

Australian Medical Association Limited

ABN 37 008 426 793

42 Macquarie Street, Barton ACT 2600: PO Box 6090, Kingston ACT 2604
 Telephone: (02) 6270 5400 Facsimile (02) 6270 5499
 Website: <http://www.ama.com.au/>



Transcript: AMA President Dr Michael Gannon, ABC News Evenings, 19 October 2017

Subject: Euthanasia and physician assisted suicide

TRACEY HOLMES: Victoria could soon become the first place in Australia where a doctor can legally help their patient end their life. The State Parliament debated the *Assisted Dying Bill* into the early hours of this morning, with almost every MP rising to give their personal views. While MPs opposed to the Bill are not giving up without a fight, the State's Opposition has conceded it is likely to pass the Lower House tonight. So what might happen nationally if the Bill passes, and what's the reaction from the medical establishment?

Joining us is the National President of the Australian Medical Association, Dr Michael Gannon. Dr Gannon, thanks for joining us. You've made your own personal opposition to euthanasia very clear. What are your current thoughts on what's happening in the Victorian Parliament?

MICHAEL GANNON: Look, any public commentary I've made is based on the AMA's Position Statement, which I was involved in in a very detailed fashion, first as Chair of the Ethics Committee, and then as President when we released it last year.

Certainly, we're watching events in Victoria with great interest. It's been the case for some weeks now, it's been stated that those promoting the Yes case have the numbers. We'll wait and see. I think that Members in the Lower House can do better on end-of-life care than to pass this Bill. If it does pass tonight, the action moves to the Upper House. If this Bill passes the Upper House, well, then it becomes a legal option in terms of the management of patients.

Some people are keen to point to the different emphasis between the Federal AMA and the Victorian AMA. I think one of the things my colleagues in Victoria have been very keen to do is to make sure that they have a seat at the table if it is legislated, to make sure that we maximise protections both for our members and for our patients.

TRACEY HOLMES: So you don't see this in any way, if it does pass, causing a split or a rift in the AMA?

MICHAEL GANNON: No, I think this issue is bigger than the AMA. The AMA's statement is very clear that Parliamentarians have a role in making laws for their citizens. Society makes these decisions, doctors don't, but doctors will not fail to give their unique perspective, and especially if a State is going to legislate physician assisted suicide, then we're right in the middle of it.

The Andrews Government and other Parliaments in Australia that are considering Bills – there's a Private Member's Bill that's there ready to go in New South Wales, there's a Parliamentary Committee in Western Australia – what we would say to them is: consider the issues, consider how this affects medical care, how it affects the health system as a whole, and don't be surprised when there's opposition against something which has been part of medical ethics for centuries.

TRACEY HOLMES: Let's say it passes – and I know this is hypothetical, but we're dealing with a hypothetical situation at the moment – if it passes and other States also start to pass

