

Fact Sheet:

Voluntary Assisted Dying (VAD) in Australia

Voluntary Assisted Dying (VAD) refers to the process by which a person with a terminal illness can legally choose to end their life with medical assistance. In Australia, the legal status and requirements for VAD vary across different states and territories.

VAD includes:

- **Self-administration**, where the person takes the VAD medication themselves, and
- **Practitioner administration**, where the person is given the medication by a health practitioner.

'Voluntary' means it is the person's voluntary choice.

The person must have decision-making capacity to decide to access VAD.

Legal Framework by State and Territory

The information in this factsheet is a guide only. For detailed information about the law on VAD in your State visit End of Life Law in Australia.

(<https://end-of-life.qut.edu.au/assisteddying>)

Victoria

Legislation: VAD Act 2017

Eligibility:

- Must be 18 years or older.
- Resident of Victoria for at least 12 months.
- Diagnosed with a terminal illness expected to cause death within six months (or 12 months for neurodegenerative conditions).
- Capable of making and communicating the decision.

Process:

- Two independent medical assessments.
- A written request followed by two verbal requests.
- 9-day reflection period between the first and final request.

Visit: [VIC Dept. of Health VAD website](#)

Email: vadcarenavigator@petermac.org

Western Australia

Legislation: VAD Act 2019

Eligibility:

- Must be 18 years or older.
- Resident of Western Australia for at least 12 months.
- Diagnosed with a terminal illness expected to cause death within six months (or 12 months for neurodegenerative conditions).
- Capable of making and communicating the decision.

Process:

- Two independent medical assessments.
- A written request followed by two verbal requests.
- A minimum 9-day reflection period between the first and final request.

Visit: [WA Dept. of Health VAD website](#)

Email: VADCarenavigator@health.wa.gov.au

Tasmania

Legislation: End-of-Life Choices (VAD) Act 2021

Eligibility:

- Must be 18 years or older.
- Resident of Tasmania for at least 12 months.
- Diagnosed with a terminal illness expected to cause death within six months (or 12 months for neurodegenerative conditions).
- Capable of making and communicating the decision.

Process:

- Two independent medical assessments.
- A written request followed by two verbal requests.
- A minimum 9-day reflection period between the first and final request.

Visit: [TAS Dept. of Health VAD website](#)

Email: vad@health.tas.gov.au

Queensland

Legislation: VAD Act 2021

Eligibility:

- Must be 18 years or older.
- Resident of Queensland for at least 12 months.
- Diagnosed with a terminal illness expected to cause death within 12 months.
- Capable of making and communicating the decision.

Process:

- Two independent medical assessments.
- A written request followed by two verbal requests.
- A minimum 9-day reflection period between the first and final request.

Visit: [QLD Dept. of Health VAD website](#)

Email: qvadsupport@health.qld.gov.au

Australian Capital Territory

- The [Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2024 \(ACT\)](#) was passed by the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) Parliament on 5 June 2024. VAD will commence operation in the ACT on 3 November 2025. The new laws provide for and regulate access to VAD.
- Further information is available from [ACT Health](#).

South Australia

Legislation: VAD Act 2021

Eligibility:

- Must be 18 years or older.
- Resident of South Australia for at least 12 months.
- Diagnosed with a terminal illness expected to cause death within six months (or 12 months for neurodegenerative conditions).
- Capable of making and communicating the decision.

Process:

- Two independent medical assessments.
- A written request followed by two verbal requests.
- A minimum 9-day reflection period between the first and final request.

Visit: [SA Dept. of Health VAD website](#)

Email: Health.VADCareNavigators@sa.gov.au

New South Wales

Legislation: VAD Act 2021

Eligibility:

- Must be 18 years or older.
- Resident of New South Wales for at least 12 months.
- Diagnosed with a terminal illness expected to cause death within six months (or 12 months for neurodegenerative conditions).
- Capable of making and communicating the decision.

Process:

- Two independent medical assessments.
- A written request followed by two verbal requests.
- A minimum 9-day reflection period between the first and final request.

Visit: [NSW VAD Care Navigator Service](#)

Email: NSLHD-VADCareNavigator@health.nsw.gov.au

Northern Territory

Legislation: No current VAD laws (As of August 2024)

Eligibility:

- The territories do not have their own VAD laws due to federal restrictions; however, discussions and potential legislative changes are ongoing.

Voluntary Assisted Dying and Aboriginal people

- Voluntary Assisted Dying is an unfamiliar concept for many First Nations people. In some Aboriginal languages there is no equivalent translation for the concept of voluntary assisted dying.
- Aboriginal concepts of individual and community wellbeing are strongly linked to culture and spirit. This holistic view of wellbeing incorporates cyclical concepts of life and death. Discussions around end-of-life care and choices with Aboriginal patients should recognise and respect these key components of wellbeing.

Strategies for Clients and Supporters

Coping with a terminal illness and making end-of-life decisions can be emotionally challenging for clients, family, friends, and caregivers. Fortunately, there are many support options and strategies to help you through this journey:

- **Consider Mental Health Support:** Seeking a counsellor or psychologist can provide valuable emotional support. Your doctor can refer you if needed.
- **Connect with Your Support Network:** Reach out to trusted friends and family for emotional support. Discussing end-of-life choices can be difficult, especially with differing opinions; your doctor can help facilitate these conversations about VAD.
- **Prioritise Self-Care:** Make time for yourself by scheduling regular breaks and engaging in activities you enjoy.
- **Practice Mindfulness:** Use techniques such as meditation, grounding exercises, and deep breathing to manage difficult emotions.
- **Stay Connected:** Maintain social connections and participate in community activities to prevent isolation.
- **Education:** Learning about VAD can empower you to navigate the process more confidently.
- **Utilise Support Services:** Refer to the support services listed in this brochure for additional assistance.
- **Check for VAD Care Navigator Services:** Many states offer VAD Care Navigator services to help you understand your options. Visit your local Department of Health website to see if this service is available in your area.

Resources to support clients and families

- **Health Direct**
<https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/voluntary-assisted-dying>
- **End of Life Directions for Aged Care**
<https://www.eldac.com.au/Toolkits/End-of-Life-Law/Voluntary-Assisted-Dying/Overview>
- **QUT End of Life Law in Australia**
<https://end-of-life.qut.edu.au/assisteddying>
- **SWCNS Aboriginal Liaison Officers:**
Email:
VADcarenavigator@health.wa.gov.au
Phone: (08) 9431 2755
- **Roles and obligations of medical practitioners, registered nurses, allied health professionals and enrolled nurses, and personal care workers**
<https://www.eldac.com.au/tabid/7586/Default.aspx>
- **Residential facilities in South Australia, Queensland and New South Wales and Victoria, Western Australia and Tasmania**
<https://www.eldac.com.au/tabid/7586/Default.aspx>
- **Frequently asked questions about voluntary assisted dying**
<https://www.eldac.com.au/tabid/7410/Default.aspx>
- **End of Life Law in Australia**
<https://end-of-life.qut.edu.au/assisteddying>
- **State departments of health**
<https://www.eldac.com.au/tabid/5756/Default.aspx>