

What is voluntary assisted dying and how you can have your say?

Ensuring compassionate, high-quality, and accessible care for those nearing end of life, is a fundamental right for all Territorians. Just like every other Australian, the NT community should have the freedom to make choices regarding their end-of-life care.

The NT has a unique history as the first jurisdiction in Australia to introduce voluntary assisted dying (VAD) in 1995. Today, many Territorians seek genuine choices for their end-of-life care, including the option to align their final moments with their held values.

Voluntary assisted dying is a carefully regulated process that provides individuals with the choice to end their life when they wish, provided they meet all the legal criteria.

The VAD framework places a strong emphasis on safety, ethics, and the protection of both individuals and healthcare professionals. In December 2022, the Australian Senate passed the *Restoring Territory Rights Act* (Cth), removing previous restrictions that had prevented the NT and the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) from enacting VAD legislation.

Voluntary assisted dying is already accessible in Victoria, Western Australia, Tasmania, Queensland, and South Australia, and will be introduced in New South Wales in November 2023. The ACT will also consider VAD legislation in its Legislative Assembly in 2023.

Community Engagement

An expert advisory panel has been set up as part of the consultation process.

The Panel, co-chaired by Vicki O'Halloran AO CVO and Duncan McConnel CS, is committed to engaging with Territorians to gather the necessary input to shape a final report to be provided to the NT Government by July 2024.

This consultation process will include regional and remote areas of the Northern Territory and major urban centres, ensuring that community questions and feedback about voluntary assisted dying are heard and addressed. The Panel's priority is to ensure consultation takes into account the perspectives of Aboriginal Territorians and other cultural and religious groups.

To learn more about VAD and share your input, go to cmc.nt.gov.au/vad

Guide 1 This guide may contain sensitive information related to voluntary assisted dying

There are 5 discussion guides that are designed to assist those who want to contribute to the development of VAD legislation, regulations, and operations. They provide information about VAD in other Australian states and outline key topics for consideration and feedback across five crucial areas. The Guides also highlight the specific questions that the Expert Panel will be addressing:

1. What lessons can the Northern Territory learn from the VAD experiences in other jurisdictions, including international examples?
2. Who should have access to VAD?
3. What should be the process for individuals to access VAD?
4. What models of care should be adopted to effectively implement VAD in the Northern Territory context?
5. What are the legal and ethical responsibilities of healthcare practitioners involved in VAD?
6. What safeguards need to be established for individuals seeking or providing VAD?
7. How should compliance be monitored?
8. Any other questions that the panel deems relevant.

Stakeholders from diverse sectors across the NT, including health, non-government organisations, community groups, Aboriginal community-controlled organisations, peak bodies, universities, and researchers, will be actively engaged.

It's important to note that once the law is debated and passed, the availability of voluntary assisted dying to eligible individuals will not be immediate, appropriate training and protocols and processes will need to be completed and established.

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