



TASMANIA'S VOLUNTARY ASSISTED DYING JOURNEY

Tasmania's Voluntary Assisted Dying legislation, End-of-Life Choices (Voluntary Assisted Dying) Act 2021, was passed on the 23rd of March 2021. In a world first, it was passed unanimously in the Upper House. It had been a thirty-year journey.

In early 1992 Laurie Heathorn formed a Voluntary Euthanasia Society (North West Branch), and Terry Hague formed the Voluntary Euthanasia Society (Northern Branch). At the end of that year the "Voluntary Euthanasia Society of Southern Tasmania" was formed, with John Huta as President.

On Sunday the 12th of June 1994, these three groups met (diplomatically in the middle of Tasmania – at Ross) to form a statewide organisation. It was to be called the Voluntary Euthanasia Society of Tasmania (VEST), with Norma Jamieson as statewide President and John Huta as Vice-President.

In 2006 it was agreed that the Voluntary Euthanasia Society of Tasmania (VEST) would change its name to Dying with Dignity Tasmania (DwDTas).

Nick McKim, then a Greens Member of Parliament, took the first step in presenting this contentious issue to Parliament with his 2009 Bill. This was followed by another attempt in 2013, when Lara Giddings, by then a Labor Premier of Tasmania, joined Nick McKim to jointly bring in their Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill. In 2017 Lara Giddings and Cassy O'Connor, Greens, jointly presented their Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill.

Tasmania's successful voluntary assisted dying Bill was brought to Parliament, following an approach from Dying with Dignity Tas, by an Independent Member of Tasmania's Upper House, the Legislative Council. This was Mike Gaffney, who carried the burden of the development and carriage of his End-of-Life Choices (Voluntary Assisted Dying) Bill 2021. It was passed in March 2021, given the Royal Assent in April 2021, and came into effect in October 2022.

Dying with Dignity Tas had significant involvement in these last three Bills, and the success of the last one saw our substantial contribution at every stage of the process – working with politicians, providing information, lobbying and actively campaigning, and collaborating with the "Your Choice Tas" campaign.

We continue to be involved in the operation of the legislation and work hard to get improvements to it, and to make the Tasmanian VAD legislation the best it can be.