



## MEDIA RELEASE

To: News Editor  
From: Uniting Church Synod of WA

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**19 September 2019**

### **Uniting Church WA opts to deliberate further on Voluntary Assisted Dying**

At its 43<sup>rd</sup> Annual Meeting of the Synod of WA, held last Friday 13 to Sunday 15 September, the Uniting Church WA discussed its position on Voluntary Assisted Dying (VAD).

Members held a lengthy and meaningful discussion that was marked by the sincere respect displayed between people of differing views. No formal position was taken on the matter with the Synod deciding to extend its deliberation period. The Synod did formally recognise that, "Within the Church there is a diversity of faithful Christian understandings and responses to dying and to voluntary assisted dying."

The Synod further affirmed that, "Life is a gift of God, and all human life, regardless of circumstance, is precious to and has dignity before God, [and that] 'neither death nor life, neither suffering nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord' (Romans 8:38-39)."

Rev Steve Francis, Moderator of the Uniting Church WA said, "Life is sacred – that is a given in the Christian tradition. It is also true that everyone deserves dignity in their living and in their dying. We need to take the greatest care in our deliberations on such important matters as Voluntary Assisted Dying to ensure that we are always honouring life and dignity, particularly of the most vulnerable.

"Our ministers and care agencies are very familiar with supporting people through their end of life stages and we heard a number of stories of personal experiences. People were very keen to listen to each other well and were obviously torn on the issue. In the end I think it was a wise decision of the Synod to take more time to consider the matter.

"For people in the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress we heard that this was a difficult subject and not something they have openly discussed. We also heard gratitude from other people that the Uniting Church is a church that does discuss difficult issues like this and takes care in the process."

It was of special significance that the Synod meeting took time to honour the life and contribution of the Uniting Church's Rev Dr Douglas MacAdam who was a pioneer of palliative care medicine in WA.

Following Rev Dr MacAdam's legacy, the meeting commended the WA Government, "For its commitment to increased financial allocations to palliative care services, and urges the WA Government to live up to, and in future years extend, its commitment to increased support for quality palliative care services with better access across the State."

Rev Francis has invited all Uniting Church WA members to join an Interfaith Prayer Service whilst the proposed VAD legislation is debated in the State Parliament. This gathered time of prayer will not be a time to advocate a particular view of the VAD legislation. Prayers will be made for guidance and strength for the various professions and families whose members would be most affected by VAD laws. Representatives of the Jewish, Islamic, Buddhist, Hindu and Christian faiths have been invited to participate.

The Prayer Service will be held at 3pm on Sunday 29 September at St Mary's Cathedral, Victoria Square, Perth.

**Ends**

*For media enquiries and interviews, please contact Media and Communications Manager, Maggie Johns on 0419 831 576*