

A joint statement by the national leaders of most New Zealand church denominations

We urge the people of Aotearoa New Zealand to vote very cautiously in the two Referendums, because both decisions carry the risk of inflicting serious long-term damage on our society, endangering vulnerable people, and making our country less safe for everyone.

The End of Life Choice Act

As church leaders, we are very familiar with people being terminally ill and dying, and we have great empathy for the sorrow and anxiety they often go through.

We understand the reasons why euthanasia appeals to some people, as a way of alleviating individual suffering in the context of very serious illness.

However we do not support the End of Life Choice Act. We believe it would be an unethical and dangerous step for New Zealand society to allow doctors or nurse practitioners to actively end someone's life or to assist them to commit suicide. We believe that is a line New Zealand should not cross.

We are confident that with good palliative care most people can die with pain well controlled, and very often peacefully.

We believe that the End of Life Choice Act is too loosely framed, is more liberal than euthanasia laws in most other countries, and that it lacks enough effective safeguards, particularly against coercion. There is no 'last resort' clause, no requirement to see a palliative care specialist, no mandatory requirement for psychological assessment, no mandatory cooling-off period, no requirement to consult or tell family, no independent witness, and no adequate protection for doctors who object to euthanasia on spiritual or ethical grounds.

We note that overseas provision for euthanasia has almost always been widened to include other conditions, and to those under 18, and has also been associated with an increasing incidence of involuntary euthanasia. We believe that those who will ultimately suffer most from euthanasia are society's most vulnerable: the aged and frail, the poor, cultural minorities, and disabled people.

We respectfully encourage New Zealanders to help keep our society safer for those who are very vulnerable, and to vote no to the End of Life Choice Act.

SIGNED...

Bishop Jay Behan, Church of Confessing Anglicans in Aotearoa New Zealand

Pastor Steve Burgess, Regional Overseer, Senior Leader, C3 Churches

Commissioner Mark Campbell, Territorial Commander, The Salvation Army

Cardinal John Dew, Archbishop of Wellington, Roman Catholic

Pastor Iliafi Esera, General Superintendent, Assemblies of God in New Zealand

Rev Dr Jaron Graham, National Superintendent, Church of the Nazarene

Rev Tale Hakeagaiki, Chairman, Congregational Union of New Zealand

Rev Charles Hewlett, National Leader, Baptist Churches of New Zealand

Rev Brett Jones, National Superintendent (Acting), Wesleyan Methodist Church of New Zealand

The Right Rev Fakaofu Kaio, Moderator, Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand

Rev Dr Stuart Lange, National Director, New Zealand Christian Network

Pastor Brent Liebezeit, President, Christian Churches New Zealand

Rev Andrew Marshall, National Director, Alliance Churches of New Zealand

Pastor David MacGregor, National Director, Vineyard Churches Aotearoa NZ

Pastor Sam Monk, The National Leader of Acts Churches NZ & Equippers Church

Pastor Peter Mortlock, Senior Pastor, City Impact Churches of NZ

Assistant Bishop Jim Pietsch, Lutheran Church of New Zealand

Pastor Boyd Ratnaraja, National Leader, Elim Church of New Zealand

Pastor Eddie Tupa'i, President, New Zealand Pacific Union Conference of the SDA Church

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