

# Two of anything?

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### 1. Decision of the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania on Voluntary Assisted Dying.

Many ACC members have expressed their amazement and grief at the decision of the Vic-Tas Synod in July 2019 to resolve that (among many parts and different provisions) *“exploring, accessing, and conscientiously objecting to voluntary assisted dying are all within the range of faithful Christian responses to the Victorian Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2017.”* And ... *“give permission within Victoria to UCA institutions (Uniting VicTas and Uniting AgeWell) and the UCA-affiliated hospital group (Epworth HealthCare) to make voluntary assisted dying allowable within the context of their facilities and services for their patients, clients and residents, under the conditions described in the Victorian Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2017.”* Note: the full decision is available on the Vic-Tas website.

The decision reflects the now foundational idea of ‘two integrities’ (or ‘new fundamentalist doctrine’) that was used as the basis for the change to marriage and is taking on a life of its own. One wonders what will be the next matter that will utilise this context?

The situation within the whole Uniting Church is even stranger when one considers that the Synod of Queensland at its Synod meeting in May 2019 considered this matter and stated that *“... we do not support the legalisation of voluntary assisted dying in Queensland. If legalised, our facilities will not provide this as a service and our staff, in the course of their employment, will not participate in medical acts to end a life through voluntary assisted dying.”*

The ACC has a position paper on these areas of contemporary debate, and it is commended to you for understanding the orthodox Christian position on euthanasia and assisted suicide. See under Resources on the ACC website – ‘Statements and Papers on Social Issues’, or contact the ACC office for a printed copy.

No matter how many provisos and warm sounding statements are also made in the same resolution about life, palliative care and conscience, they are negated by

approving of what is voluntary assisted suicide. This term is preferable to ‘voluntary assisted dying’ which gives an appearance of abstract neutrality – somewhat bizarre given the personal context.

Please pray for the members, staff of Uniting Church facilities and residents in Victoria as the implications of this decision are considered and come forth.

### 2. Bills concerning Abortion

In another area of ‘life matters’, many members would be familiar with the extensive debate in the NSW Parliament and South Australian members would be aware of matters before the SA Parliament from the pastoral letters/columns of the SA moderator and material in the Synod news (including the helpful provision of past decisions in the Synod and other material for reference, noted with the usual disclaimer about the variety of UC views).

You can read ACC’s position statement on abortion. This is a helpful reference document for all UCA members. You can download a copy from the ACC website or request a printed copy from the ACC office.

It must be somewhat confusing for people in Australia when they hear contradictory positions within the Uniting Church on these matters. Unfortunately, it contributes to the further erosion of the importance of beliefs overall. I am often asked in usually a negative or derisive way why ACC has made comment on ‘life matters’ and upholds ‘conservative’ positions. My answer is simply, not because traditional positions are supposed to be upheld by conservative people, but because they are integral to the sovereignty, grace and mercy of God.

