

NORTHERN TERRITORY
***of* AUSTRALIA**

Dr TANZIL RAHMAN MLA

Member for Fong Lim

HANSARD EXTRACT

ICEL5 VAD CONFERENCE

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Purple House; Congress; community services and all the local businesses from Alice Springs. I also acknowledge people in our local community who came out in droves for the search operation in Alice Springs. We had people come from Darwin, Tennant Creek and Katherine to help in that search effort for Kumanjayi Little Baby. As devastating and heartbreaking as that news has been and continues to be for so many in our community, it has shone a light on how amazing the place is that we call home.

I thank you, Madam Speaker, for all your hard work, commitment and love for the community. I thank the Member for Braitling who was out on the search, doing what he does, supporting the local community. I know the Member for Barkly was also there supporting the family. I thought it was important to acknowledge that. The Member for Daly also came to support the search efforts.

That is what makes Alice Springs. For all the bad headlines that we have attracted and continue to attract, we are a great place. We are a place that when something goes wrong, that community comes out. I saw people volunteering their time who I never in my wildest dreams would have thought I would see out there actively working for the community, with businesses volunteering thousands of dollars and their time for those efforts.

I say to Alice Springs that I love you, and I am so proud to call you home. It is a hard time for all of us; we are still grieving Kumanjayi Little Baby. In respect for our family, we have to let her rest. Loving her is easy, and we will do it every day; missing her is a heartache that will never go away. What will remain with us is the strength of our community and compassion.

In Alice Springs, within hours of that devastating news, the community came together. There were hundreds of donations of finances and food for the sorry camp and wishes. The community came together for a vigil, with 2,000 people showing strength, love and compassion.

I thank every member of this parliament for turning out to the front steps here for the vigil last Thursday to show your commitment, passion and sign of strength to the family.

It is important in times of need that we come together and support one another. I am so thankful that people are continuing to do that.

To everyone across the country who has made donations through SNAICC, which has helped to collect those donations, thank you. For everyone who held a vigil across the country, thank you so much. To all my family across Central Australia, particularly in Yuendumu, Lajamanu and Kalkarindji, I am with you. I am there to support you. I love you all. We will continue to support one another through this difficult time.

I thought it was important, before sittings finished, to say to Central Australia how proud I am to call you home. The love I have for the Territory is amazing. We are the greatest place in Australia. We have our challenges, but we are unique, bold, beautiful and compassionate.

Dr RAHMAN (Fong Lim): Madam Speaker, in the second half of this year this Assembly will make a decision on one of the most consequential things—certainly in the opinion of many people in the community—in this term of parliament, the matter of voluntary assisted dying. The issue is not resolved yet, and it is definitely something we should all be slowly turning our minds to. I turn my mind to it regularly.

I field a range of queries on a regular basis about voluntary assisted dying. As much as I know about the issue, I am still not entirely across all the details. I think all of us in this House will be asked more and more questions about voluntary assisted dying and what it should and could look like for the Northern Territory.

With that in mind, from 8 to 10 April I attended the ICEL5 conference in Brisbane, the 5th International Conference on Assisted Dying and Other End of Life Care, hosted by the Australian Centre for Health Law Research at Queensland University of Technology. I went because it was an opportunity to learn how VAD works across Australia in practice, not from politicians and not even necessarily from policymakers and academics, but real-world practitioners—nurse practitioners, speech pathologists, doctors and clinicians—the people who are doing the real work and have real insight that humbles you when you hear how it works in the real world. It was my great privilege to be there.

I thank the people from the Queensland University of Technology Australian Centre for Health Law Research who facilitated the program, including Professor Ben White, Professor Lindy Willmott, Dr Eliana Close, Dr Katrine Del Villar, Dr Rachel Feeney, Dr Madeleine Archer and Katherine Waller. I am, no doubt, forgetting many others. I thank you for putting on such an excellent event.

It was an opportunity to learn about some of the things we will be asked about and which sometimes a lot of us do not have the answers to.

Soon after coming back from that event, the Member for Fannie Bay, the Leader of the Opposition, the Member for Johnston and I attended the seminar run by COTA (Council on the Ageing) where Peter Warren, Executive Director of the World Federation of Right to Die Societies, gave a lecture. There were many questions from the audience, from seniors in COTA. They were all reasonable questions, but it indicated—I mean this politely—just how little people know about the nuts and bolts of a lot of stuff to do with VAD. We will be bombarded with these questions, so I encourage everyone in this House to try to get across the issues.

I will have more conversations about VAD and will work with COTA and similar organisations to put on information sessions to answer questions as best we can. Even though we are not subject matter experts on VAD, being in this Chamber we are the decision-makers on VAD. If there are things that you do not know about, try to learn about them. I will share whatever knowledge I have in a bipartisan fashion, noting that this is a decision we will all make as individuals in this parliament.

In a similar vein, on 14 April, immediately after I came back from that conference, I had the opportunity to talk to the Darwin Probus group. Its members invited me specifically because they wanted to hear about where things were at with VAD and what I could tell them. We went past all the usual stuff, the history of what happened in the Northern Territory, to talk about some of the nuts and bolts. Lots of basic questions were answered for people who still felt like they do not know how things will go forward. There were questions about legal oversight; the role of review boards, courts and whatnot; what happens in residential facilities, which is of real concern to a lot our seniors; and even things like administration methods. It is tough to talk about this stuff.

I was in a session when I asked about statistics regarding administration stuff and everyone in the room pounced on me at once. I realised it was because everybody in that room deals with VAD. The doctors and nurses were saying, 'This is all preliminary information. You should be across this.'

I also point out that lots of people at the conference were interested in what is happening in the Northern Territory. There are a lot of eyes around the country and the world on what is happening in the Northern Territory with VAD. People care about us moving this issue forward in a sensible way, and hopefully learning from what has happened in other places.

It is hard to talk about, but whether people have VAD substances administered intravenously, orally or enterally, which is tubes in the stomach, makes a difference. These are the real questions, and they matter to the people I saw there, some of whom were looking to access VAD because they were unwell.

I will not go into all the gory details, but one thing that I learned there, which is worth remembering, is that Australia is still relatively forward-thinking on VAD. There are other countries around the world where this is not happening and/or it has fallen apart. A lot of people thought VAD legislation would get up in Scotland and the UK recently. It has just recently died a death due to fear campaigns squashing it, which is what tends to happen around the world. Those fear campaigns succeed when legislators like us are not across the details well enough to answer the questions and try to get sensible legislation through a parliament.

It is predictable that there will be fear campaigns surrounding this, as there always are around the world. They will predictably relate to the issues of dementia and what happens in the Netherlands, Belgium and Switzerland. If you really knew what happened in those places, you would not be concerned. You would see that the numbers of people who access voluntary assisted deaths are very small. When you are talking about people who access in relation to dementia, which is not even a possibility in Australia, the numbers are infinitesimally small. I hope that we do not end up having our Bill fall apart on the basis of fear campaigns and a lack of people in the legislature being across the issues.

I specifically thank a few people who were kind and taught me a lot when I was there. I thank Dr Chloe Furst at Royal Adelaide Hospital. She had a lot of fantastic things to say which helped me understand a lot of the practicalities of VAD administration. I thank Virginia Barbour, the Editor-in-Chief of the *Medical Journal of Australia*. She also had fantastic insight and wisdom to share. I thank Jan Obery, a care navigator in the South Australian Voluntary Assisted Dying Care Navigator Service. Understanding what those navigator services do is important in being able to put together a solid VAD service. I thank Lindsay Marshall from the Clem Jones Group, for facilitating meetings and introductions for me while I was there. There is a range of others from various dying with dignity societies and advocacy groups. It was good to be in a space where people had respectful discussions about VAD.

I also thank my colleagues from the McKinnon Institute who helped host me in the Queensland Parliament. It is always nice to see how another parliament operates. It was good to talk to parliamentarians in Queensland about how their VAD Bill worked and how people on different sides approached the issue.

All of you would have been sent a book earlier this year called *The Power of Choice* which was a photographic book from—it is on the tip of my tongue; I am sorry. Anyway, that book is worth looking at. While I was in Brisbane, there was the exhibition for it. It is confronting, but it is important to understand that behind VAD legislation we are talking about terminally ill people who are suffering and looking for a way forward.

I encourage all of you as colleagues across the House, no matter what party or tribe you are from, to over the coming months get in touch with your electorate's feelings and get across the information that will be required to answer the questions that will be asked of all of us when we come to consider VAD legislation in the latter part of this year. I hope that we can all truly have a respectful debate about it in the second half of this year.

Mr PATEL (Casuarina): Madam Speaker, I will share a few highlights from Dripstone Secondary College, because its students have been doing incredible things lately and they deserve the recognition.

To all the teachers and staff at Dripstone, I thank you for the important job you do. Every day you are encouraging, supporting and preparing students for the future. I am sure it can be challenging some days, but you all do an incredible job, and achievements come out of the school all year round.

I give a big congratulations to Year 10 Dripstone student Zaharias, who was selected as one of only seven students from across the Northern Territory to join the Chief Minister's Sharing Our History, Securing Future Peace Study Tour to Okinawa, Japan. It is a fantastic opportunity. The program focuses on learning about historical conflict, peacebuilding, international relationships, leadership and diplomacy—all things that help shape thoughtful, capable young leaders. To be chosen for this is a real credit to Zaharias and the way he applies himself inside and outside the classroom. I look forward to hearing about his experience when he returns. Have an amazing trip, Zaharias.

I also congratulate two talented Year 9 students, Ameliah and Gisele, who, along with their teammates from Casuarina Football Club, have been selected to travel to Valencia to compete in the IDA Valencia tournament. To represent their club, school and community on the international stage is really special. The girls' dedication, discipline and countless hours of training have paid off, and they are off on a trip they will never forget. Well done, Ameliah and Gisele, I hope you have an amazing time and show off the incredible talent coming out of Casuarina.

I acknowledge the Dripstone students who recently took part in the Interschool Secondary Hockey Gala Day. A special shout-out goes to the girls' team which was outstanding all day. They are a united and determined team, and it was fantastic to hear they came away with a well-earned win in their competition. Dripstone's mixed team also put in a strong performance, finishing tied third in their competition—another example of hard work paying off.

Whether it is international study tours, sporting tournaments overseas or local gala days, it is clear that Dripstone Secondary College students are putting themselves out there, working hard and representing their school with pride. Well done to all involved; I am incredibly proud of you. I love Casuarina.

Mr SMELT (Nightcliff): Madam Speaker, I acknowledge the mighty Nightcliff Tigers Football Club. The club was originally founded in 1950 as the Works and Housing Football Club and first competed in the 1950–51 season. Early success followed with premierships in the 1956–57, 1960–61 and 1964–65 seasons. It would then be a 54-year drought until the cup came home again in 2018–19 to make a three-peat with wins in the following two seasons.

It was an incredible achievement to celebrate a seventh senior men's title in March this year after recent near misses. It was such a fantastic experience for the team and the club, but it is the stories behind the flag that are the most memorable. I will briefly share three stories that illustrate the culture and success of the club from this great grand final win.

Leigh Crossman and Blake Launer not only coach one of the under-9 teams at Nightcliff but also happen to be the senior coach and a senior player. For our youngest players to learn from the best in the NT is something special. It builds a culture where juniors and seniors grow together, share success and support each other on their football journey. Leigh and Blake have been outstanding role models for our kids to learn from. This is shown through their development and enjoyment of the game.