



**Uniting Church in Australia**  
SYNOD OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA

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Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

Over the last year, the Uniting Church in the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania has been considering the issue of Voluntary Assisted Dying. This conversation has continued over the years, with a variety of views expressed by members of the Church.

Anticipating that legislation might be passed in Victoria, the 2017 Synod requested a consultation process across the Synod. The aim was to bring to the 2019 Synod, a report and recommendations regarding the Church's response to any potential legislation.

When legislation was passed in Victoria, it became more important to know how the Church in this Synod might respond to those who look to us for guidance. This includes members of congregations, ministers and pastors, members who are supporting loved ones and those who are personally considering voluntary assisted dying, as well as Uniting VicTas, Uniting AgeWell, and the Church-affiliated hospital group Epworth HealthCare.

Last week, members of the 2019 Synod of Victoria and Tasmania met together in careful consideration, discussion and prayer to discern our response to the Victorian Voluntary Assisted Dying Legislation. The Synod heard a wide range of strongly and faithfully held views, from various theological and cultural perspectives.

Synod members listened to each other, seeking the Spirit's leading as they worked together as a Christian community in openness, honesty and respect. The original proposals were tested and reshaped, until we could decide together on the response of the Church in our Synod.

Together we affirmed aspects of our core Christian beliefs. We affirmed that life is a gift of God, that all life is precious to God, and has dignity before God, regardless of circumstances. We affirmed that the love of God in Christ holds us throughout all of our lives and in our dying, and that there is nothing that can separate us from the unbounded love of God. We affirmed the distinctive Christian theology and mystery of suffering. We are held within the love of God who enters into our sufferings, bringing grace and peace even in our darkest moments. We affirmed the calling of Christians to be discerning communities of love and care to others, in their journey through life and death.

We affirmed that palliative care is the primary way in which we support and care for those at the end of life, including their families, and called on the Victorian Government to increase resourcing for this.

We recognised that there is a range of faithful Christian responses to voluntary assisted dying which reflect these deeply held Christian beliefs. In relation to the very specific limitations of the 2017 Victorian Voluntary Assisted Dying legislation, we recognised that exploring or accessing voluntary assisted dying, as well as conscientiously objecting, are all faithful Christian responses.

In light of all this, permission was given to the relevant UCA institutions and associated hospital group within Victoria, to make voluntary assisted dying allowable for their patients, clients and residents, under the specific conditions of the legislation.

This decision honours the diversity of faithful Christian responses within our Church, and gives people the freedom to follow their own conscience in this matter. While this decision may be difficult or challenging for some members or communities of our Church, the resolution commits to respecting the range of faithfully held Christian responses.

Taking into account the range of cultural and language needs, and the range of faithful Christian responses, the Synod resolved to resource those who offer spiritual and pastoral support to people (and their families) who are exploring, accessing, or who have accessed voluntary assisted dying. Translations of this letter into other languages may also be available, if needed.

I encourage you to share this letter and the attached resolution (unconfirmed minute) with your congregations, faith communities, or organisations, that we may together explore what this means in our life of faith and witness to the grace and love of God in our midst.

May the grace and peace of Christ continue to fill us with God’s unbounding and renewing love.



**Rev Denise Liersch**  
**Moderator**

