



Media Alert: Sydney, 10 November 2022

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE PRIME MINISTER

Vanessa Bortolin Delivers a Letter to the Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, Telling The Story of Her Husband's Suicide and Requesting His Assistance In Creating A New Treatment Pathway For People With Treatment Resistant Depression By Allowing Limited Access To Psychedelic-Assisted Therapy

On November 7, 2022, Vanessa Bortolin delivered a letter to her local Member of Parliament and Prime Minister of Australia, Anthony Albanese.

She shared the tragic story of her husband, who lost his life to suicide after a 3-year battle with treatment-resistant depression, leaving behind his wife of 30 years, Vanessa, and their beloved daughter Zara.

After exhausting every option our Australian medical system had to offer, including 19 anti-depressant and anti-psychotic drugs and 96 ECT treatments, Vanessa was filled with hope when she read about the incredible results of psychedelic-assisted therapy in overseas trials. Unfortunately, with the current regulations in Australia there is no legal access pathway, and he took his life before he was able to access this treatment.

In her letter, Vanessa has highlighted the cruelty of disallowing treatment-resistant patients like her husband to receive access to these potentially life-saving treatments, when nothing else has worked and the risk of suicide is great.

She has requested Mr Albanese meet with her to discuss the current scheduling of these substances and to find a way to allow treatment-resistant patients to access treatment.

This is in response to the recent [Interim Decision](#) from the TGA not to support the limited rescheduling of psilocybin and MDMA. This rescheduling, if successful, will allow patients with treatment-resistant depression, like Franco, the opportunity to access psychedelic-assisted therapy in a medical environment under the strict controls outlined in the rescheduling applications. It will also bring Australia in line with other leading nations such as the United States, Canada, Switzerland and Israel in allowing access to these treatments via compassionate and expanded access schemes.

The TGA's final decision will be announced in December. A [public submission](#) period is currently open until November 24, in which members of the public can respond to and OPPOSE the Interim Decision not to support rescheduling.

Mind Medicine Australia Board Director and Head of The Ethics Centre Dr Simon Longstaff said that: *"It is unethical to withhold these medicines from Australians who are suffering with treatment-resistant conditions in medically controlled environments."*



MIND MEDICINE A U S T R A L I A

As Vanessa wrote in her letter: *“Prime Minister, you can help put a stop to the immense suffering in this nation. Please reschedule these substances for therapeutic use. Please don’t let another child lose a parent to suicide.”*

- Read Vanessa’s letter here - <https://mindmedicineaustralia.org.au/wp-content/themes/cc-MMA/temp/A-Letter-to-Anthony-Albanese.pdf>
- A short (4 min) video showing Vanessa reading and then delivering her letter can be viewed here - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pDSi2SOTQ2w>
- The full (15 min) video showing Vanessa reading and then delivering her letter can be viewed here - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bVpgA1z1G54>
- Learn more about the TGA’s Interim Decision not to support rescheduling here - <https://www.mindmedicineaustralia.org.au/tga>

Mind Medicine Australia is Australia’s leading not-for-profit organisation and peak body working on the use of medicinal psilocybin and MDMA-assisted therapies to treat a range of mental illnesses. Mind Medicine Australia exists to help alleviate the suffering and suicides caused by our accelerating mental illness epidemic in Australia, through expanding the treatment options available to medical practitioners and their patients. Visit: <https://www.mindmedicineaustralia.org>

Potential interviewees include:

- Vanessa Bortolin
- Peter Hunt AM, Chair, Mind Medicine Australia
- Tania de Jong AM, Executive Director, Mind Medicine Australia

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