



Accessing voluntary assisted dying in Western Australia

Who is eligible?

Summary

This information sheet is for people who want to know more about who can access voluntary assisted dying in Western Australia (WA).

Key points include:

- Voluntary assisted dying enables a patient to legally access medication that will cause their death. It is intended to be accessible for anyone who is eligible.
- A person must meet **all** eligibility criteria to be able to access voluntary assisted dying (the criteria are outlined in this information sheet).
- If you would like more information about voluntary assisted dying, you can talk to a medical practitioner (doctor) or another health professional involved in your care.
- You can also contact the Western Australian Voluntary Assisted Dying Statewide Care Navigator Service (SWCNS) for assistance or information.

What is voluntary assisted dying?

Voluntary assisted dying is a legal process that enables a patient to legally access medication that will cause their death. This medication is called the voluntary assisted dying substance. The patient may choose to take the voluntary assisted dying substance themselves or may have the substance administered to them by an eligible medical practitioner or nurse practitioner.

On 1 July 2021, WA became the second state in Australia to allow voluntary assisted dying (the first state was Victoria). This means that eligible Western Australians can now request access to voluntary assisted dying as an option at end of life.

Who will be able to access voluntary assisted dying?

The *Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2019* (the Act) is the legislation that regulates voluntary assisted dying in WA. The Act requires that a person must meet **all** the following criteria to be eligible for voluntary assisted dying:

- The person has reached 18 years of age
- The person is an Australian citizen or permanent resident
- At the time of making a first request (for voluntary assisted dying), the person has been ordinarily resident in Western Australia for a period of at least 12 months
- The person is diagnosed with at least one disease, illness or medical condition that:
 - is advanced, progressive and will cause death

- will, on the balance of probabilities, cause death within a period of six months or, in the case of a disease, illness or medical condition that is neurodegenerative, within a period of 12 months
- is causing suffering to the person that cannot be relieved in a manner the person considers tolerable.
- The person has decision-making capacity in relation to voluntary assisted dying
- The person is acting voluntarily and without coercion
- The person's request for access to voluntary assisted dying is enduring.

Who can I talk to about voluntary assisted dying?

If you think you may be interested in voluntary assisted dying and would like more information about the process, you can speak with a medical practitioner (doctor) or another health professional involved in your care (e.g. nurse, social worker etc.).

Medical practitioners and nurse practitioners can raise the topic of voluntary assisted dying with you if, at the same time, they also inform you about treatment options available to you and the likely outcomes of that treatment. They must also inform you about palliative care and treatment options available to you and the likely outcomes of that care and treatment. The Act does not allow other health professionals to raise the topic with you. This means that you will need to be the one to start the conversation.

You can talk to a health professional about voluntary assisted dying in person or during a telehealth appointment (e.g. phone or videoconference).

If a health professional does not agree with voluntary assisted dying (often called conscientious objection) they may suggest you talk with someone else. If they do not directly refer you to another health professional, you can contact SWCNS.

What is SWCNS?

SWCNS can support anyone involved with voluntary assisted dying in WA, including health professionals, service providers, patients and members of the community.

The Care Navigators can:

- provide general information about voluntary assisted dying
- provide specific information about voluntary assisted dying in WA
- help to locate a medical practitioner or nurse practitioner who is willing and eligible to participate
- assist patients to access regional support packages
- link people to other helpful resources.

SWCNS is based in Perth but can be accessed by email or phone from anywhere in WA during standard business hours (8:30am – 5:00pm).

Email: VADcarenavigator@health.wa.gov.au

Phone: (08) 9431 2755

Where can I find more information?

As well as talking to the people involved in your care, other sources that can provide useful information about voluntary assisted dying in WA include:

- Department of Health website www2.health.wa.gov.au/voluntaryassisteddying
- illness-specific organisations
- voluntary assisted dying support groups.

The information sheet *Accessing voluntary assisted dying in Western Australia – Overview of the process* outlines the key steps and roles involved in WA.

Glossary of terms

Refer to *Accessing voluntary assisted dying in Western Australia – Glossary of terms* for explanations of key terms used within this information sheet.

Acknowledgement

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