

Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2019 Implementation Project

Fact Sheet – Information for Health Providers and Related Care Service Providers

Key Messages

- Western Australia has passed legislation which enables voluntary assisted dying to become a choice available to eligible people in **mid-2021**. This is to allow for an 18-month implementation period
 - The Department of Health is working to prepare for voluntary assisted dying becoming available in Western Australia, including the development of education, information and supporting materials
 - There are many aspects to ensuring that voluntary assisted dying is safe, accessible and person-centred
 - The Department of Health has set up an Implementation Leadership Team to provide expert guidance to the implementation project
 - Health providers and health services can start considering how they and their service will become prepared for people or patients who may request voluntary assisted dying
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What is voluntary assisted dying?

Voluntary assisted dying involves a process to access medication and to enable a person to legally choose the manner and timing of their death.

The term 'voluntary assisted dying' emphasises the voluntary nature of the choice of the person and their enduring capacity to make this decision.

Who will be able to access voluntary assisted dying?

The person must be an adult who is an Australian citizen or permanent resident and have been ordinarily resident in Western Australia for at least 12 months.

The person must have a disease, illness or medical condition that is advanced, progressive and will cause death (on the balance of probabilities) within six months, or 12 months if it is a neurodegenerative condition (for example motor neurone disease). It must be causing suffering that cannot be relieved in a manner the person finds tolerable.

The person must have decision-making capacity in relation to voluntary assisted dying. They must be acting voluntarily and without coercion (force). Their request must be enduring.

Which health practitioners can participate in voluntary assisted dying?

Medical practitioners that meet certain eligibility requirements can undertake the roles of coordinating practitioner, consulting practitioner, or administering practitioner. Nurse practitioners that meet certain eligibility requirements can undertake the role of administering practitioner.

Do I have to participate in voluntary assisted dying?

No. You may choose to not to participate in voluntary assisted dying – this is outlined in the law.

What else do I need to know?

This is an initial simple fact sheet and is not intended to provide detailed information on voluntary assisted dying.

Where can I find out more information about the *Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2019*?

The law contains a lot of detail about who can access voluntary assisted dying and the processes that must be followed.

For more information, and to see the full legislation, please go to the Department of Health website: www.health.wa.gov.au/voluntaryassisteddying

The website also contains a flow chart that outlines the voluntary assisted dying process and a presentation that you can watch or listen to. These are good starting points for learning more.

What is the Department of Health doing to prepare for voluntary assisted dying?

A project is underway at the Department of Health to ensure that voluntary assisted dying is implemented properly in Western Australia.

It is important to make sure that the process is safe, appropriate and follows the law.

What needs to be prepared?

There are many aspects to making sure that Western Australia is ready for when voluntary assisted dying becomes a choice available to eligible people.

The *Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2019* outlines many forms and details, and the various processes that must be followed. Preparations need to be made so that everybody involved understands these requirements so that they can be followed correctly.

The training program for the doctors and nurse practitioners who take part in the process needs to be developed, the Voluntary Assisted Dying Board needs to be set up and the IT system for processing and data collection needs to be created.

Services need to be set up so that people can access the voluntary assisted dying substance once it has been prescribed.

There will also be a Care Navigator Service which will assist people to find out information about voluntary assisted dying and support people during the process if needed.

Who is helping in the preparations?

The Department of Health has created an Implementation Leadership Team led by Dr Scott Blackwell, who was also on the Ministerial Expert Panel on Voluntary Assisted Dying. This team is made up of medical, nursing, health and community representatives. More details are available on the [website](#).

During the preparations, the Implementation Leadership Team will work with many other representatives and stakeholders to ensure they have the right information when developing the more detailed aspects of implementing voluntary assisted dying in WA.

What do I need to do? What does my health service need to do?

It is worthwhile starting to spend some time contemplating your own position on voluntary assisted dying and how you may respond if a patient asks you about it once it becomes a legal option.

It is also a good time for health services to consider what their own organisational policies and procedures may need to be in response to voluntary assisted dying becoming legal.

During the coming year, the Department of Health will develop supporting information, as well as training (which is mandatory for practitioners participating in the voluntary assisted dying process).

How can I be kept up to date on progress?

The Implementation Leadership Team will be sending out email updates during the year. You can sign up to receive these updates [here](#).

Is there anything else I should know?

There is quite a lot of information about the process that led to voluntary assisted dying becoming passed into law in Western Australia and the Final Report of the [Ministerial Expert Panel on Voluntary Assisted Dying](#) provides a good overall summary of the issues involved. (Please note however that some aspects of the law are a little different to the panel recommendations).

There is also much information available on the internet about other places that have some form of voluntary assisted dying, including in [Victoria, Australia](#). You may find that some of the resources that deal with more general information related to voluntary assisted dying are quite helpful but be aware that the details of local laws and processes can be quite different to the Western Australian law.