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TASMANIAN GOVERNMENT MEDIA RELEASE

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Strong Protections Imperative

I welcome the Premier's decision to provide Liberal members of Parliament with a conscience vote on the issue of Voluntary Assisted Dying (VAD) legislation.

The strengthening of protections for the state's most vulnerable and freedom of conscience is imperative during this week's debate of VAD Legislation.

Members of Parliament have received two reports, one from Government agencies and the other from the University of Tasmania, which collectively raise more than 70 concerns with the draft legislation before Parliament.

A number of these concerns go to ensuring that strong and robust safeguards are in place to ensure that no one unwillingly or unwittingly dies and that conscientious objectors, including institutions, are not forced to participate in practices against their will.

The Bill before Parliament currently denies adequate protections to organisations with a conscientious objection to VAD. This is deeply concerning and must be resisted. No-one should be compelled to act against their conscience.

Stronger safeguards, based on objective assessments, are needed to ensure that the elderly, the sick and other vulnerable people are protected.

Already more than 20 versions of the Bill have been put forward with the original Bill heavily amended.

More than 100 amendments to the Bill were debated by the Legislative Council. In the Lower House, over 100 amendments to the Bill were circulated late last week with more foreshadowed.

We run the risk of creating a legal quagmire without approaching this debate with an abundance of caution.

This legislation is quite literally a matter of life and death. It is critical that debate is informed by the facts, considered and not rushed.