

# Editorial

Together with New Zealand, all Australian states now enact voluntary assisted dying (VAD) legislation. Australia's two territories are likely to follow. What will guide the Lutheran Church of Australia and New Zealand (LCANZ), together with other Christian churches, as they formally respond to this legislative introduction, and as they provide high quality Christ-centred care and support for people and their families who access or consider accessing VAD? This tension between the church's espoused theology and its pastoral care practices is experienced among the LCANZ's members, families, congregations, and aged care communities.

In this *Lutheran Theological Journal* edition you will encounter the views of a variety of people who are engaged in the dialogue between faithful Christian confession and compassionate, pastoral practice. Hamilton outlines an enquiry project conducted by two official LCANZ groups which reflects on current learning and guides continuing enquiry. Tromans grapples with VAD from an explicit faith perspective, while Schwarz considers how the introduction of VAD is guided by changing world views. Briese, who thoughtfully initiated this special themed edition, investigates and promotes person-centred approaches for the provision of pastoral care for people who seek to access VAD in aged care contexts, and for the pastoral care of the staff in those same communities. He further investigates the complexity that receiving public funding creates for aged care providers as it relates to VAD. Fandrich offers the reader unique insight into VAD through his dual perspectives of being an ordained Lutheran pastor while also serving as a general medical practitioner. Lutze and Smith approach VAD as ordained, pastoral practitioners who serve in different contexts, while Pietsch and Schulz introduce and apply aspects of the moral theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer to this collection. Watson and Schuessel provide scholarly and penetrating reflections on the matter of assisted dying. Nelson concludes this rich journal edition with a summary of overarching perspectives on VAD through a literature review.

Each contribution to this *LTJ* edition is reflective of a variety of, sometimes divergent, personal experiences and perspectives. While some are strongly stated, thus appearing to be fixed, they all reflect enquiry, learning and life where more always remains to be understood and said. A further course of enquiry could, for example, explore Martin Luther's comprehensive, Christ-centred consolation for people who are dying (*ars moriendi*, art of dying). Far from asserting a contemporary, human mastery of death, Luther's care for the dying was grounded in Christ Jesus' defeat of death. This guided his pastoral care for the living, whereby dying and death were addressed, spiritually framed and even practiced well before the event.

The *LTJ* editors are grateful for the various contributions to this edition, and thank those who provided them. As we commend these articles to you, we encourage readers to use these perspectives to stimulate and guide their own enquiry on the matter of voluntary assisted dying.

**Pastor James Winderlich and Dr Anna Nürnbergger, Co-Editors.**