

Subject: Elder abuse and euthanasia a dangerous mix

Dear [Name]

I would like you to vote against the *Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill 2021 (Greenwich Bill)* which has the aim of legalising both euthanasia and assisted suicide in New South Wales.

In recent years, it has become apparent that elder abuse and the risk of elder abuse are increasing threats in Australia. If an individual is unable to take care of themselves, has reduced decision-making capabilities and/or financial management issues, their vulnerability to be pressured into euthanasia by family members or others responsible for their care increases.

The World Health Organisation has estimated that the prevalence of elder abuse in high- or middle-income countries ranges from 2% to 14%. More than 15% of Australia's population is aged 65 or over, and more than 80% of Australians over the age of 85 are living with a disability.

A 2015 NSW Parliamentary inquiry revealed shocking accounts of elder abuse. The Committee Chair, Hon. Greg Donnelly MLC, wrote:

*"Within the context of the many priorities that governments juggle, abuse of older people can be overlooked, perhaps because elder abuse tends to be hidden away. Perhaps it is because of the ageism that exists in our culture, that allows us to disrespect our elders and tacitly accept disempowerment as an inevitable outcome of frailty. Perhaps it is too threatening for many of us – because we ourselves will one day be old and frail – to see this abuse for what it is: exploitation of and in some cases violence towards people who are vulnerable, people who in many cases are the least able to protect and defend themselves."*

These are extraordinary words, and reveal the risk of elder abuse: not in an abstract sense, but here in NSW.

An Australian Law Reform Commission recommended a detailed study into the prevalence of elder abuse in this country, and a national plan combat elder abuse to be agreed between federal, state and territory governments.

This has not yet happened.

It would be recklessly negligent of the NSW parliament to legalise euthanasia and assisted suicide in the state before putting in place a system to effectively address the scourge of elder abuse. If we cannot tackle elder abuse, there is no reason to believe that we can adequately safeguard against abuse when it comes to euthanasia and assisted suicide for our vulnerable elderly.

Please protect our elderly and vote 'no' to the Greenwich Bill.

Thank you.