



NT Voluntary Euthanasia Society Inc

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Newsletter

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SOUTH AUSTRALIA

SA recently passed VAD legislation. VADSA have been advised that by June 30 the Implementation Taskforce will review the planned commencement date of March 2023. If it is deemed safe to do so, the Taskforce will recommend that the date be brought forward.

Change of government to Labor is certainly making this likely. Susan Close who presented the VAD Act in the House of Assembly is deputy premier. Kyam Maher who presented the VAD Act in the Legislative Council is now Attorney General.

Liz Habermann has been announced as South Australia's Inspiring Woman of the Year by the Australia Day Council. Liz was a strong and courageous voice in the campaign for VAD, having lost her son Rhys to terminal cancer 2 years previously. Liz stood as an Independent in the Flinders electorate in March. It was said to be the safest seat in SA & Liz lost oh so narrowly with a swing of 25% from the Liberal candidate - she was 1% off winning the seat.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

WA's VAD legislation came into use on 1 July 2021.

DWDWA have made an official representation to the new Minister for Health detailing the many things that are wrong with the "CEO Requirements", which are impeding an adequate sign-up of doctors and nurse practitioners. No doubt a substantive response will take a little while.

The Health Department is being very slow to publish the details from the 6-month progress forum held a few weeks ago. It is claimed that they will become available in "a few weeks". A link will be provided when it comes out, as the statistics are quite interesting, regarding numbers overall, and also the proportion of VAD deaths done via practitioner administration.

NEW SOUTH WALES

On Tuesday 22 February Dying with Dignity NSW welcomed the Report of the Standing Committee on Law and Justice for the Inquiry into the Provisions of the Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill 2021 that was tabled in NSW Upper House. The report recommended that the Legislative Council proceed to consider the Voluntary Assisted Dying (VAD) Bill 2021.

On Wednesday 23 February 2022, Labor's Adam Searle delivered a powerful, opening Second Reading speech to commence debate of the *Voluntary Assisted Dying (VAD) Bill 2021* in the Legislative Council.

Since the introduction of the VAD Bill, Dying with Dignity and Go Gentle Australia have been calling on the Legislative Council to treat this reform as a matter of urgency and ensure there is enough time to debate the Bill.

Opponents of VAD laws in NSW started a parliamentary e-petition asking MPs to try to block the Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill so DWDNSW and GGA decided to start their own petition asking Upper House MPs to support the Bill. As of 3 April 2022 that petition has 19,760 signatures, nearly 2,000 more than the opponents.

Last year, many supporters signed the petition calling on the Lower House MPs to support Alex Greenwich's VAD Bill. That petition gained over 100,000 signatures and Cate Faehrmann was able to table that irregular petition at the start of the LC debate.

Last week, the Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill 2021 was allocated four hours of debate time in the NSW Legislative Council. This followed a similar allocation of debate time the week before so as of 4 April 2022 a total of 22 MLCs have spoken in favour of the legislation and only 11 MLCs have spoken against.

DWD NSW and GGA have been running a joint campaign titled 'They Died Waiting' with full page ads in the two major newspapers and demonstrations outside Parliament House. Hundreds of supporters braved the elements to show their elected representatives the faces of just some of the many people who have died with terrible suffering while waiting for VAD laws to be passed in NSW.

There is no doubt that the two rallies and the full page ads helped to keep pressure on the Upper House and prevented the opponents' delaying tactics. The results so far are a huge relief but there are a number of hurdles yet to clear. There are still some "Second Reading" speeches to be done and then a "Second

Reading” vote is required. The VAD Bill will then move to the “Committee Stage” where opponents will seek to amend the Bill in ways which would make VAD more difficult to access under the guise of making it “safer”. This happened in the Lower House and the opponents in the Upper House are expected to employ the same tactics.

The Parliament doesn’t sit again until 11 May but DWDNSW and GGA will be making careful plans to ensure they are well-prepared.

Those attending the Parliament heard some incredibly moving and beautiful speeches from MPs who support the Bill – many have had their own experience of the death of a loved one. Others have been profoundly moved by the many stories sent to them by VAD supporters and the testimony given at the recent Parliamentary Inquiry.

QUEENSLAND

Three DWDQ committee members are working with the Qld Government VAD implementation team.

Currently the government implementation team is developing clinical guidelines, training, models of care, referral pathways, and consumer resources.

By June they plan to have a VAD Support Service established and the VAD Pharmacy Service established.

They are on track to have the implementation completed by 1 January 2023.

DWDQ has also started canvassing the Qld Federal Politicians about their willingness to support an amendment to the Federal Carriage Act that may make accessing VAD difficult for people who live in regional & remote areas.

TASMANIA

On **22 April 2021**, Royal Assent was given to the End of Life Choices (Voluntary Assisted Dying) Act 2021. This was the last step on the very long journey to a law for voluntary assisted dying choice in Tasmania. The Department of Health is currently implementing VAD under the Act. Access to VAD is currently not available. The Act is due to commence by 23 October 2022.

NORTHERN TERRITORY

Senator Sam McMahon’s bill to restore the NT’s right to legislate for VAD did not reach the voting stage and will lapse when the newly-elected Federal Parliament sits.

VICTORIA

On 19 June 2019, the Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2017 came into effect. Victorians who are at the end of life and who meet strict eligibility criteria can now request access to voluntary assisted dying. The provision of the medication is proving problematic when that state has one centralised pharmacy that dispenses the VAD medication.

It appears that some from palliative care are attempting to sabotage VAD applications. DWDVic are creating support groups, including regional. Numbers are increasing with social media helping to spread the word. They are also answering some frequently asked VAD questions in 1-minute videos on social media. They are seeking to provide more presentations on VAD, Advance Care Directives and Medical Treatment Decision Makers. They have written to all Victorian councils offering to conduct face-to-face/online presentations.

They are recording stories from those who do not qualify for VAD under the existing legislation.

Dr Stephanie Green – “This is Assisted Dying”

Dr Stephanie Green’s new book "This is Assisted Dying: A Doctor's Story of Empowering Patients at the End of Life," is published. Dr Green describes her experience providing MAID in the Canadian context. Initially a maternity doctor, Dr Green highlights the link between maternity care and end of life care, both most intimate life moments.

The book is available in Australia from Booktopia

Dying With Dignity Canada is pleased to host the 2022 World Federation of Right to Die Societies (WFRTDS) International Conference. This event, bringing international delegates and local attendees together, provides an opportunity for networking, education and information sharing from across the globe. It is the must-attend event for clinicians, lawyers, advocates, and supporters who want to learn more about assisted dying in Canada and around the world.

Where: The Chelsea Hotel, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

When: November 3-6, 2022