



Voluntary assisted dying implementation in WA

Overview and update

Dr Scott Blackwell

GP

Chair, Implementation Leadership Team

Amanda Bolleter

Project Director, End of Life Care

Department of Health



Overview

Scott and Amanda

- Introduction to the legislation
- Update re implementation
- Staying informed

Stephanie

- The legal obligations of all health practitioners under the *Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2019* (the Act)
- Outline of the voluntary assisted dying request and assessment process
- Practical information for health practitioners



The Voluntary Assisted Dying Act **2019**

- The Act will commence in full on 1 July 2021.
- The Act enables an eligible person to legally access medication that will cause their death. This medication is called the voluntary assisted dying substance.
- The process requires:
 - **3 requests** to access voluntary assisted dying must be made: First Request; Written Declaration; and Final Request.
 - **2 assessments** independently completed by eligible medical practitioners to confirm the patient is eligible.
 - The patient be informed of many different aspects relating to treatment and palliative care options, as well as voluntary assisted dying.
 - A decision for either self-administration or practitioner administration of the voluntary assisted dying substance.
 - A person who is eligible remains eligible through the entire process and can revoke their involvement at any stage.



Principles informing the Act (1)

- Every human life has equal value.
- A person's autonomy, including autonomy in respect of end of life choices, should be respected.
- 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 and treatment.
- A person approaching the end of life should be provided with high quality care and treatment, including palliative care and treatment, to minimise the person's suffering and maximise the person's quality of life.
- A therapeutic relationship between a person and the person's health practitioner should, wherever possible, be supported and maintained.
- A person should be encouraged to openly discuss death and dying, and the person's preferences and values regarding their care, treatment and end of life should be encouraged and promoted.



Principles informing the Act (2)

- A person should be supported in conversations with their health practitioners, family and carers and community about treatment and care preferences.
- A person is entitled to genuine choices about the person's care, treatment and end of life, irrespective of where they live in Western Australia and having regard to the person's culture and language.
- A person who is a regional resident is entitled to the same level of access to voluntary assisted dying as a person who lives in the metropolitan region.
- There is a need to protect persons who may be subject to abuse or coercion.
- All persons, including health practitioners, have the right to be shown respect for their culture, religion, beliefs, values and personal characteristics.



Patient eligibility

To be eligible for voluntary assisted dying, the person must meet **all** of the eligibility criteria. This includes that they:

- are aged 18 years or over
- are an Australian citizen or permanent resident
- have been ordinarily resident in WA for at least 12 months
- have been diagnosed with at least 1 disease, illness or medical condition that is advanced, progressive and will cause death; and, will, on the balance of probabilities cause death within a period of 6 months (or 12 months for neurodegenerative); and, is causing suffering that cannot be relieved in a manner that the person considers tolerable
- must have decision-making capacity in relation to voluntary assisted dying
- must be acting voluntarily and without coercion
- must have an enduring request for access to voluntary assisted dying



Workforce considerations

- The Act enables an additional end-of-life choice for an eligible person; this choice can take place in a variety of settings, including primary care.
- Health practitioners are not required to provide or support voluntary assisted dying, participation is a choice.
- The extent to which health practitioners are involved is also a choice (e.g. only providing information vs agreeing to be Coordinating Practitioner).
- Health practitioners and other staff should consider their level of involvement and how they will respond to:
 - a patient seeking information about voluntary assisted dying; or
 - a patient requesting access to voluntary assisted dying.
- Also consider what workplace supports might be required (e.g. EAP, bereavement counselling etc.)



Implementation Leadership Team

- **Dr Scott Blackwell – Chair**
- **Dr Elissa Campbell**
- **Dr Peter Wallace**
(rep RACGP)
- **Dr Andrew Miller**
(rep AMA-WA)
- **Chris Kane**
(rep WAPHA)
- **Hon Dr Sally Talbot MLC**
- **Noreen Fynn – Deputy Chair**
- **Assoc Prof Chris Etherton-Beer**
- **Stephanie Dowden**
(rep Nurse Practitioners)
- **Amanda Collins-Clinch**
(rep AHCWA)
- **Marg Denton**
(rep WACHS)



Implementing the Act

There are 8 workstreams being delivered by the Voluntary Assisted Dying Act Implementation Project (VADAIP) and supported by the Implementation Leadership Team (ILT):

1. **Voluntary Assisted Dying Board** – monitors the delivery of voluntary assisted dying and refers relevant matters to WA Police, AHPRA, HaDSCO etc.
2. **Clinical Guidelines** – guidance for participating practitioners and other health professionals to support compliance with the Act.
3. **Statewide Pharmacy Service** – provides state-wide, equitable and person-centred access to the voluntary assisted dying substance.
4. **Statewide Care Navigator Service** – provides a single point of contact for any questions or requests for support regarding voluntary assisted dying in WA.



Implementing the Act (cont.)

5. **Approved Practitioner Training** – online training required to be completed by eligible medical practitioners and nurse practitioners before commencing activities under the Act.
6. **Consumer and Provider information** – accessible information about the voluntary assisted dying process in WA for patients, families and health professionals.
7. **VAD Information Management System** – online ‘portal’ to document required information and support compliance with the Act.
8. **Data, Reporting and Research** – to provide an Annual Report on the voluntary assisted dying process required by the Minister for Health and future opportunities for quality improvement.



Staying Informed

Website:

www.health.wa.gov.au/voluntaryassisteddying

- Can subscribe to updates via link on website
- Implementation Leadership Team communiques
- Key events / milestones / releases
- Online pre-recorded presentations
- Information sheets

Implementation Conference
Saturday 22 and Sunday 23 May
Frasers, Kings Park