

Australian and New Zealand Society of Palliative Medicine

Position Statement on New Zealand End of Life Choice Act 2019

As part of the general election to be held 17 October 2020, New Zealand citizens will be able to vote in a referendum on whether they support the End of Life Choice Act 2019. This is a significant piece of legislation and requires careful consideration to ensure there are adequate protections for all vulnerable citizens in our society.

The Australian & New Zealand Society of Palliative Medicine (ANZSPM) is deeply concerned about the legislation as currently drafted, and encourages New Zealanders to seek further information and advice. Helpful websites include:

- [Hospice New Zealand](#)
- [Riskylaw.nz](#)

ANZSPM's formal Position Statement, *The Practice of Euthanasia and Physician Assisted Suicide* (EPAS), emphasises that these practices are not part of palliative medicine and that ANZSPM does not support the legalisation of EPAS.

ANZSPM acknowledges that, as with the diversity of opinion in the general and medical communities across Australia and New Zealand, there are divergent views on EPAS within its membership.

Palliative care is an interprofessional and holistic approach to care that improves the quality of life of patients and their families facing the problems associated with life-threatening illness. It involves the prevention and relief of suffering by means of early identification, impeccable assessment, and treatment of pain and other problems - physical, psychosocial and spiritual.

In accordance with best practice guidelines internationally, the discipline of Palliative Medicine does not include the practices of EPAS.

- ANZSPM will continue to advocate for and, through its members, deliver optimal care for the dying, and this does not include the practices of EPAS.
- Patients have the right to refuse life-sustaining treatments including the provision of medically-assisted nutrition and/or hydration. Refusing such treatment does not constitute euthanasia or physician-assisted suicide.
- Good medical practice mandates that the ethical principles of beneficence and non-maleficence should be followed at all times. It is ANZSPM's position that withholding or withdrawing treatments that are not benefitting the patient, is not euthanasia or physician-assisted suicide.
- Treatment that is appropriately titrated to relieve symptoms and has a secondary and unintended consequence of hastening death, is not euthanasia or physician-assisted suicide.

See ANZSPM's full Position Statement: The Practice of Euthanasia and Physician-Assisted Suicide [here](#).



About the Australian and New Zealand Society of Palliative Medicine

ANZSPM aims to improve health outcomes for every person with a life-limiting illness living in Australia and New Zealand. ANZSPM works closely with the Royal Australian College of Physicians and Palliative Care Australia to support the professional development of its members, promote the practice of Palliative Medicine and advocate for those who work in the field of palliative medicine. ANZSPM is governed by a Council made up of elected and appointed members, supported by a Canberra secretariat managed by ANZSPM's Chief Executive Officer. An ANZSPM Aotearoa Committee, elected by New Zealand members, oversees business specific to New Zealand.

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