

Voluntary Assisted Dying

Chair's update

August and September 2022 have been prolific months for the Voluntary Assisted Dying Taskforce and Implementation Team. This communique features an update on SA Voluntary Assisted Dying Pharmacy Service (SAVAD-PS) establishment, a key support service for the delivery of Voluntary Assisted Dying in South Australia.



Dr Chris Moy

The new Pharmacy Service is coming together quickly, with key resources and staff converging to facilitate the safe supply and education about voluntary assisted dying medications.

An important step towards voluntary assisted dying has been the ordering of the medication for self-administration. This is an enormous behind the scenes achievement by our Implementation Team and SA Pharmacy and is the culmination of hours of careful work to bring voluntary assisted dying one step closer to becoming a reality for eligible South Australians.

You may have seen that recruitment for our senior pharmacy positions within SAVAD-PS have been advertised. The successful applicants to this service will play the pivotal role of delivering the voluntary assisted dying medication kit to people all over South Australia, including the need for travel and overnight stays to reach people in regional and remote areas.

While applications for pharmacy positions are now closed, Care Navigator Service, Operations Team, and Review Board Secretariat positions are either open or coming soon, so head over to [iworkforSA.sa.gov.au](https://www.workforSA.sa.gov.au) for your opportunity to join the team.

Keep watching this space and www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/vad for more announcements as the time for voluntary assisted dying implementation in SA approaches.

Dr Chris Moy

Chair, Voluntary Assisted Dying Implementation Taskforce

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Spotlight on... SA Voluntary Assisted Dying Pharmacy Service

Voluntary assisted dying requires access to medication that can reliably result in death while causing minimal side effects.

The new SA Voluntary Assisted Dying Pharmacy Service (SAVAD-PS) has been set-up to ensure safe and equitable access to voluntary assisted dying medications for eligible South Australians.

Part of SA Pharmacy, the new service will work with the SA Voluntary Assisted Dying Care Navigator Service (SAVAD-CNS) and medical practitioners to ensure continuity of care and support across the journey for people accessing voluntary assisted dying statewide.

SAVAD-PS are responsible for ensuring substances are prescribed, labelled, stored, dispensed, and destroyed according to the safeguards set out in the *Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2021* (the Act).

Pharmacists working within SAVAD-PS will combine their clinical expertise and compassionate care skills to deliver high quality person centred services for people making the choice to access voluntary assisted dying, and their family and friends.

They will make deliveries of the secure medication directly to people who have been granted permits, sometimes requiring travel overnight to regional areas of South Australia.

To support safe and compassionate access to voluntary assisted dying, pharmacists will be available to answer questions and troubleshoot to manage medication-related risk throughout the process.

They will also work with nominated contact persons to ensure they know how to safely return any unused medication for disposal.

SAVAD-PS also play a critical support role for Coordinating Medical Practitioners who will be tasked with prescribing, and in some situations, administering medications.

Any new process can be challenging to navigate at first and the Pharmacy Service will be there to support clinicians throughout each step.

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The next few months will see the service built from the ground up. Recruitment to new senior pharmacist roles are well underway, and key information resources for people accessing voluntary assisted dying, their family and friends, and medical practitioners are in development.

Keep an eye on www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/vad for more information about the Pharmacy Service – coming soon.

If you have any questions about SAVAD-PS, please contact Health.VoluntaryAssistedDying@sa.gov.au.

Aboriginal community engagement

Work is underway to support a culturally safe and accessible pathway to voluntary assisted dying for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in South Australia. Together with the community, the Taskforce aims to build a narrative that promotes understanding of the concept of voluntary assisted dying and creates a cultural connection to it, but we are aware that this will take time.

Staff coming onboard to deliver voluntary assisted dying support services will undertake cultural awareness training and implement models of care informed by collaboration with colleagues in Aboriginal Health Services at a local health network level, with Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations, and other lead Aboriginal professional organisations.

Care provided will also need to consider concepts of family and shared decision making, and how the voluntary assisted dying process can be confidently navigated while addressing risks of coercion.

The Taskforce has recognised there is a lot to do in this space, and we will continue to meet with Aboriginal health organisations and community to ensure that voluntary assisted dying will be safe, culturally appropriate, and accessible for Aboriginal people who wish to make this choice at end of life.

Did you know?

The [Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2021](#) (the Act) recognises there may be conscientious objections for registered health practitioners in relation to voluntary assisted dying.

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The South Australian legislation acknowledges the rights of individuals to conscientious objection.

A registered health practitioner who has a conscientious objection to voluntary assisted dying has the right to refuse to do any of the following:

- > to provide information about voluntary assisted dying;
- > to participate in the request and assessment process;
- > to apply for a voluntary assisted dying permit;
- > to supply, prescribe or administer a voluntary assisted dying substance;
- > to be present at the time of administration of a voluntary assisted dying substance;
- > to dispense a prescription for a voluntary assisted dying substance.

Individual organisations will need to consider policies and procedures that support staff to conscientiously object.

If you want more information about you can support your organisation to do this, check out www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/vad or contact the Implementation Team at Health.VoluntaryAssistedDying@sa.gov.au.

Workshops, events and presentations

The Implementation Team are continuing to engage with a range of health sector and community stakeholders over September and October 2022. Roadshow presentations with local health networks are nearing completion, and the team have facilitated a number of specialised sessions for medical practitioners across SA.

We are already anticipating the next phase of sector readiness and community engagement needs that will continue right up to and beyond commencement of voluntary assisted dying in SA. This will ensure health and community service providers and medical practitioners feel ready to handle requests for information and assessments. Stay tuned to this space for more events.

Summary of September presentations

Event	Date
Royal Adelaide Hospital Cancer Nurses Group	1 September
Regional Local Health Network Senior Community Nursing & Specialist Leadership Forum	5 September
Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission	13 September
Lyell McEwin Hospital Grand Rounds	14 September
Multicultural Communities Council of SA - Ageing Well Network	23 September

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Get involved

A reminder that medical practitioners can [register their interest now](#) to access the voluntary assisted dying medical practitioner training when it is launched later in 2022.

Health practitioner survey

The Implementation Team would appreciate your help completing a [survey](#) to the understand capacity and willingness of South Australian health and medical practitioners to participate in voluntary assisted dying (you can choose to remain anonymous).

If you have already participated in the survey, we thank you for your feedback, and you do not need to complete it again.

Connect with us

Stay up to date with the latest news regarding voluntary assisted dying in South Australia by visiting www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/vad or join the mailing list by emailing us at Health.VoluntaryAssistedDying@sa.gov.au.

About the Implementation Team

This month, we are pleased to feature a little information about Varo and Sara from the team who are working behind the scenes to implement voluntary assisted dying in South Australia.

Varo (they/them) is the Program Manager for the Voluntary Assisted Dying Implementation Team and has a broad background in public policy, law, politics and not-for-profit management. They have held various policy, strategy and leadership roles across the housing, international development and LGBTIQ+ sectors and hold a Bachelor of Laws (Hons), Bachelor of International Studies and Graduate Certificate in Public Policy. Varo is deeply passionate about applying critical thinking, policy analysis and project management principles to create a safe and accessible end of life care choice for South Australians.

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Sara (she/her) is a Senior Project Officer, focussing on project communications activities. She started her health career as a registered nurse in respiratory care and general medicine before pursuing further studies in public health and health service management. Sara has worked in a range of administration and project positions in New South Wales and South Australian health organisations and government services. She is passionate about empowering people to make informed choices about their health and care needs that reflect their lived experience and values.

If you wish to connect with the team, contact Health.VoluntaryAssistedDying@sa.gov.au

Support services

Some people may find issues relating to voluntary assisted dying concerning or distressing. If reading the material in this communique or thinking about voluntary assisted dying has raised some issues regarding grief and bereavement or personal crisis, the helplines and websites below provide support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

- > Visit the [Lifeline website](#) or call 13 11 14
- > Visit our [Bereavement Portal](#)
- > Visit the [SA Health mental health services webpage](#) for a range of services
- > Call the Mental Health Triage Service on [13 14 65](#)
- > Call Kids Helpline on [1800 551 800](#)