

**(b) Opening Statement - Hon. Michael Gaffney MLC for Oireachtas (Irish Parliament)
Joint Committee on Assisted Dying**

Mr Chairman and Committee Members,

It is my pleasure to assist the Irish People and Members of the Joint Committee on its deliberations with this most important issue.

Tasmania is a rural island state with a land area that's almost identical to the Republic of Ireland with population of approximately 570,000.

Our Parliament operates with a House of Assembly (Lower House) and a Legislative Council (Upper House), with two major parties together with a number of independents. I am an Independent Member of the Legislative Council.

The Tasmanian End-of-Life (Voluntary Assisted Dying) legislation was the fourth time assisted dying legislation had been introduced and none of the previous three attempts (2009, 2013 and 2016) even reached the Committee stage.

The Bill was introduced by me as a private Member's Bill directly to the Legislative Council, where it passed with unanimous consent before being debated by the House of Assembly passing 19 votes to 6 and received Royal assent on the 22 April 2021.

A critical factor I believe in the Bills success was its bespoke drafting, with considered legal and community input from sources that included me presenting the initial draft to 35 public forums across 29 Council areas, numerous briefings and facilitating considered stakeholder input from all sides of the debate.

In total, I have presented 117 community forums across Tasmania. The wide-spread community engagement and involvement was definitely advantageous for the successful passage of this legislation. It reflected the community's wider support for Voluntary Assisted Dying as a legitimate and regulated health and well-being decision.

The Tasmanian Act does have unique elements such as the role of Nurses as an AHP (Administering Health Practitioner), the inclusion of injury as part of the definition of a Relevant Medical Condition, the anticipation of intolerable suffering as a legitimate reason, and the right of a person to apply for a determination from the Commission to be exempt from the prescribed time limits - together with numerous essential safeguards.

I look forward to answering questions and clarifying issues raised in the briefing document provided.

Kind regards,

Mike

The Hon Michael Gaffney (MLC)
Member for Mersey