



# Voluntary Assisted Dying Implementation in SA



**Government of South Australia**

SA Health

# Acknowledgement of Country

We would like to acknowledge that this land we meet on today is the traditional land for the Kaurna people, and that we respect their spiritual relationship with their country.

We also acknowledge the Kaurna people are the custodians of the Kaurna Land, and that their cultural and heritage beliefs are still important to the living Kaurna people today.



# Background

- Legislation passed 24 June 2021
- Implementation date: Originally March 2023, but State Government has brought forward to **January 31<sup>st</sup> 2023** & will continue to assess if earlier date is possible
- Implementation Taskforce commenced December 2021
- Taskforce & Working Groups - representatives cover clinical, consumer, pharmacy, education & training & legal/ethical aspects.
- SA government committed to support introduction of **accessible and equitable** pathway that gives South Australians with terminal illness **choice** at end of life & ensures integrity of **safeguards** in Act.



# Guiding principles

(1) A person exercising a power or performing a function or duty under this Act must have regard to the following principles:

- > (a) every human life has equal value;
- > (b) a person's autonomy should be respected;
- > (c) a person has the right to be supported in making informed decisions about the person's medical treatment, and should be given, in a manner the person understands, information about medical treatment options including comfort and palliative care;
- > (d) every person approaching the end of life should be provided with quality care to minimise the person's suffering and maximise the person's quality of life;
- > (e) a therapeutic relationship between a person and the person's health practitioner should, wherever possible, be supported and maintained;
- > (f) individuals should be encouraged to openly discuss death and dying and an individual's preferences and values should be encouraged and promoted;
- > (g) individuals should be supported in conversations with the individual's health practitioners, family and carers and community about treatment and care preferences;
- > (h) individuals are entitled to genuine choices regarding their treatment and care;
- > (i) there is a need to protect individuals who may be subject to abuse;
- > (j) all persons, including health practitioners, have the right to be shown respect for their culture, beliefs, values and personal characteristics;
- > (k) every person has the right to make decisions about medical treatment options freely and not as a consequence of the suggestion, pressure, coercion or undue influence of others.



Minister for Health and Wellbeing

Chief Executive, Department for Health and Wellbeing

Voluntary Assisted Dying Implementation Taskforce

Workstreams

Working  
Groups

Care  
Pathways

Community/  
Consumer  
Information

Clinical  
Guidelines

Education  
and  
Training

Pharmacy  
Protocol

Implementation  
Team

VAD  
Regulations

Information  
Technology  
Systems

VAD Review  
Board  
Establishment

Implementation  
Support

# Criteria for access Voluntary Assisted Dying

- > To access voluntary assisted dying, a person must meet **all** of the following eligibility criteria:
1. aged 18+
  2. Australian citizen or permanent resident; and be ordinarily resident in SA for at least 12 months
  3. have decision-making capacity in relation to voluntary assisted dying
  4. be diagnosed with disease, illness or medical condition that:
    - is incurable; and
    - is advanced, progressive and will cause death; and
    - is expected to cause death within weeks or months, not exceeding 6 months (12 months for people with a neurodegenerative condition); and
    - is causing suffering that cannot be relieved in a manner the person considers tolerable.



# Medical Practitioners

- > The Act **only** allows **medical practitioners** to provide voluntary assisted dying

## **27—Minimum requirements for coordinating medical practitioners and consulting medical practitioners**

**(1) Each *coordinating* medical practitioner and *consulting* medical practitioner must—**

**(a) *hold a fellowship with a specialist medical college; or***

**(b) *be a vocationally registered general practitioner.***

**(2) *Either the coordinating medical practitioner or each consulting medical practitioner must have practised as a registered medical practitioner for at least 5 years after completing a fellowship with a specialist medical college or vocational registration (as the case requires).***

**(3) *Either the coordinating medical practitioner or each consulting medical practitioner must have relevant expertise and experience in the disease, illness or medical condition expected to cause the death of the person being assessed.***

- > Both medical practitioners must complete **compulsory voluntary assisted dying training** before conducting an assessment
- > Medical practitioners are **prohibited from initiating a discussion about voluntary assisted dying**. However, they may provide information about VAD if a person requests it.



# Conscientious Objectors

- > There are different rights imposed by the Act with respect to conscientious objectors:
  - > **Registered health practitioners** have right to refuse to be involved in **all aspects**
  - > **Health Services Establishments** must ensure that patients advised of service's refusal to participate in voluntary assisted dying. However, they must have arrangements in place to **transfer** person to other facilities so they can access voluntary assisted dying; & take reasonable steps to facilitate such transfer.
  - > **Residential Facilities** must not hinder person's access at facility to information about voluntary assisted dying. Must, on request, allow reasonable **access to person by a health practitioner or other lawfully participating individual** to enable **requests, assessments, declarations permits & administration**





# Voluntary Assisted Dying Pathway



# Characteristics of medication: self-administered



- instructions on how to self-administer the medication
- pre-medication
- suspension and sweet syrup liquid for mixing
- voluntary assisted dying medication
- measuring tools, and
- contact information of the coordinating medical practitioner and the statewide pharmacy service.



# Characteristics of medication: practitioner administered



# Support and Governance

## ➤ Voluntary Assisted Dying Review Board

## ➤ VAD Care Navigator Service.

- Provides support system for anyone seeking information or access to VAD service
- Linkage role between local support services & resources
- Manages regional access support scheme for those living in regional SA where no local VAD trained practitioner
- Care provided wherever it is needed, face to face, telephone, email, video-conference (in line with Commonwealth carriage service considerations)

## ➤ VAD Pharmacy Service.

- Provides education & support regarding self administration for person
- Provides education & support to medical practitioners providing physician administered VAD
- Work closely with Care Navigator Service

## ➤ VAD Liaison Roles.

- One in each metro LHN & one combined regional role
- Support patients & clinicians



# Department of Health and Wellbeing Readiness

- > Mandatory education package developed for medical practitioners
- > Overview education package developed for health practitioners
- > VAD website
- > Regional support program



# VAD Clinical Portal

## VAD Clinical Portal

### Voluntary Assisted Dying

#### Practitioner access

Login

Apply for access

Before you apply, check [whether you're eligible](#) and [what you need](#).

The Voluntary Assisted Dying Clinical Portal is the secure online system used to manage requests for voluntary assisted dying in South Australia.

Medical Practitioners use the Clinical Portal to:

- access the mandatory voluntary assisted dying training
- complete and submit forms required to access voluntary assisted dying
- apply for a permit to prescribe a voluntary assisted dying medication

#### I am a medical practitioner

You do not need access to the VAD Clinical Portal to submit the following forms. If you are a VAD Clinical Portal registered practitioner, please [log in](#) first.

● A patient has made a First Request for voluntary assisted dying

📄 First Request Form

● I have received a referral for a Consulting Assessment

📄 Consultation Referral Form

#### I am a patient

● I want to prepare for my voluntary assisted dying assessment

📄 Prepare for Assessment Form



# Expected need per month

Voluntary assisted dying activity	Voluntary assisted dying deaths estimated at 1% of all deaths in SA
Deaths	11
Prescriptions	15
First assessments	28
First requests	60



# Practitioner participation

On 16 March 2022, SA Health opened a survey to understand the capacity & willingness of SA health & medical practitioners to participate in Voluntary Assisted Dying Pathway

The survey has received responses from:

- > 590+ health practitioners
- > 160+ medical practitioners
- > represents over 1% of all health and medical practitioners in South Australia

40+ medical practitioners have identified they are eligible & willing to act as coordinating medical practitioner





# Next steps

You can get involved in voluntary assisted dying implementation by:

- > finding out more about voluntary assisted dying in South Australia by searching 'voluntary assisted dying' at [www.sahealth.sa.gov.au](http://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au)
- > Register your interest to undertake the mandatory training required to be a provider of voluntary assisted dying [Health.VoluntaryAssistedDying@sa.gov.au](mailto:Health.VoluntaryAssistedDying@sa.gov.au) and add the subject line “Register for medical training”.
- > joining our mailing list by emailing [Health.VoluntaryAssistedDying@sa.gov.au](mailto:Health.VoluntaryAssistedDying@sa.gov.au) and add the subject line “Join the mailing list”.
- > **SA Voluntary Assisted Dying Implementation Conference – register now - 16<sup>th</sup> November**



**Thank You**

