

NEWS

Australian doctors help kill 52 sick patients in first 6 months of new assisted suicide law

Australian politician says the new assisted suicide law is 'working well'

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By Paul Smeaton

February 19, 2020 (LifeSiteNews) — A new report has revealed that doctors aided in the state-sanctioned killing of 52 people in Victoria, Australia under a new assisted suicide law which came into effect six months ago.

The law allows for patients who are told they have six months to live to apply for assisted suicide. If a patient is unable to kill himself by personally taking the lethal dose of drugs, a lethal injection may be administered.

Of the 52 deceased, 43 killed themselves with the lethal drugs, while nine were killed by their doctors administering the drugs.

The report states that a total of 136 people have applied to kill themselves since the new law came into effect. Some applications were denied because of administrative errors, some because applicants were not Australian citizens, and others for unspecified reasons. In some instances, the individual died before his application had been answered.

In addition to the Australian territory of Victoria – and Western Australia starting in 2021 – assisted suicide and/or euthanasia is legal in Canada, 10 U.S. jurisdictions, Belgium, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Luxembourg, and Colombia.

Pro-life advocates have long argued that doctors killing patients or helping them kill themselves is antithetical to medicine, incentivizes insurance companies to fund inexpensive death drugs rather than more costly life-saving care, and allows coercion of the elderly.

In Belgium, children can now be euthanized. In the Netherlands, a doctor who forcibly euthanized an elderly woman by first drugging her coffee and then having her relatives hold her down was determined by a government panel to have “acted in good faith.” A court subsequently ruled the doctor had acted in the patient’s best interests.

Victoria medical oncologist Cameron McLaren, who has been involved in 17 deaths, told Australian media that he wants to be able to initiate conversations with patients about assisted suicide.

“I’d like to see more awareness in the community about their rights and access,” he said. “And I would like to be able to talk a patient about the option [of assisted dying] from the outset, instead of having to wait for them to prompt me.”

Under the current law, a doctor is not allowed to initiate a discussion on or suggest assisted dying to a patient.

McLaren also said that he wanted to see more doctors trained to help people kill patients, because it was a “little bit cruel” to ask patients to travel to available doctors to “fulfill the requirements of voluntary assisted dying.”

Voluntary Assisted Dying Review board chairwoman, Betty King, said that the feedback from family members of those killed under the law “has been predominantly about how peaceful it was, how fabulous it was for my parent or my loved one to be able to choose to be surrounded by family, to play music and to just quietly go to sleep.”

Victorian Health Minister Jenny Mikakos claimed that the law “is working well and as intended.”

She said that she expects the number of patients who are euthanized or prescribed lethal drugs to increase.

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“We anticipate as more Victorians understand that this choice is available to them and more doctors undertake the mandatory training there will be a further increase,” Mikakos said.

Prior to the law passing in Victoria in 2017, the Australian Catholic bishops in Victoria wrote a pastoral letter in which they explained, “Euthanasia and assisted suicide are the opposite of care and represent the abandonment of the sick and the suffering, of older and dying persons.”

The Archdiocese of Melbourne has an entire section on its website devoted to refuting myths about assisted suicide and euthanasia.

Victoria was the first state in Australia to legalize assisted suicide. In November last year Western Australia passed similar legislation, which will go into effect in 2021.

Commenting at the time of the passing of the legislation in Western Australia, American bioethicist Wesley J. Smith asked: “Where will this lead? Over time, into the bottomless moral pit into which the Netherlands, Belgium, and increasingly Canada have already jumped. I can’t escape the irony that people seem to lack faith in doctors to care for patients properly and ameliorate their suffering, but ironically, will allow these same doctors to kill them. Bizarre.”
