



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

**20<sup>th</sup> September 2017**

### **COTA Victoria urges informed discussion on Voluntary Assisted Dying**

**COTA Victoria urged informed discussion on the Voluntary Assisted Dying (VAD) legislation introduced into the Victorian Parliament today.**

COTA Victoria is deeply committed to accurately informing older Victorians on this significant social reform to enable older people to participate in public discussion. As an organisation that represents the rights of older people, in all their diversity, we understand there will be a range of views on the proposed VAD legislation. There are strongly held beliefs on Voluntary Assisted Dying and we therefore urge the expression of personal views on what the legislation is to be based on evidence.

COTA Victoria will carefully consider the draft legislation over the coming weeks and will provide accurate and accessible information to older people on what is being proposed. We urge all MP's and those expressing views on the legislation to be accurately informed and not to create unnecessary anxiety and fear in the community.

The legislation reflects the Ministerial Advisory Panel's final report which fully considered the recommendation for a *compassionate and safe* Assisted Dying framework made by the bipartisan Parliamentary Inquiry into End of Life Choices. The legislation sets out access to lethal medication for terminally ill Victorians. The person must be over the age of 18, with decision making capacity and "diagnosed with a disease, illness or medical condition" that is incurable. The illness "must be causing suffering to the person that cannot be relieved" in a way they consider "tolerable". The person must also be expected to die "within weeks or months, but not exceeding 12 months".

Once a person requests access to VAD, there is a three-step process involving two independent medical assessments.

COTA Victoria commends the Ministerial Advisory Panel's work and the intention of the legislation to provide a safe and compassionate approach to accessing VAD.

Quotes attributable to Ronda Held:

*"We note that all 68 safeguards recommended by the Ministerial Advisory Panel have been included in the legislation. COTA Victoria will carefully consider these in order to provide accurate information to older people on protections against coercion and other safety concerns."*

*"COTA's focus has been (and will remain) on the rights of older people to be accurately informed and supported in their decision-making regarding their own end of life choices".*

**To organise a media interview with COTA CEO Ronda Held, please call:**

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