



Voluntary assisted dying position statement

1. Purpose

This position statement sets out the ANMF's position on voluntary assisted dying legislation (VAD) and the minimum safeguards the ANMF considers should be in place. It should be read with the ANMF position statement: *Caring for people with a life-limiting illness*.

2. Definitions

In this position statement, **voluntary assisted dying** (VAD) is defined as a regulated intervention by an authorised health practitioner, either providing the person with the means to end their life or, if the person is unable to do so, ending the person's life with the primary intent of relieving their pain or suffering, at the person's voluntary, repeated, and fully informed request.

3. Context

VAD laws have been passed in all Australian states and have commenced operation in Victoria, Western Australia, Tasmania, Queensland, South Australia and New South Wales.

The Northern Territory Government has assembled an expert advisory panel to consider VAD in the NT. The panel is due to report by July 2024.

A VAD bill was introduced to the ACT Parliament in late 2023.

4. Position

1. The ANMF supports legislative reform that advances the right of competent adults with a life-limiting physical illness that creates unbearable suffering to:
 - choose to die at a time and in a manner acceptable to them
 - not be compelled to suffer beyond their wishes.
2. The ANMF also supports palliative care as an important choice for all adults with a life-limiting illness and will continue to advocate for Australian governments to increase these resources and make timely, high quality palliative care available to all who want and need it, regardless of where they live, when they need it, or their financial means.
3. The ANMF considers all such legislative reform must provide specific safeguards for the person wishing to use VAD and for the nurses and midwives involved in their care

Safeguards for people with life-limiting illnesses

It is the position of the ANMF that:

4. Legislative reform authorising VAD must:
 - ensure that no individual, group or organisation can be compelled against their will to participate in, or be prohibited from participating in, an authorised assisted or supported death
 - only be accessible to people who have an incurable physical illness that creates unbearable suffering
 - require obtaining prescriptions from the treating doctor for the self-administration or assisted administration of medication that will end a person's life



Safeguards for practitioners providing care

It is the position of the ANMF that:

5. Legislative reform authorising VAD must give health practitioners the right to conscientiously object to participating in VAD on moral, ethical or religious grounds.
6. Legislative reform authorising VAD must also:
 - protect health practitioners from litigation when they are asked, and agree to assist with, a VAD process.
 - ensure that it is not an offence to:
 - confidentially advise a sufferer regarding a voluntarily chosen death
 - assist or support such a death
 - be present at the time of that death
 - include a reporting regime for the prescribing doctor and dispensing pharmacist.

5. Position statement management

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