



A letter to the People of God in the Diocese of Broken Bay

Thursday 11 November 2021
Feast of Saint Martin of Tours

My dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

Debate by the NSW Assembly on the Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill (2021) is about to commence in the chamber. The discussion that will ensue over the coming weeks, and most likely into early 2022, will be both personal and passionate as Members of Parliament speak from both their own perspective and that of their electorates. I have written to the Members of Parliament of the electorates in our Diocese to express my grave concern about development and to urge them to consider carefully its implications.

In respect to this sensitive matter, the social mood has clearly continued to evolve in a way that the language of personal rights has achieved considerable dominance over concern for the common good. All who are engaged in this question are committed to the alleviation of unbearable human suffering. We are united in this common endeavour. It is the question of how such suffering might be mitigated that forms radically different perspectives in the debate.

It has long been the understanding in the Catholic Tradition that extraordinary means are not a moral requirement for the preservation of life. Each person must have the right to determine to withdraw from such treatment if the consequences are not for the benefit of a quality of life. The direct termination of life, however, is a different matter. As a form of palliation, termination, though technically achievable in a sterile and controlled manner, is an unacceptable solution to the problem of suffering. It is not how we may be able to eliminate those who suffer that makes for a genuinely human society but rather how we care for them. “Voluntary Assisted Dying” is a failure of humanity. Where doctors are free to destroy life, rather than to protect it, there eventually society accepts the sanction of the State to determine who lives and who dies.

In the debate that unfolds over the coming weeks, much weight will be given to the testimony of personal experience, the pain of watching loved ones die. Such deeply moving stories, however, must be heard in the context of what makes for a truly compassionate society. The therapeutic termination of life is not an acceptable form of compassion; it is the avoidance of genuine care and the obligation of the State to provide the necessary resources for its exercise.

MOST REVEREND ANTHONY RANDAZZO BISHOP OF BROKEN BAY

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Legislative change in other Australian jurisdictions should not be the basis for the same in the State of New South Wales. It would be commendatory for this State to propose a different strategy to the problem of human suffering – one that is not based on the technical capacity of controlled termination but on the much more humane mystery of human care for the vulnerable. This is particularly the case in regional and rural NSW in which it is known that the lack of access to palliative care and general health services are driving factors in people's desire to seek euthanasia as an option.

The Catholic community stands against this proposed legislation. Its institutions will not participate in an act that they consider abhorrent, nor allow their sites to be used in a way that violates religious conscience and for those acts contrary for which authentic medicine stands.

I encourage our people to ring, write or email their own local Members of Parliament to register their objection to the passing of Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill (2021). Your voice will be critical throughout the parliamentary debate. Let us address the problem of suffering. Let us do so, however, in a way that promotes a culture of life within our society rather than which insinuates a culture of death, sanitised though it may be.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Rev Anthony Randazzo DD, JCL
Bishop of Broken Bay