Euthanasia & Physician Assisted Suicide – Why are we concerned?

Pastoral letter to the Catholics of Victoria – Push to introduce euthanasia and assisted suicide The Victorian Government is seeking to introduce euthanasia and assisted suicide later this year. The proposed changes will impact everyone, not just the terminally ill. Because of their concern about this grave matter, the Bishops of Victoria have released a pastoral letter with copies available in parishes. Please read the pastoral letter and if you would like to get involved, speak with Fr Joseph. You can also find out more information from the Life, Marriage & Family Office on 9287 5587 / lmf@cam.org.au or visit: www.cam.org.au/lifemarriagefamily

Euthanasia & assisted suicide represent the abandonment of the sick and suffering Just as we accompany someone at the start of life, so we are called to accompany our loved ones at the end of life, ensuring a good death. Euthanasia and assisted suicide represent the abandonment of the sick and the suffering, of older and dying persons. We should be assuring people that their life – even as it ebbs away – is precious. We should not be creating laws that intentionally cause death. To find out more about the issue, contact the Life, Marriage & Family Office on 9287 5587 / lmf@cam.org.au or visit: www.cam.org.au/euthanasia

The provision of pain relief is not euthanasia Every person is entitled to good pain relief to alleviate suffering at the end of life, such as that offered by palliative care. The provision of such pain relief is not euthanasia, even if a person’s life may be shortened. It is a vastly different action to euthanasia where the decision is made to intentionally kill someone. To find out more about the issue, contact the Life, Marriage & Family Office on 9287 5587 / lmf@cam.org.au or visit: www.cam.org.au/euthanasia

The refusal of overly burdensome or futile treatment is not euthanasia Every person has the right to refuse overly burdensome or futile treatment which does not correspond or is disproportionate to their needs. This is good medical care, not euthanasia and has always been part of Catholic moral teaching and health care. To find out more about the issue, contact the Life, Marriage & Family Office on 9287 5587 / lmf@cam.org.au or visit: www.cam.org.au/euthanasia

Euthanasia and physician assisted suicide would damage doctor-patient relationships The purpose of medicine is to improve a patient’s quality of life not shorten it. As the World Medical Association says, euthanasia is unethical and incompatible with the dignity and practice of medicine. Euthanasia and physician assisted suicide would erode our trust in doctors and plant a seed of doubt in the minds of patients in relation to end of life care. To find out more about the issue, contact the Life, Marriage & Family Office on 9287 5587 / lmf@cam.org.au or visit: www.cam.org.au/euthanasia

Promoting suicide is not good public policy Suicide is always a tragedy that has far-reaching effects. The State Government plans to spend over $5 million on suicide prevention throughout 2016-2017 but at the same time open the door to suicide for certain groups of people by legislating for euthanasia and physician assisted suicide. It is both incoherent and a contradiction to promote suicide as a tragedy as well as good public policy. To find out more about the issue, contact the Life, Marriage & Family Office on 9287 5587 / lmf@cam.org.au or visit: www.cam.org.au/euthanasia

The “right to die” can too easily become the duty to die Euthanasia and physician assisted suicide would create a class of people it would be legally permissible to kill – with the state permitting such killing. We should think about what message this would send our most vulnerable members of society. The “right to die” can too easily become a perceived duty to die. To find out more about the issue, contact the Life, Marriage & Family Office on 9287 5587 / lmf@cam.org.au or visit: www.cam.org.au/euthanasia

Euthanasia & physician assisted suicide would make vulnerable people feel like a burden Author Dr Karen Hitchcock writes, “Almost every day an elderly patient will tell me – with shame – that they are a burden or a nuisance, that they’re taking up a hospital bed someone else needs. They apologise for being a pain, a drain, for wasting my valuable time, for being sick and needing help.” Euthanasia and physician assisted suicide would reinforce this, making the vulnerable even more so. To find out more about the issue, contact the Life, Marriage & Family Office on 9287 5587 / lmf@cam.org.au or visit: www.cam.org.au/euthanasia
Euthanasia “safeguards” can never be made foolproof Irrespective of how robust euthanasia and physician assisted suicide "safeguards" are; they can never be completely foolproof. Recognising that mistakes are made, we abolished capital punishment. We should ask ourselves – can we be absolutely sure vulnerable members of society would not be pressured into dying? Or like in some European countries – be euthanised without their consent? To find out more about the issue, contact the Life, Marriage & Family Office on 9287 5587 / lmf@cam.org.au or visit: www.cam.org.au/euthanasia

Our dignity is not dependent on our usefulness, health or age Our dignity is not dependent on our usefulness, health or age but simply on our humanity. Everyone should be loved, supported and cared for until they die. The fact that some people struggle to access adequate care is an injustice we should address. There is nothing dignified about being killed or assisted to suicide. Killing such people is not the solution. To find out more about the issue, contact the Life, Marriage & Family Office on 9287 5587 / lmf@cam.org.au or visit: www.cam.org.au/euthanasia

We all have the right to receive good palliative care at the end of life Every person has the right to receive good palliative care at the end of life. As palliative care doctors recently wrote: “Good palliative care helps patients and families avoid both overtreatment and neglect of treatment. It enhances patient autonomy and decision-making capacity by improving symptom control and empowering patients to participate in their care. It is illogical and immoral to even consider euthanasia legislation before ensuring there is universal access to palliative care.” To find out more about the issue, contact the Life, Marriage & Family Office on 9287 5587 / lmf@cam.org.au or visit: www.cam.org.au/euthanasia

Let your MPs know your views about euthanasia & physician assisted suicide It is vitally important that our members of parliament (both those in the lower and upper houses) hear the public’s view about the impending euthanasia and physician assisted suicide legislation. Contact your member of parliament by writing them a letter or visiting them in person. To find your local MPs visit: www.parliament.vic.gov.au/electorates To find out more about the issue, contact the Life, Marriage & Family Office on 9287 5587 / lmf@cam.org.au or visit: www.cam.org.au/euthanasia

Heavenly Father,
We pray for all who are approaching death.

We ask that You may grant them the grace to live in peace in this life and find peace in the next.

Show us how to care for those at the end of life with loving patience.

We pray for all doctors, nurses and care givers who answer the call to serve You in the sick and dying.