' experience to have the skills and knowledge to take part in the VAD scheme.

"While our doctors in training are outstanding future specialists, we do not want to leave them in a position to make decisions that may be beyond their current level of experience," AMA Queensland Vice President Dr Bav Manoharan, himself a doctor in training, said today.

"The Victorian and Western Australian VAD schemes limit eligibility to doctors who have practised for at least five years after completing a fellowship and who have relevant experience in treating or managing the medical condition of the patient.

"We believe that the same provisions should apply in Queensland.

"We surveyed our members and they were clear – almost 90 per cent said doctors in training should be exempt from the VAD scheme, and 91 per cent said the eligibility requirements should match those of Victoria and Western Australia.

"This is particularly important as the Queensland legislation allows patients with an expected 12 months left to live to request VAD, while the other states require a six months life expectancy.

"Twelve months is a big call when asking a doctor to make a decision. It is vital that all doctors making these decisions have the appropriate experience.

"However, we acknowledge that rural and remote Queensland has very unique needs and rural generalists in those areas are special cases. They are often the sole providers of medical care for entire communities much earlier in their careers than their metropolitan counterparts and guidelines should be included to allow them to participate in the scheme.

"Our survey responders were from all specialties and ages, socially conservative and progressive alike.

"They are people who see patients getting sick and dying, and want only the best for their patients and their colleagues.

"We hope the Queensland parliament will put these protections in place for patients and doctors alike."



## **BACKGROUND**

- On completing a medical degree, a doctor receives provisional registration and enters the workforce as an intern or postgraduate year 1 (PGY1) doctor.
- This training lasts for 12 months and is usually undertaken in a public hospital, although interns can spend part of their training in general practice, community based settings and private hospitals.
- Interns must pass rotations in medical, surgical and emergency medicine and two non-core rotations to receive general registration, at which point they may be able to begin training for a specialty.
- Specialty training and admission as a fellow can take several years.

**MEDIA CONTACT: AMA Queensland – 0419 735 641 and [media@amaq.com.au](mailto:media@amaq.com.au)**