

NEWS RELEASE
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For immediate release

RIGHT TO ASSISTED DEATH CONFIRMED IN THIRD US STATE

The rights of terminally ill patients to access physician assisted dying is now legally enshrined in the USA state of Montana.

The Montana Supreme Court has determined that there was nothing in state law preventing patients from seeking physician assisted death.

Doctors in the state can now, with no fear of prosecution, prescribe the life-ending drugs to mentally competent, terminally ill patients.

Montana is now the third state in the USA to rule positively on the rights of the terminally ill to seek physician assisted death. Oregon and Washington State allow assisted suicides for terminally ill patients. Oregon enacted the nation's first "death with dignity" law in 1997.

The decision by Montana's highest court was today welcomed by Dying With Dignity Victoria (DWDV) President, Neil Francis, who said it was time state laws here were updated to reflect the views of the vast majority of Australians.

“Research shows that 85 percent of Australians favour physician assisted dying and yet the Victorian government has not been prepared to review legislation,” said Mr Francis.

“In 2009 there were three landmark judgments handed down by Australian courts that upheld the rights of terminally ill patients to end their lives with assistance from doctors and yet the Victorian Government is still stuck in the past, refusing to refer the relevant legislation to the Victorian Law Reform Commission for community consultation and review”.

DWDV is a not-for-profit education, services and law reform organisation pursuing public policies and laws in Australia that enhance self-determination and dignity at the end of life.

END

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