

Quality Practice Series #3 (December 2022)

Message from the Voluntary Assisted Dying Board Chair

As we approach the festive season the Voluntary Assisted Dying Board (the Board) would like to acknowledge all families who have been touched by voluntary assisted dying and recognise this may be an especially difficult time for them. In September, the Department of Health facilitated a memorial service to mark the first year of voluntary assisted dying as an end of life choice in Western Australia and we hope this was a source of comfort to those grieving the loss of a loved one. The Board is always grateful to the patients, families, friends and practitioners who have provided personal reflections throughout the year, as this helps us to remain people centred and understand the human element of the voluntary assisted dying process. We understand that taking the time to share this written feedback is time consuming and may be emotionally challenging and thank those who have shared their stories.

The Board delivered its first annual report to the Minister for Health, in November, which has been an opportunity to share all that was achieved in the first twelve months of voluntary assisted dying in Western Australia. Supporting practitioners is a priority for the Board and we will continue to advocate for removal of barriers to the use of telehealth, remuneration of participating practitioners and adequate funding and support for eligible patients, including those in regional areas. The Board is committed to continuous improvement and has made several recommendations to ensure this end of life choice is sustainable, equitable and available for all Western Australians.

I would like to welcome Susan Gontaszewski as the new Manager of the Voluntary Assisted Dying Board Secretariat Unit. Susan has a background in health regulation and policy, previously working within the Department of Health's Clinical Excellence Division on the regulation of reproductive technology and the Public and Aboriginal Health Division to reduce the risks associated with controlled drug prescribing. She is a Churchill Fellow who travelled to the United States and Canada to develop a framework for real time prescription monitoring. Susan is also the Deputy Mayor of the City of Vincent where her focus has been on delivering strong governance, smart policy and improved community engagement.

Wishing you all the best for the festive season and the coming year.

Dr Scott Blackwell
Chair - Voluntary Assisted Dying Board

Focus Area 1 – Planning for Death

Planning for Death Proforma

Following the implementation of voluntary assisted dying in July 2021, the Board has received personal reflections from practitioners, patients, family and friends. We welcome and encourage this feedback as it assists us to understand what is working well and identify areas for improvement. While most of the information shared has been positive, some families have described challenging situations, where following a self-administration they are uncertain of what to do next.

Preparing for the death of a loved one is difficult and while this may be confronting for some people, having a plan in place can help those present to understand the practicalities of what needs to be done, while also respecting the patient's wishes. To assist patients and their families, the Board encourages the use of the *Proforma planning for death*. This template is available in the [Voluntary Assisted Dying Guidelines \(Appendix I\)](#) and can be completed by the patient with their Coordinating Practitioner, carers, family, friends or other health professionals.

Focus Area 2 – Notification of Death Forms

Notification of Death Form – (Coordinating/Administering Practitioner)

It is a requirement of the *Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2019* that the *Notification of Death Form – (Coordinating/Administering Practitioner)* is submitted to the Board, following the death of a patient. This applies to all deaths that occur during the voluntary assisted dying process (except for Practitioner Administration), which includes:

- The patient self-administered the voluntary assisted dying substance;
- The patient died as a result of their disease;
- The patient died due to another reason.

If the Coordinating Practitioner becomes aware that the patient has died, they must complete *The Notification of Death Form – (Coordinating/Administering Practitioner)* and submit it to the Board **within two business days** of becoming aware of the patient's death.

If the Administering Practitioner becomes aware that the patient has died, they must inform the Coordinating Practitioner of the patient's death and complete the *Notification of Death Form – (Coordinating/Administering Practitioner)* and submit it to the Board **within two business days** of becoming aware of the patient's death.

The Consulting Practitioner is unable to submit the *Notification of Death Form – (Coordinating/Administering Practitioner)* on behalf of the Coordinating or Administering Practitioner. It is recommended that if they become aware of the patient's death, they add a note to the patient episode in VAD-IMS and notify the Coordinating Practitioner, who can then complete the form.

Following the submission of the *Notification of Death Form – (Coordinating/Administering Practitioner)* when the substance has been supplied, but the patient did not self-administer, the VAD Board Secretariat Unit will follow up with the Contact Person, to ensure they are aware of their

responsibilities. This includes the requirement to take the substance to an Authorised Disposer within 14 days after the patient's death.

Notification of Death Form – Other Medical Practitioner

This form is completed by a medical practitioner who **is not** the Coordinating or Administering Practitioner and has:

- Attended a deceased person and completed the Medical Certificate Cause of Death; and
- Knows or reasonably believes that the person self-administered, or was administered, a voluntary assisted dying substance in accordance with the *Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2019*.

This form can be accessed and submitted via VAD-IMS or by fax (9222 0399) and must be submitted to the Voluntary Assisted Dying Board **within two business days**. A medical practitioner does not need to be a registered user on VAD-IMS to be able to complete and submit this form.

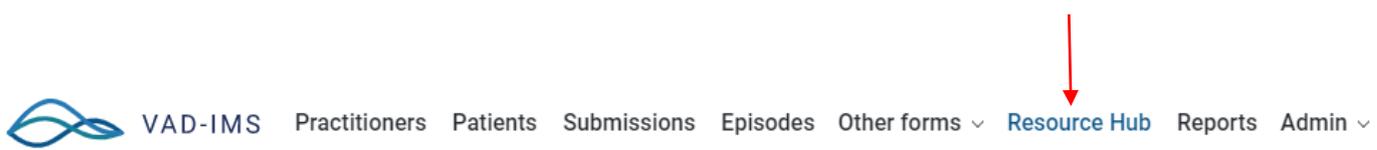
Practitioner Administration Form

When a patient dies via practitioner administration, the Coordinating or Administering Practitioner must submit the *Practitioner Administration* form to the Board **within two business days**. Once this form has been submitted to VAD-IMS the Notification of Death panel automatically displays on the right-hand side of the screen. In submitting this form, the practitioner has met their obligation of notifying the Board of the patient's death and does not need to submit a *Notification of Death Form - (Coordinating/Administering Practitioner)*.

***Note:** Submission of forms via VAD-IMS is considered giving a copy to the Voluntary Assisted Dying Board.

Focus Area 3 – VAD-IMS

In June 2022, there was an upgrade to VAD-IMS, which included the addition of a new Resource Hub:



The Resource Hub has been designed as a central point where Practitioners can access voluntary assisted dying resources including blank forms, fact sheets and training materials. The training videos that are currently available via My File Transfer (MyFT) have now been uploaded to the VAD-IMS Resource Hub and can be accessed by logging in, navigating to the Resource Hub and then *Filter by Type* to select Training.

For any assistance locating items on the Resource Hub please contact the VAD Board Secretariat Unit via email (VADBoard@health.wa.gov.au).

Useful Links

The Act: www.legislation.wa.gov.au Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2019

The Act Explanatory Material (as tabled): [Parliament tabled paper 3625 \(Feb 2020\)](#)

The Board: <https://ww2.health.wa.gov.au/voluntaryassisteddyingboard>

- Board membership, functions and processes
- VAD-IMS user support materials
- Contact details
Email: VADBoard@health.wa.gov.au
Fax: 08 9222 0399

Department of Health resources:

https://ww2.health.wa.gov.au/Articles/U_Z/Voluntary-assisted-dying

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