

7 October 2020

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Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **Health**

Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2019

Implementation Update

Implementation Leadership Team - Communique October 2020

Message from the Chair, Dr Scott Blackwell

The Implementation Leadership Team (ILT) for voluntary assisted dying in WA is now 6 months into its work and after our last meeting, during which we covered an extensive amount of the work we are doing, there was a moment to reflect.

The work the ILT is doing has an added responsibility when compared to the policy work that each member has been involved in many times in the past.

This work will result in enabling a new choice for the people of WA, based on legislation, that will commence in 10 months. In spite of this pressure, or maybe because of it, the ILT is well on the way to forming the foundation for this new choice.

The work being produced exhibits a high degree of respect. Respect I believe that is born out of the reality that the outcome here is a service for a person. This person will be a Western Australian who has a terminal illness and who is suffering. When looking back for a moment this respect is seen throughout the history of voluntary assisted dying here in WA. From the concept that emerged from the will of the people, through the development of legislation and its passage through our Parliament, to the legislation that is the script upon which we are building.

There is much more to do and we will remain busy for some time and we will continue in this attitude of respect.

Dr Scott Blackwell

Chair - Implementation Leadership Team, Western Australia

Voluntary assisted dying implementation update

The ILT and workgroups continue to progress preparations for the introduction of voluntary assisted dying in Western Australia (WA) on 1 July 2021.

The general information fact sheets, audio and recorded presentations for community members and health service providers that have been released are being accessed – the presentations have now been viewed well over 300 times.

Engagement with stakeholders is underway and targeted consultations have supported several implementation projects.

- **Voluntary Assisted Dying Care Navigator Service**

Engagement on the draft model for the service involved a series of one-on-one and group consultations with an additional opportunity for stakeholders to provide feedback online. The responses provided through the consultations have been extremely valuable to the service development process which is now underway.

- **Participating Practitioner Guidelines**

The Victorian practitioner guidelines were used to inform and guide engagement with stakeholders in WA. This involved an interactive webinar with real-time audience questions and an opportunity to provide additional comments following the webinar. The feedback provided by stakeholders is currently being included in the drafting of the WA participating practitioner guidelines.

- **Voluntary Assisted Dying Board ICT solution**

Targeted consultation on the ICT system that will support practitioners to submit forms and other required information has now been completed. These consultations will inform the next implementation phase for the ICT solution.

Ongoing development of resources to support implementation

Implementation of voluntary assisted dying in WA is a complex process and the ILT is focused on the development of resources to support this process. More detailed information and materials for providers, consumers and community members, including the voluntary assisted dying handbook, guidelines and fact sheets, are scheduled for release during the first half of 2021.

The ILT will also continue to link with health professionals and agencies in Victoria as implementation of voluntary assisted dying in WA progresses. Our Victorian colleagues have been invaluable in providing insight into the operationalisation of voluntary assisted dying.

Preparing for voluntary assisted dying in WA

Health service and related care service provider readiness

The [Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2019](#) (the Act) will commence 1 July 2021. Health service and related care service providers can familiarise themselves with the Act.

Voluntary assisted dying will take place in a variety of settings. Several resources are available to help service providers and staff consider the impact that voluntary assisted dying will have on their service.

Useful resources for general information include:

- Fact sheet – [Health service and other service providers](#)
- Presentation – [Introductory information for health and other service providers](#)

A more detailed resource to assist service providers and staff in preparing for implementation of voluntary assisted dying is:

- Fact Sheet – [Health service or related care service provider preparation](#)

Implementation of the Act will require an organisation-wide approach for service providers. The information included in these resources is designed to encourage service providers and staff to begin thinking about their level of participation and the related processes that will need to be completed prior to commencement of the Act.

Learning from the Victorian experience

The Victorian Voluntary Assisted Dying Review Board has recently released its [third report of operations from January to June 2020](#). Service providers may find this useful in understanding the scope of voluntary assisted dying and the potential demand in WA.

Please keep in mind that WA has approximately 40% of the population of Victoria and the legislation governing voluntary assisted dying is not identical - WA resources should be used for understanding the requirements here in WA.

Throughout November the ILT will host a series of webinars in partnership with Victorian service providers. This is an opportunity for Western Australian services to learn from the preparation and implementation experiences of providers who have been delivering voluntary assisted dying in Victoria since June 2019. While details are currently being finalised, WA service providers can register their interest in attending these webinars through the following links:

- 19 November 2020 - [Preparing for voluntary assisted dying: Palliative Care providers](#)
- 23 November 2020 - [Preparing for voluntary assisted dying: Hospital and related service providers](#)
- 24 November 2020 - [Preparing for voluntary assisted dying: General Practitioners and Nurse Practitioners](#)
- 25 November 2020 - [Preparing for voluntary assisted dying: Residential Aged Care providers](#) **New date*

Please circulate this communique within your networks so that those who might be interested in attending a webinar are aware of the upcoming dates.

Subscribe now and further information

These early stage communications will be followed with further information as implementation of voluntary assisted dying in WA continues to move forward. More information is currently available at the [WA Department of Health's voluntary assisted dying website](#).

If you would like to receive future editions of the ILT communique, please subscribe [here](#).

Support Services

Some people may find issues relating to end of life care distressing. If reading the material in this communique or thinking about end of life care has raised some issues regarding grief or bereavement or personal crisis, there are helplines and services available to provide support and counselling 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

- **Lifeline:** Ring 13 11 14 for telephone support and counselling 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. You can also visit Lifeline's crisis support chat online, 7pm to midnight, 7 days a week
- **Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement:** Ring (03) 9265 2100 or 1800 642 066 (free call, Australia-wide) for information about bereavement services and support





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