



Witness a Written Declaration

What is a Written Declaration?

To access voluntary assisted dying a person must make a written declaration that they are making a voluntary decision to access voluntary assisted dying and that they understand the nature and effect of their decision.

The written declaration must be made in the approved form provided by the person's Coordinating Medical Practitioner.

Two witnesses are required to be present to witness the signing of the written declaration along with the Coordinating Medical Practitioner.

Who can be a witness?

Witnessing a written declaration does not require you to have prior knowledge of the person accessing voluntary assisted dying or specialist knowledge but is based on your observation of the person making the declaration at the time of signing.

You are not eligible to act as a witness to a written declaration if:

- you are aged 17 years or younger
- you know or reasonably believe you may be a beneficiary under the person's will
- you know or reasonably believe you may otherwise benefit from the death of the person
- you own or are responsible for the day-to-day operation of a health facility where the person lives or is being treated
- you are directly involved in providing health services or professional care to the person.


No more than one witness may be a family member of the person making the written declaration.

What is being witnessed?

In signing the written declaration, the two witnesses are independently certifying that the below statements are true:

- the person making the declaration, or another person acting on their behalf, signed this declaration in their presence and the presence of another witness, the person and the coordinating medical practitioner
- the person appeared to freely and voluntarily sign the declaration or direct another person to sign it on their behalf
- the person appeared to have decision-making capacity in relation to voluntary assisted dying
- the person appeared to understand the nature and effect of making the declaration
- to the best of their knowledge, they are eligible to be a witness.

If the witness has any doubt about whether the above criteria have been met, they must not sign the written declaration.



What happens if a person is physically unable to sign the Written Declaration?

If the person accessing voluntary assisted dying is unable to sign the written declaration, another person may sign the form on their behalf.

A person signing the written declaration on behalf of the person accessing voluntary assisted dying must:

- be aged 18 years or older
- not be a witness to the signing of the Contact Person Appointment Form
- sign the declaration on the person's behalf in that person's presence

What if the person needs interpreting or translating services?

People who prefer or need to communicate in a language other than English can use an interpreter accredited by the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) to help them complete a written declaration.

The interpreter must sign the written declaration to certify that they provided a true and correct translation of any material translated and are eligible to interpret the written declaration.

Often in medical and health settings, family members may offer to assist with interpretation or translation. This is not permitted under the VAD Act and any interpreter must:

- not be a member of the patient's family
- not know or believe they may benefit from the death of the patient
- not own and is not responsible for the day-to-day management of a health facility where the patient lives or is being treated, for example a residential aged care facility
- not be directly involved in providing health services or professional care to the patient.

If the person prefers or needs to communicate in a language other than English, an accredited interpreter should be arranged by the Coordinating Medical Practitioner. The Voluntary Assisted Dying Care Navigator Service can also support the person to arrange for an interpreter to be present.

What should happen once the Written Declaration is signed?

Once the written declaration has been made it must be given to the Coordinating Medical Practitioner.

The Coordinating Medical Practitioner must submit the written declaration to Voluntary Assisted Dying Board after receiving it.

Contact us

For more information about voluntary assisted dying in South Australia visit www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/vad.

Specialist services are available to support access to and provide information about voluntary assisted dying to people making decisions at end of life, their family, friends and carers, health practitioners and service providers.

South Australian Voluntary Assisted Dying Care Navigator Service (SAVAD-CNS)

For support to access voluntary assisted dying contact:

Email: Health.VADCareNavigators@sa.gov.au

Phone: [0403 087 390](tel:0403087390)

Hours: Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm

South Australian Voluntary Assisted Dying Pharmacy Service (SAVAD-PS)

For queries related to the supply, administration or disposal of voluntary assisted dying medication contact:

Email: Health.VADPharmacy@sa.gov.au

Phone: [\(08\) 7326 1746](tel:0873261746)

Hours: Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm

South Australian Voluntary Assisted Dying Review Board

If you would like to contact the Review Board, email the Secretariat at:

Email: Health.VADReviewBoard@sa.gov.au

Phone: [\(08\) 8226 8859](tel:0882268859)

Support

Some people may find issues relating to voluntary assisted dying concerning or distressing.

If you need to talk to someone, these services provide telephone support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week:

- visit the [Lifeline website](#) or call [13 11 14](tel:131114).
- visit our [Bereavement Portal](#) website.
- visit the [SA Health mental health services](#) webpage.
- call the Mental Health Triage Service on [13 14 65](tel:131465).
- Call the [Kids Helpline](#) on [1800 551 800](tel:1800551800).

For more information

**Health Services Programs Branch
Department for Health and Wellbeing**

Health.VoluntaryAssistedDying@sa.gov.au

www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/vad

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