

FACTSHEET 02: Public opinion polls on voluntary euthanasia law reform in Australia

Over three quarters of Australians give an affirmative response to the following Morgan Poll question: *If a hopelessly ill patient, experiencing unrelievable suffering, with absolutely no chance of recovering, asks for a lethal dose, should a doctor be allowed to give a lethal dose or not ?*

- In 1962 47% said "yes" to a similar question and the percentage has steadily increased over the years.
- It was above 70% throughout the 1990s. In 1993, 1994, and 1995 78% said "yes", and 76% in 1996.
- In 2002 a Morgan Poll revealed that national support was 73% and 79% in South Australia. The percentages by religious persuasion saying "yes" in South Australia in June 2002 were: Anglican 81%, Methodist 87%, Presbyterian 66%, Roman Catholic 69%, Uniting Church 74%, Lutheran 74%, and Baptist 68%.
- In 2007 the same question was asked in a Newspoll survey, with 80% of Australians saying "yes" (81% in South Australia). Nationally 74% of respondents who stated that they had a religion gave an affirmative response to the question.
- In a 2009 Newspoll 85% of Australians gave an affirmative response (82% in South Australia).
- The 2010 survey by the Australia Institute (an independent "think tank" developing and conducting research and policy analysis, www.tai.org.au) had a 75% affirmative response to this question.
- In 2011 a Newspoll conducted in New South Wales showed an 83% affirmative response.
- In 2012 Newspoll surveyed 2521 Australian adults which showed 82.5% support for law reform (81% in South Australia). Voluntary euthanasia was cited as third out of eight 'burning' issues (after a National Disability Insurance Scheme and dealing appropriately with asylum seekers). Twenty nine per cent stated that they would change their vote over this issue; 23% if their candidate opposed law reform compared with 6% if they supported reform. Politicians are therefore more likely to lose votes by failing to support reform.
- Although public opinion polls cannot be the only basis for law reform, there can be no doubting the widespread support for allowing a hopelessly ill and suffering patient legal access to a requested medically hastened death.