

What process should a person follow to access VAD

Territorians should have access to appropriate information and support to help them make decisions about accessing voluntary assisted dying (VAD).

What do you think the process should be for accessing VAD in the Northern Territory?

For your consideration, this is a summary of the process to access VAD in other Australian states:

1. The person asks a qualified and experienced doctor (first doctor) to help with voluntary assisted dying.
2. The first doctor assesses if that the person is eligible to access voluntary assisted dying.
3. The person asks a different qualified and experienced doctor (second doctor) to help with voluntary assisted dying.
4. The second doctor assesses that the person is eligible to access voluntary assisted dying.
5. The person makes a written request to the first doctor, witnessed by independent witnesses.
6. The person makes a final request to the first doctor.
7. The first doctor makes sure the person is still eligible for voluntary assisted dying, submits paperwork, and arranges for a pharmacist to supply a prescribed VAD substance.
8. The person dies by taking the voluntary assisted dying substance when they choose to do so, either by taking the substance themselves or by asking a health professional to help them take the substance.

Finding a health professional who can help

In the Territory with small populations spread out over a large area, it can be hard to find a doctor. Online meetings are often the only way people can speak to health professionals.

How should Territorians be able to request access to voluntary assisted dying, and should they be allowed to use online platforms, for example, the first request must be in person with a health professional, but the second request can be online?

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

In other Australian states, a nurse practitioner can also help a person access VAD, should we consider this in the NT?

Making sure Territorians freely choose VAD

In other places in Australia, a person can only access VAD if they take a few days to think about it before making the final request. A person can only access VAD if other people witness at least one written request and a witnesses must be someone who will not benefit personally or financially from the person's death.

Do you think a person can be a witness for a VAD request if they are also a beneficiary?

In some places in Australia, a medical professional is not allowed to start a discussion about VAD. Other states allow medical professionals to start the discussion about VAD, but they must provide information about treatment, palliative care and support options and their likely outcomes at the same time.

What model should we use in the NT?

Taking the VAD substance to die

In parts of Australia, a doctor can provide an eligible person access to a prescribed medication to bring about the person's death as part of the VAD process. This substance is called the voluntary assisted dying substance.

The person can decide when, or even if, they want to use this substance. Some states have established specific timeframes for returning the substance if the individual opts not to use it (e.g., within seven days).

In most Australian states, individuals are required to self-administer the voluntary assisted dying substance, but in cases where this isn't possible or appropriate, a doctor can assist them. Some states also allow individuals the choice of self-administration or seeking assistance from a healthcare professional.

How should we approach this in the NT?

Notifying and registering a person's death

When a person dies in the Northern Territory, it must be registered with Births, Deaths and Marriages within seven working days after the burial or the cremation.

A death registration statement is usually completed by the funeral director, the person who arranges for the disposal of the remains, or a local health worker.

Death certificates are used for various legal, insurance and other purposes and a person's family might not want to include details of how a person died. Some states in Australia require a death certificate to state that a person's death was caused by their illness, and not caused by voluntary assisted dying.

We want to know your views on how a person's death should be notified and registered if they die from voluntary assisted dying.

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