

DR MARISA PATERSON MLA SPEECH

3 Aug 2022

Adjournment Speech – Support for Territory Rights

Thank you, Madame Speaker.

This is a great week for Canberrans and for residents of the Northern Territory. Finally, we are seeing a correction of an historical wrong that was inflicted upon us back in 1997.

The Andrews Bill took advantage of a power that the Commonwealth uniquely holds over the Territories that it does not have over the States, to deprive us of rights that all other Australians have enjoyed. The Andrews Bill removed our right, here in this Assembly on behalf of the community who have elected us to represent them, to debate and legislate on laws that apply to them.

Since the Andrew's Bill, we have been gagged on the right to debate and legislate for voluntary assisted dying for terminally ill people in our community.

Every Australian State has passed voluntary assisted dying laws.

I know this matter is important to my constituents. I have heard from too many people in my community their frustration that the right of terminally ill

adults to choose how to end their life is not afforded to them and that they are forced to suffer, to live in pain, and that other members of our community are forced to watch loved ones suffer.

Canberrans are denied the dignity that's afforded to our interstate counterparts. We are denied basic human rights and we are at odds with most of the rest of the country. I have had people in tears approach me outside shopping centre – begging to change this.

I am overjoyed that this is – hopefully – set to change. Despite numerous previous attempts to introduce similar legislation over the last 25 years, I am confident that we now have a progressive Federal Government, with the right numbers of members of Parliament in both houses, who will vote with the best interests of our citizens at heart and in good consciousness.

We have already seen, this morning, the House of Representatives vote favourably. On behalf of all Canberrans, I thank everyone in Federal parliament who supported this important change. I now call on our Upper House Senators to do the same when the Bill comes forward to them in later sittings.

I commend my Labor colleagues, and others, who have fought long and hard to overturn the Andrew's Bill for 25 years. It's beyond time that Canberran's human and democratic rights are restored.

I commend Mr Andrew Barr and Ms Tara Cheyne's efforts, as Chief Minister and Minister for Human Rights, for their continued advocacy on this important matter.

I commend Alicia Payne and Luck Gosling for their commitment to this Bill.

This is an important week for Canberrans.

I encourage all members of our community to continue to lobby and advocate for this Bill to be passed in the Federal Parliament; and I thank again those who have taken the time to express their views on this matter with me previously.

Thank you.