

Voluntary Assisted Dying

Chair's update

As work progresses on implementing the Voluntary Assisted Dying Pathway in South Australia, it is great to see monumental efforts in consultation and development come together in such a short time. I am therefore pleased to provide you with another update on behalf of the Taskforce, Working Groups and Implementation Team.



Dr Chris Moy

In late July, the Implementation Taskforce had the pleasure of meeting with the Honourable Chris Picton MP Minister for Health and Wellbeing, and the Honourable Kyam Maher MLC Attorney-General, and it was reassuring to hear from them about the State Government's commitment to delivering voluntary assisted dying in a compassionate, accessible and safe way in South Australia. The Taskforce will continue to review the timeframe as we progress with implementation and explore opportunities to bring the commencement date forward safely. Whether this will be possible will become clearer towards the end of September 2022.

Engagement with public and private health, aged care, and disability sectors continues at pace despite the intrusive demands brought on by the latest COVID-19 wave and its impact on many of our clinical stakeholders. The Implementation Team are working as flexibly as possible with stakeholders in scheduling meetings and events and are grateful for the high level of engagement and feedback they have received. I would like to pass on my sincere thanks to everyone making time to participate in the implementation.

Several key "big ticket" components of the pathway are currently under construction. This includes the medical practitioner training (see later in this communique) and the Voluntary Assisted Dying Clinical Portal. Work is now underway to establish the South Australian Voluntary Assisted Dying Care Navigator Service (SAVAD-CNS) and the South Australian Voluntary Assisted Dying Pharmacy Service (SAVAD-PS), including the recruitment of staff and setting up of workplaces.

I look forward to bringing you more from the Taskforce and Implementation Team in these monthly communiques as key pieces of the pathway come together and commencement of voluntary assisted dying approaches, and I hope that they will become a place to stay informed about events and training opportunities.

Dr Chris Moy

Chair, Voluntary Assisted Dying Implementation Taskforce

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Spotlight on... medical practitioner training

Under the [Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2021 \(the Act\)](#), medical practitioners must complete an approved assessment training prior to assessing whether a person requesting access to voluntary assisted dying meets the eligibility criteria. This training will include information about the functions of coordinating and consulting medical practitioners, eligibility criteria for people accessing voluntary assisted dying, and identifying and assessing risk factors for abuse or coercion.

Dr Caroline Phelan from Flinders University is leading the development team producing SA's mandatory medical practitioner training. A multidisciplinary team from several schools across the university are developing the bespoke learning package, which includes a competency assessment component that medical practitioners will need to pass to demonstrate successful completion of the training. The Digital Learning & Design unit within the Women's and Children's Health Network are also applying their award-winning team of learning designers, developers, graphic artists, animators and video production specialists to designing and developing a contemporary and engaging learning package.

Completion of the training package is anticipated by the end of September, with roll-out to begin prior to commencement. This will allow eligible medical practitioners time to prepare to take on their critical roles within the Voluntary Assisted Dying Pathway.

Medical practitioners can [register their interest now](#) to access the medical practitioner training when it is launched.

Using telehealth to support voluntary assisted dying access

You may have seen recent media articles about the Commonwealth *Criminal Code Act 1995 (the Code)* which sets out offences with regards to communicating about suicide over a carriage service, such as telephone, email, telehealth. These provisions in the code therefore constitute potential major barriers to access for people living in regional and remote areas.

A recent article in *The Australian* on 14 July 2022 highlighted how these laws have significant implications for the provision of voluntary assisted dying.

Dr Chris Moy recently spoke to ABC Radio Adelaide about the issue, "*At the moment we're actually hampered by a national law which prevents the discussion of any of*

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these matters by a carriage service and we're getting legal advice about this, but the inability to do this means that we can't use telephone or email to give very specific advice to say the doctor who's actually supporting their patient, or the patient themselves."

"...this is about equity and discrimination for those in the country, rural, remote to be able to get equitable service for a [legal service]. So, that's where the main argument is, and I think really it's time to change it".

The Implementation Team have been working with other State and Territory colleagues to raise the issue with the Code at a national level given the access implications for people who are not easily able to travel to participating health practitioners or who may live in regional or remote areas.

Did you know?

Did you know that there are legislative restrictions preventing registered health practitioners from initiating discussion about voluntary assisted dying in South Australia?

Under [Section 12 of the Act](#), a registered health practitioner who provides health services or professional care services to a person must not, in the course of providing those services, initiate discussion with a person that is in substance about voluntary assisted dying or suggest voluntary assisted dying to that person. However, if the person raises voluntary assisted dying as an option, health practitioners may provide them with relevant information. This is different to the law in some other states in Australia, where health practitioners may initiate a discussion with a person about voluntary assisted dying if, at the time it is done, the practitioner also informs the person about the treatment options and palliative care available to that person. Broad awareness and understanding of this requirement in the Act is important, because failure to comply is regarded as unprofessional conduct under *Health Practitioner Regulation National Law*.

Inform service planning – 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.

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Upcoming events and presentations

The Implementation Team are continuing to engage with sector and community stakeholders over August and September 2022 with the following activities:

Presentations/Forums/Workshops	Date
Limestone Coast Local Health Network (LHN) Readiness Workshop	12 August
Eyre and Far North LHN Readiness Workshop	12 August
Riverland Mallee Coorong LHN Readiness Workshop	19 August
Multicultural Communities Council of SA Ageing Well Network	24 August
Barossa Hills Fleurieu LHN Readiness Workshop	25 August
Flinders and Upper North LHN Readiness Workshop	26 August
Yorke and Northern LHN Readiness Workshop	26 August
Royal Adelaide Hospital Cancer Nurses Group	1 September
Regional LHN Senior Community Nursing & Specialist Leadership Forum	5 September

Register now

Online workshop	Details
<p><i>Preparing for voluntary assisted dying in regional and remote South Australia</i></p> <p>A free online workshop for GPs and medical specialists in regional and remote South Australia</p>	<p>Monday 29 August 2022</p> <p>6:30 – 9:00pm ACST</p> <p>Register at Eventbrite</p>

If your organisation would like to know more about voluntary assisted dying in South Australia, contact the Implementation Team to arrange a presentation.

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.

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About the Implementation Team

This section will showcase people working behind the scenes to implement voluntary assisted dying, with the first honours going to Kate and Marianne.

Kate (she/her) is the Clinical Lead for the Voluntary Assisted Dying Implementation Team and is a Registered Nurse with extensive leadership experience in specialist palliative care. Kate was the Clinical Director for Southern Adelaide Palliative Services for 15 years, and in that time supported the triple strand of care approach where education and research inform clinical practice. As Clinical Lead, Kate brings her vast clinical expertise and compassionate care experience to all workstreams within the Implementation Team.

Marianne (she/her) is the Project Support Officer within the team and has a background in administration, event, project and office management. Marianne's role is wide and varied, providing secretariat support for the Taskforce, as well as performing administration, finance, HR and IT functions. Marianne says she is passionate about working to deliver voluntary assisted dying due to her personal experiences of death and dying with close family members and the focus on providing options to people who have been given a short timeframe to live.

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

Support services

Some people may find issues relating to end of life care concerning or distressing.

If reading the material in this communicate 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](#)