



STUART GRIMLEY MP

Member for Western Victoria
State Leader of Derryn Hinch's Justice Party



MEDIA RELEASE

Wednesday 27 November, 2019

Patients Die Before Dying with Dignity

Derryn Hinch's Justice Party MP Stuart Grimley has asked the Minister for Health Jenny Mikakos how many people had utilised the difficult-to-navigate voluntary euthanasia laws that were enacted in June 2019. The Minister was unable to indicate the exact number of persons accessing the program stating that this would be revealed in an interim report to be tabled in February 2020.

Due to the number of hoops patients must jump through and the delays in satisfying the safeguards (such as seeking specialist approval), it has been confirmed a number of voluntary assisted dying patients have died before they were able to partake in the euthanasia program.

Following a meeting with organisation Dying With Dignity Victoria (DWDV) last month, Mr Grimley asked the Government in Question Time to "indicate how many people have utilised Victoria's voluntary euthanasia program".

Mr Grimley further asked the Minister if the Government is "considering implementing a public awareness campaign so that there is a greater understanding about the program and uptake for those who satisfy its 69 safeguards".

Stuart Grimley MP – whose Party Leader Derryn Hinch has been a long-time advocate for dying with dignity – said the low uptake is mainly attributed to terminally-ill Victorians not knowing about it.

The voluntary euthanasia legislation stipulates it must be reviewed 5 years after it is enacted (June 2024) but the program - which officially began on 19 June 2019 - has many issues that have already been identified.

To satisfy a few of the many safeguards the law requires, those who are terminally ill must see a general practitioner (GP) and a specialist who 'tick off' their approval to commence with voluntary euthanasia.

Under current laws, a 'specialist' appointment *must* be undertaken, yet these specialists are usually based in metropolitan areas, where waiting times can be many months long – and this is after a referral is given. This has reportedly been the main reason behind deaths of those who have requested voluntary assisted dying.

Minister Mikakos responded acknowledging that the satisfaction of both a GP and specialist would "put some challenges" on those who live in regional Victoria but unfortunately stopped short of being open to immediate changes to the current voluntary euthanasia laws.

Derryn Hinch is speaking about voluntary assisted dying on HINCH on Sky News Thursday, 8pm.

Quotes Attributable to Stuart Grimley MP:

"The fact is not enough people are accessing this program which was brought in for the huge number of terminally ill Victorians who wish to die with dignity.

To make the decision to pursue dying with dignity and then not see it through because of the massive hoops you have to jump through is disappointing and needs to be addressed.

Everyone in pain or near the end of their life has the right to die with dignity. Our recently enacted laws in Victoria have not been properly utilised by these vulnerable people.

One of the key attributes of a good law is that people know about it and frankly, I don't think enough terminally ill people know about this law."

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