



Voluntary assisted dying

Information, resources
and materials.

*Find out more about
voluntary assisted dying
(VAD) choice in the
Northern Territory*

COTA NT and Go Gentle
Australia partnered to help grow
community awareness of voluntary
assisted dying choice in the NT, to
increase people's understanding of
it and to talk about how VAD laws
are being used in the
rest of Australia.

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gogentleaustralia.org.au

NT specific related is also on COTA NT's website
www.cotant.org.au/information

About COTA NT and Go Gentle Australia

COTA NT and Go Gentle Australia are working together, and alongside other VAD advocates in the Northern Territory including Australian Independent Retirees (AIR), National Seniors, Northern Territory Voluntary Euthanasia Society, to advocate for Territorians to have the same end of life choice as other Australians.

COTA NT is the Peak Body for seniors in the Northern Territory and is dedicated to promoting the well-being of senior Territorians aged 50 years and over. First incorporated in the Northern Territory in 1969, COTA NT has represented the interests of senior Territorians within the COTA movement across Australia for more than 55 years.

In January 2020, COTA NT asked its Members this question, "Assisted dying or euthanasia is the practice whereby a person suffering from a terminal illness or incurable condition have the right to request a lethal drug from a doctor to end their lives. Do you support or oppose this for the Northern Territory?" Of those who replied, 91% answered: Yes I support assisted dying.

NT stakeholders were also asked the same question. 95% of total respondents answered: Yes I support assisted dying.

COTA NT has been lobbying for voluntary assisted dying legislation to be enacted in the Northern Territory on behalf of its Members and stakeholders ever since. Its CEO Sue Shearer was invited to be part of the Expert Panel by the Northern Territory Government. This panel released the [Report into Voluntary Assisted Dying in the Northern Territory](#) in July 2024.

Go Gentle was founded in 2016 by broadcaster Andrew Denton. We are a national charity that promotes and enables choice at the end of life, including the option of voluntary assisted dying.

Go Gentle empowers people to choose the end-of-life care that is right for them, including the option of voluntary assisted dying. We amplify the voices of individuals, families and health professionals to ensure their views are heard and understood.

Our vision is an Australia where we can all choose the end-of-life care that is right for us. We have been instrumental in passing voluntary assisted dying laws in all six Australian states and the ACT, and now work to ensure these laws operate as intended, are protected and improved, and that compassionate, person-centred end-of-life care is available for all Australians.

Voluntary assisted dying laws allow terminally ill adults with decision-making capacity, and who are at the end of their life, to request help from a doctor to end their suffering. Voluntary assisted dying is also sometimes called assisted dying, physician assisted dying or medical assistance to die.

Fast facts

- Voluntary assisted dying laws have been operating in Victoria since June 2019, Western Australia since July 2021, Tasmania since October 2022 and Queensland and South Australia since January 2023. The law in NSW took effect in November 2023, and the ACT's law will begin on 3 November 2025
- Australians strongly back voluntary assisted dying laws. Support runs at between **70 and 90% in most recent polls.**
- Voluntary assisted dying is only for terminally ill people in the final stages of their illness. It is voluntary for all involved, including participation by medical professionals.
- Evidence from all jurisdictions where VAD is legal shows the laws are operating safely, compassionately and as intended.
- Globally, more than 430 million people now have access to assisted dying laws in Europe, Canada, New Zealand, Colombia and 11 US states or districts.

The NT was the first in the country to have a law for voluntary euthanasia in 1995. But now it's the last.

Every other state and the ACT already has a law for what's now known as VAD.

Advocates believe that it is time to write this law without delay.



Frequently asked questions

What is voluntary assisted dying?

Voluntary assisted dying allows a dying person who is suffering in the final stages of life to ask their doctor for medication to help them die. The person must be an adult, have decision making capacity and be assessed as eligible by two independent doctors.

Is voluntary assisted dying the same as euthanasia?

Technically, euthanasia means a doctor administers the life-ending substance to a dying person - rather than the person taking it themselves.

In Australia, the term 'voluntary assisted dying' covers both practices.

In the majority of cases in Victoria, people have taken the medication themselves. This is because in Victoria self-administration is the default method and only in cases where the person is too sick to take it themselves can a doctor step in to help. In Western Australia, where people are permitted to choose the method of administration, a significant majority elect for their doctor to administer the medication for them.

The term voluntary assisted dying is preferred in Australia because it also centres the dying person's choice.

VAD is not something that happens to you, but something you choose.

Is voluntary assisted dying legal in Australia?

Yes with the exception of the NT. Every state and the ACT has passed and implemented its own voluntary assisted dying law. ACT residents will have access to assisted dying on 3 November 2025, after an 18-month implementation period. **In the Northern Territory voluntary assisted dying is not legal.**

I live in the NT. Can I access voluntary assisted dying?

The NT Government assembled an Expert Advisory Panel to consider the legalisation of VAD in the Territory. It recommended a VAD law be drafted in line with other Australian jurisdictions. The NT's Attorney General asked its Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee to undertake further community consultation and provide its recommendations to government at the end of September 2025.

There are some exceptional circumstances where an eligible person in the ACT or NT could access a voluntary assisted dying law in New South Wales or Queensland if

a) you live on the border and receive the majority of your health care in that state or

b) you can show on compassionate grounds (e.g. your family live in the state) why you should be able to access their voluntary assisted dying laws.

If you think this applies to you, please email contact@gogentleaustralia.org.au and we can provide further details.

Who can use voluntary assisted dying in Australia?

Australian assisted dying laws are some of the most restrictive in the world, intended to help a small number of terminally ill adults in extreme circumstances. To access voluntary assisted dying a person must:

- Have a terminal illness likely to end their life within six months (or 12 months for neurological conditions. Queensland has a blanket 12 month timeframe for all illnesses) and experience unbearable suffering
- Have decision-making capacity about voluntary assisted dying
- Act freely and without coercion
- Be aged 18+ and an Australian citizen/meet residency requirements
- Have lived in the state for at least 12 months.

Advanced age, disability or mental health conditions by themselves do not make a person eligible for voluntary assisted dying. To be eligible, a person must be terminally ill and satisfy all other eligibility requirements.

Other questions

Other questions around voluntary assisted dying in action addressed by Go Gentle Australia can be found on their website, <https://www.gogentleaustralia.org.au/faq>.

For policy makers

Go Gentle has campaigned for voluntary assisted dying laws in every Australian state. They have briefings and resources on most topics related to the end of life, drawn from national and global evidence and expertise.

Visit: https://www.gogentleaustralia.org.au/policy_library

For health professionals

Visit the Go Gentle Australia website to find out what is required of VAD practitioners, opting out and what doctors say about voluntary assisted dying in Australian states where VAD legislation is enacted.

Visit: https://www.gogentleaustralia.org.au/become_a_vad_practitioner

For patients and families

Go Gentle Australia publishes information which helps terminally ill people and their families explore and navigate the option of voluntary assisted dying.*

It includes: eligibility criteria, tips for planning a voluntary assisted death, how to get the help you need, grief and bereavement support and end of life planning information.

Visit: https://www.gogentleaustralia.org.au/patients_and_families

**Laws to allow this choice have passed in every Australian state and in the ACT.*

Show your support

1. Be informed

By attending a community information session and finding out more about voluntary assisted dying, you are in a position of greater understanding.

This is already one way of showing us that you care about the end of life choices for terminally ill and suffering Territorians.

2. Share knowledge

Have open, respectful discussions with family, friends, neighbours and peers.

Conversations about dying and death may seem difficult, but they are topics which affect us all.

Dying to Know Day is an annual Australian campaign held on August 8th to encourage open, honest conversations about death, dying, and end-of-life planning, aiming to reduce stigma and empower people to make their wishes known to loved ones.

[Read more](#) about how to start talking.

3. Sign and share

During 2025, many Territorians who supported VAD choice were frustrated by the delays in the NT and asked COTA NT how they could show their support asking, “where can I sign?”

[403 submissions](#) were received by the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee and Go Gentle Australia recorded hundreds of emails sent to NT MLAs. Persistence is needed to keep the issue of VAD choice in the minds and eyes of policy makers and media, so

COTA NT created additional ways for you to show your support through pledge cards and a petition.

1. Campaign pledge cards

Help us create a sea of pledge cards to create a very visual show of support.

The card is designed to be supported by a simple bamboo skewer and planted. You are welcome to [download a pledge card](#) and send COTA NT photographs of your planted cards.

The cards are available on the [COTA NT website](#) and at their offices. When signed and returned to COTA NT, they will be used publicly to remind policy makers and stakeholders in the NT of the support for VAD choice.

2. Petition

Ask MLAs to make VAD legislation for end of life choice a priority.

Sign a petition worded as follows, To the Speaker and the Members of the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory

This petition as signed below calls the attention of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly to: The Northern Territory is the only place in Australia without a voluntary assisted dying (VAD) law.

The Petitioners therefore ask that the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly: ***Pass a voluntary assisted dying law in the Northern Territory without delay.***

You can sign or pick up petition pages to share at COTA NT's head office at 65 Smith Street, Darwin during normal opening hours or download a [petition](#)

[page](#). You can also use the petition on page 9 of this brochure.

See also: Petition must be signed by at least one person on the sheet on which the text of petition is printed [i.e. not left blank]. Subsequent signatures may be written on the sheets containing the request of the petition. Petition must be signed by the parties whose names are on the petition, by their own hand, and by no one else, except in the case of incapacity or sickness. No letters, affidavits or other documents may be attached to any petition. Petition must not be altered or otherwise marked up or amended. Upon presentation to the Assembly, petition will become a public document.

(Full Guidelines-to-Lodging-a-Petition [here](#))

4. Donate to Go Gentle

Go Gentle Australia partnered with COTA NT to campaign for VAD choice in the NT.

Donations are always welcome and the campaign is not yet over. Donate [here](#)
(https://www.gogentleaustralia.org.au/donate_once)

5. Write to your local Member

Email your local politician to ask them to take action on enacting VAD legislation.

Use the form on the Go Gentle website so the number of emails can be recorded [here](#)

(<https://gogentleaustralia.good.do/VADNT>)

6. Share this link

Enlist help, share the email link below with friends, family and your community – help to generate awareness and lead community action.

<https://gogentleaustralia.good.do/VADNT>

7. Share your story

Politicians care about you, the voters. If you feel comfortable, please share your story of why you want the law to change on VAD.

It might be a personal experience, or perhaps you saw a loved one die badly. In other states, these stories have been the single most effective way to influence politicians.

Share your story [here](#)

(https://www.gogentleaustralia.org.au/submit_your_story)

8. Spread awareness within the NT

Share information with the community. Follow leading advocates on social media and share their posts.

- COTA NT (<https://www.facebook.com/COTANorthernTerritory/>)
- COTA NT and Go Gentle Aus (<https://www.facebook.com/VADintheNT/>)
- Go Gentle Australia (<https://www.facebook.com/gogentleaus>)
- Northern Territory Voluntary Euthanasia Society (<https://www.facebook.com/NTVESAus>).

Further reading & resources

Read the stories of real Territorians

- [There is no time to wait](#) *Lori Martin*
- [We are all different and deserve to have a say on our bodies and how we are treated](#) *Sam Turner*
- *John Baylis' [Fight for VAD](#)* – Read excerpts from the diary of Darwin man John Baylis, 83 as he died of Motor Neurone Disease, 18 years after the Andrews' 'coup'
- [She could have brought her mother to die surrounded by people who loved her](#) *Sharon Cramp-Oliver*
- [If I was a dog you could have me put down](#) *Robyn's story*
- [All signs of pain and distress left his face](#) *Bob and Judy Dent*

These stories are published on the Go Gentle Australia and NTVES websites.

Reports and historical perspective

- <https://parliament.nt.gov.au/committees/list/legal-and-constitutional-affairs-committee/VAD>

Lists First Interim Report (July 2025) and Second Interim Report (September 2025), terms of reference, guidelines, information in language and submissions.

- [Report into Voluntary Assisted Dying in the Northern Territory \(Final Report 2024\)](#)
- [State of VAD Voluntary Assisted Dying in Aus & NZ 2024](#)
- [Marshall Perron's National Press Club address 1996](#) – a "historical strategic blueprint" for achieving VAD.
- [Voluntary assisted dying \(VAD\) – the NT's history](#)



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PETITION

Time to Write This Law: Voluntary Assisted Dying Choice for the NT

To the Speaker and the Members of the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory

This petition as signed below calls the attention of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly to: *The Northern Territory is the only place in Australia without a voluntary assisted dying (VAD) law.*

The Petitioners therefore ask that the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly: *Pass a voluntary assisted dying law in the Northern Territory without delay.*

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I SUPPORT VOLUNTARY ASSISTED DYING CHOICE FOR THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

Signature

Name

Suburb

Electorate / MLA (if known)



On completion, your card will become a public document used for showing your support of the campaign.

WRITE THE LAW NOW



**WRITE
THE
LAW
NOW**

I SUPPORT VOLUNTARY ASSISTED DYING CHOICE FOR THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

Signature

Name

Suburb

Electorate / MLA (if known)



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