

VOLUNTARY ASSISTED DYING

161. Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE to the Minister for Health:

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's commitment to treating those Western Australians with a terminal or life-limiting illness with compassion and dignity by allowing end-of-life choices. Can the minister update the house on the implementation of this government's historic voluntary assisted dying laws?

Mr R.H. COOK replied:

I thank the member for the question; it is very important one. The member will recall that in December 2019 this Parliament passed historic legislation to make voluntary assisted dying a reality in Western Australia. It was important legislation, and it was at that time that the government committed to working tirelessly over the next 18 months to make sure we could have everything in place to ensure that this legislation was ready to be applied from 1 July. I am very proud to say that preparations for the implementation of voluntary assisted dying in Western Australia is ready to start from 1 July this year, ensuring that the process is safe, appropriate and follows the law.

As I have mentioned before, member, between 22 and 23 May, nearly 200 people attended in person or online, as part of an implementation conference involving clinicians, health professionals and policy advisers with regard to information about their roles, rights and responsibilities, in preparation for the commencement of VAD. The care navigators and clinical nurse consultant manager have now commenced their roles as part of WA's VAD statewide care navigator service. The statewide care navigator service is available to support health professionals with their preparations from 1 July, but will not be able to provide information or provide answers to the public or private support to members of the public until 1 July. These health professionals will be able to preregister for training programs to make sure that they are ready to go.

Members of the inaugural Voluntary Assisted Dying Board have also been announced. The five-member board will commence from 1 July and will have a mostly advisory and monitoring function. The board will be chaired by GP and former Australian Medical Association WA president Dr Scott Blackwell. Dr Scott Blackwell has been working in palliative and aged care for many years. He is an expert and he chairs the implementation leadership team on voluntary assisted dying. Other members of the panel include Hon Colin Holt as deputy chairperson, a recently retired member from the Legislative Council, he was also deputy chair of the Joint Select Committee into End of Life Choices; Dr Robert Edis, who is a consultant neurologist with a particular interest in motor neurone disease and is vice president of the Motor Neurone Disease Association of WA; Maria Osman is senior consultant and adviser, specialising in human rights, diversity and gender matters; and Ms Linda Savage, former director of the Social Security Appeals Tribunal and a legal member of the Administrative Appeals Tribunal.

Medical practitioners and nurse practitioners seeking to participate in voluntary assisted dying training can now preregister to check their eligibility for access to approved training, which will be available to eligible practitioners from early June. A lot of work has gone into making sure that we are ready to go from 1 July.

I take the opportunity to acknowledge Hon Dr Sally Talbot, who has been the deputy chair of the implementation leadership task force, for the work that she has done with Dr Scott Blackwell to make sure that we are ready to go. As a final note, I acknowledge the work done by everyone on this legislation to make sure that it is ready to go; and, of course, the member for Morley who was chairperson of the Joint Select Committee into End of Life Choices. I congratulate all who have been involved in this process.