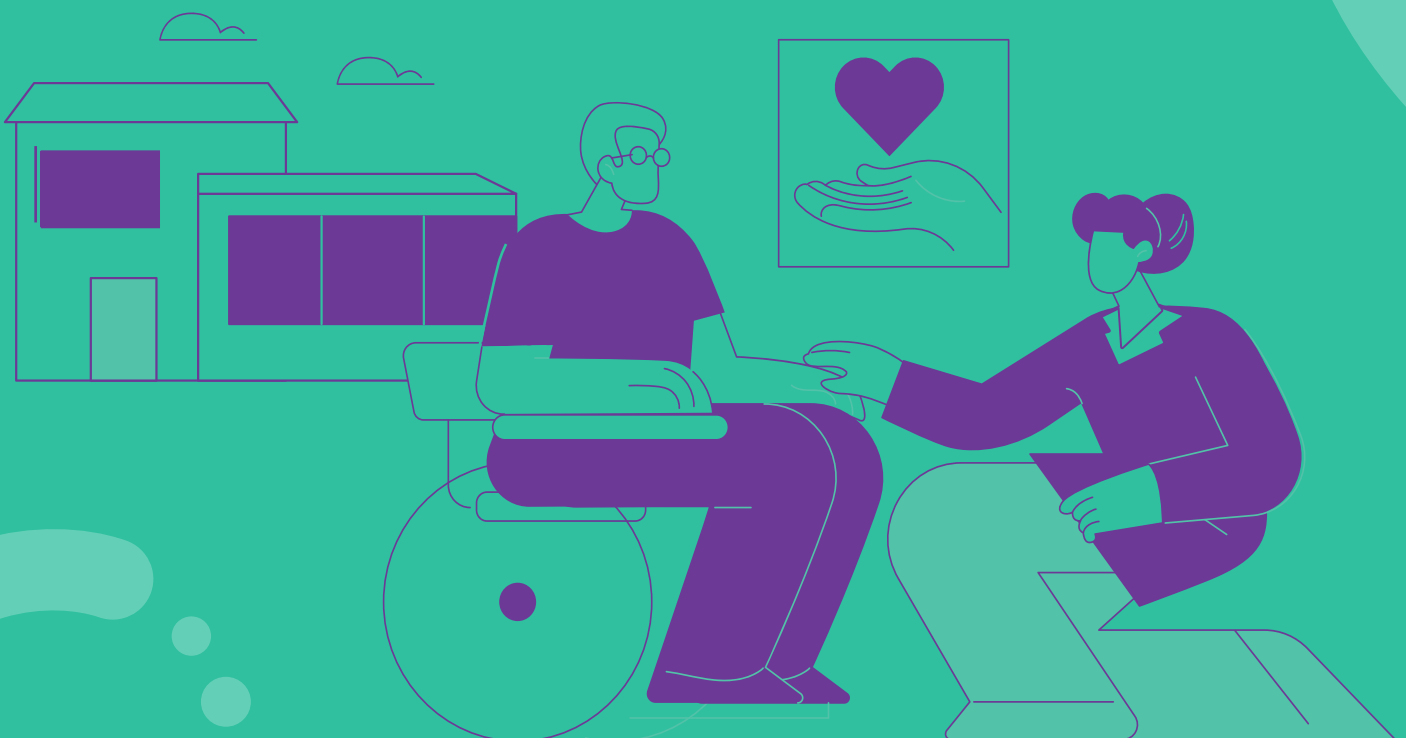


Know Your Rights

Voluntary Assisted Dying in
Aged Care

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What if my aged
care home doesn't
support VAD?



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Search your aged care provider with our free online tool

Go Gentle Australia has rated 70 of Australia's largest aged care providers on how they support people who choose VAD. To search for your provider, [click here](#).

Contact

Visit: gogentleaustralia.org.au
Email: policy@gogentleaustralia.org.au
Write: PO Box Q46, QVB NSW 1230
ABN: 61 613 668 643

Go Gentle Australia is a health promotion charity founded by Andrew Denton to advocate for better end-of-life choices, including the legal option of voluntary assisted dying.

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Introduction

This booklet is for you if you live in an aged care home, or you are planning for your future. It is also useful if you care for an older person.

It explains your rights and what you can legally expect if you want to explore the option of voluntary assisted dying (VAD) in aged care.

VAD is when a person who is dying and suffering makes an application to doctors for medication to end their life. It is a legal option in every state and the ACT. In 2025, more than 3,000 people died using VAD, making up 2 per cent of deaths in Australia.

You have a right to choose VAD – even if your aged care home doesn't take part

The Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission, which regulates aged care in Australia, says:

‘Older people have the right to choose to access VAD in their home, including where their home is a residential care facility.’

However, some aged care homes do not take part in VAD and this can make it more difficult for residents to choose it. In some cases, providers have not met their legal obligations to ensure a resident's right to access lawful care.

For example, some aged care homes have asked their residents to leave the aged care home for their VAD appointments, or told residents that they cannot take VAD medication in the aged care home.

For a person who is at the end of their life, and who may have difficulty moving around, this can prevent them from choosing VAD.

If you have any questions or have an experience with VAD in an aged care home that you would like to share, please email contact@gogentleaustralia.org.au

Before choosing an aged care home, ask about their VAD policy

While some aged care homes publish information to explain what happens if a resident asks for VAD, the majority do not.

It's important to find out if your aged care home supports VAD as soon as possible. Being prepared now will reduce the risk of delays or confusion later.

We have resources to help you

This booklet will help you to:

- **Understand your right to choose VAD**
- **Find out if an aged care home supports VAD**
- **Talk to your aged care home about your wishes**
- **Get support if you have a question or complaint about how your aged care home responds.**

Search your aged care provider with our free online tool

Go Gentle Australia has rated 70 of Australia's largest aged care providers on how they support people who choose VAD. To search for your provider, [click here](#).

If your provider is not included, this booklet will help you know the questions to ask them to find out.

OPAN (Older Persons Advocacy Network) provides free, confidential and independent information to older people in aged care. Call the Aged Care Advocacy Line on **1800 700 600** between 8am–8pm Mon-Fri and 10am–4pm Saturdays or visit open.org.au.

What is VAD?

Voluntary assisted dying (VAD) is when a person who is dying and suffering makes an application to doctors for medication to end their life. It is a legal choice in every state and the ACT. Since 2019, more than 7,000 people have died using VAD in Australia.

To be eligible, you must meet strict criteria including:

- **Be aged 18+**
- **Have an advanced medical condition that will soon end your life**
- **Be suffering in a way that you feel is intolerable**
- **Have decision-making capacity throughout.**

Choosing VAD is your decision. Nobody can ask for VAD on your behalf. At every stage of the process, health professionals will check that no-one is forcing you or encouraging you to ask for VAD.

If you want to find out more about VAD, we suggest you call your local VAD Care Navigator Service. This is a specialist service staffed by health professionals that supports people through the application process. Contact details are on the next page.



VAD Care Navigator Services where you live



Victoria

vadcarenavigator@petermac.org | (03) 8559 5823

→ [Click here to learn more about VAD care services in VIC](#)



Western Australia

VADcarenavigator@health.wa.gov.au | (08) 9431 2755

→ [Click here to learn more about VAD care services in WA](#)



Tasmania

vad@health.tas.gov.au | 1800 568 956

→ [Click here to learn more about VAD care services in TAS](#)



South Australia

Health.VADCareNavigators@sa.gov.au | 0403 087 390

→ [Click here to learn more about VAD care services in SA](#)



Queensland

qvadsupport@health.qld.gov.au | 1800 431 371

→ [Click here to learn more about VAD care services in QLD](#)



New South Wales

NSLHD-VADCareNavigator@health.nsw.gov.au | 1300 802 133

→ [Click here to learn more about VAD care services in NSW](#)



ACT

VAD.carenavigators@act.gov.au | 02 5124 1888

→ [Click here to learn more about VAD care services in the ACT](#)

You can also visit gogentleaustralia.org.au for more information.



What about the Northern Territory?

The NT is the only place in Australia where VAD is unavailable.

If you live in the NT and would like this to change, please visit

gogentleaustralia.org.au/nt_vad to find out how you can help.

The right to choose VAD

→ This section explains your rights if you live in aged care and want to choose VAD.

People who live in aged care have the right to:

- **Choose VAD (even if your aged care home doesn't directly take part)**
- **Be supported by your aged care home to access VAD services**
- **Continue to receive other care if you choose VAD**
- **Keep your VAD choice confidential if you prefer**
- **Make a complaint if you are not happy with your aged care home's response.**

The law supports your right to choose VAD

The new *Aged Care Act 2024* (Cth) says that everyone living in aged care has a right to:

- Exercise choice and make decisions that affect their life
- Be supported to make those decisions and have those decisions respected
- Have palliative care and end-of-life care when required
- Be treated with dignity and respect; and
- Have safe, fair, equitable and non-discriminatory treatment.

Even if your aged care home chooses not to take part in VAD, the regulator says this does not change your right to choose VAD:

Older people have the right to choose to access VAD in their home, including where their home is a residential care facility. This applies even where the provider has made the decision not to participate in the VAD process, and in jurisdictions where there is no obligation for a provider to directly facilitate access to VAD services.

– Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission

What can I expect if I ask about VAD in aged care?

→ This section explains what you can expect if you live in aged care and ask about VAD.

Your VAD choice must be respected

Your aged care home must respect your choices, including your right to choose VAD. You should not be treated differently because you choose VAD.

You should receive help to access the medical services you need

Your aged care home must support you to access medical services, including VAD. The aged care regulator says they should facilitate your access to VAD, which means your aged care home must:

- **Help you to get VAD information in a way that is easy for you e.g. a phone number for the VAD Care Navigators**
- **Put you in touch with VAD health professionals**
- **Organise appointments**
- **Support you to make the arrangements you need.**

Remember: Your aged care home should not send you to hospital or ask you to go to another aged care home – unless that's what you want.

Your privacy should be respected

Your aged care home must respect your privacy. You do not have to tell them that you are choosing VAD if you don't want to. The only people who need to know are your VAD health professionals (e.g. doctors, care navigators and pharmacists).

Where possible, it may be helpful to let the manager of your aged care home know about your plans so they can help make sure any visits by VAD health professionals go smoothly. It is OK to ask them not to share this information any further.

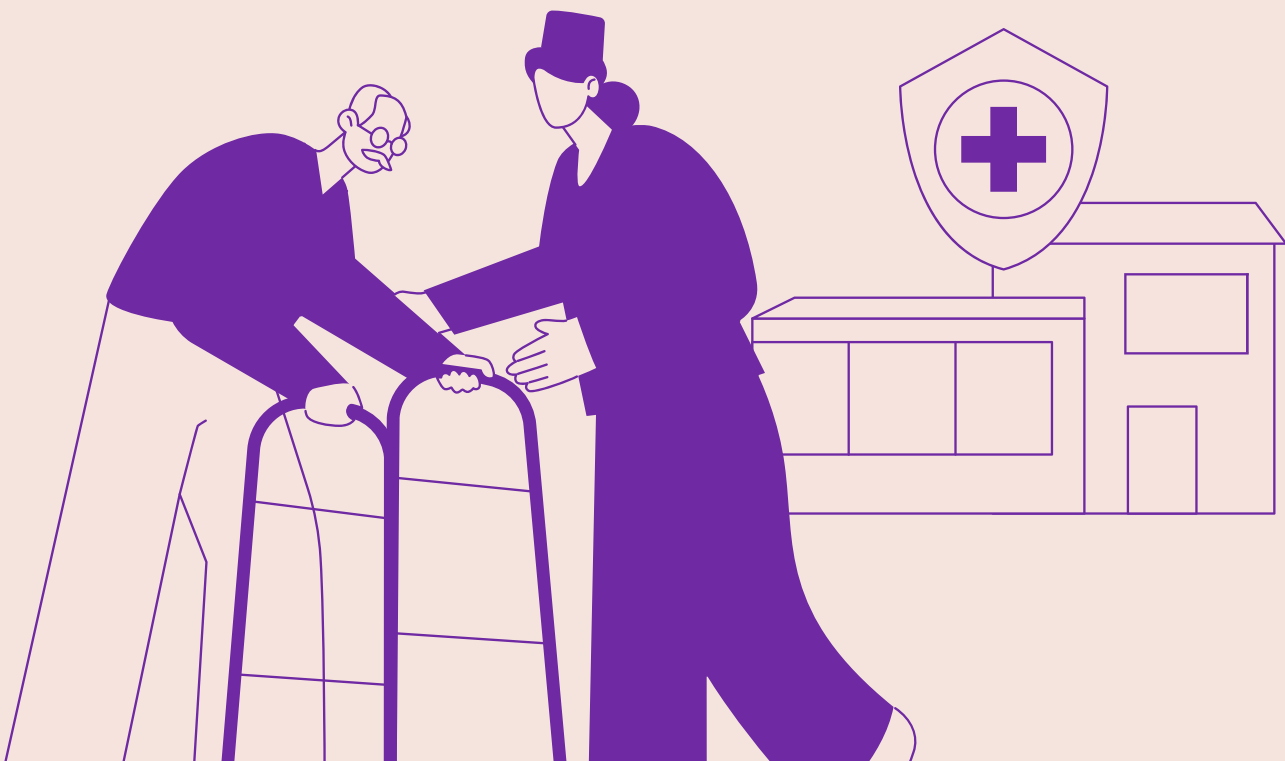
They may also be able to help with storage of VAD medication.

You should be given clear information

Your aged care home should provide you with clear, up-to-date information about what happens if you ask about VAD or want to use VAD in their aged care home. You need this information so you can make the decisions that are right for you.

Your aged care home should give you this information in a way you understand. If you don't understand, don't be afraid to ask questions – it can be complicated! You can also ask for the information in a different format if that will help.

This information should be easy to find for everyone. You should not have to become a resident before you can find it.



How can I find out if my aged care home supports VAD?

→ This section explains how to find out if an aged care home supports VAD. This is especially helpful if you are choosing between aged care homes.

Our research shows many aged care homes are not upfront about what support is available, so we have some tips and resources to help you.



Step 1:

Check the Go Gentle Australia database. We have created a searchable database of 70 of the largest providers of residential aged care in Australia to help your research. It looks at providers (e.g. Bupa, Regis, Opal) rather than individual homes. If you're not sure who your provider is, ask the aged care home. To search for your provider in the database, [click here](#).



Step 2:

Visit the provider's website. Lots of websites have a search bar at the top of the page where you can search for any information about 'voluntary assisted dying'.



Step 3:

Speak to your aged care home. The next section helps you start this conversation and know what to ask.

Find out if your aged care home supports VAD

Go Gentle Australia has rated 70 of Australia's largest aged care providers on how they support people who choose VAD. To search for your provider, [click here](#).

How do I talk to my aged care home about VAD?

→ This section explains how to begin a conversation about VAD with your aged care home (or a home you are thinking of moving to).

The first step is to request a copy of your aged care home's VAD policy or information. Ask questions if that helps you to better understand their approach. This can reduce the risk of misunderstandings or delays later if you choose VAD. You could print and take this information to your meeting if it helps.

Remember – VAD choices are confidential

Your decision to apply for VAD is confidential. Most people discuss their choice with family and friends, and let their aged care Facility Manager know. But it's up to you.

You don't have to speak to anybody about it if you don't want to. This includes staff at the aged care home. You can keep discussions private, between you and your VAD health professionals.

To find out more about VAD, call the Care Navigators where you live (see [p6](#) for details).

Suggested questions for your aged care provider

The Facility Manager is a good first person to approach. You may like to ask:

- **Can I have a copy of your policy on VAD?**
- **Do you allow VAD health professionals to visit me here for my VAD appointments?**
- **Can my VAD medication be stored here?**
- **Can I take my VAD medication here?**
- **Which staff member is best to speak to about this?**
- **Are staff trained in supporting people at the end of life and choosing VAD?**

Remember, receiving information about, and access to, VAD in your aged care home is your lawful right.

OPAN (Older Persons Advocacy Network) provides free, confidential and independent information to older people in aged care. Call the Aged Care Advocacy Line on **1800 700 600** between 8am–8pm Mon–Fri and 10am–4pm Saturdays or visit open.org.au.

Common barriers to choosing VAD

→ This section talks about some common barriers to choosing VAD, based on reports received by Go Gentle Australia.

Some aged care homes do not take part in VAD. However, the aged care regulator says this does not change your right to choose VAD.

Aged care homes must facilitate your access to VAD services. This includes to:

- **Provide the contact details for the VAD Care Navigator service in your state (also see [p6](#))**
- **Allow VAD health professionals like doctors and pharmacists to visit you**
- **Take any other steps needed to help you use VAD in your aged care home.**

If your aged care provider says...

‘We don’t have a VAD policy’ or ‘I’m not sure’ or ‘I need to check’

Ask the Facility Manager to give you their VAD policy within a reasonable timeframe (for example, two working days).

If the Facility Manager is unable or unwilling to do this, we suggest you raise a concern or complaint (see next section).

‘You don’t need VAD, we have palliative care here’

It is not an either/or choice. Most people have both palliative care *and* VAD. You can also make a decision to opt for palliative care, or both, or neither.

Your decision to apply for VAD is yours. It is not OK for people to try and change your mind either way.

If this happens, schedule a meeting with the Facility Manager to explain your wishes. You may want to take a family member or friend with you.

‘We don’t allow VAD assessments in the care home’ or ‘We don’t store VAD medication here’ or ‘You can’t use VAD here’

These are not acceptable responses. The aged care regulator says all aged care providers (no matter whether they agree with VAD) must support you to access VAD.

The regulator also says that living in an aged care home should not disadvantage you if you would like VAD information or access.

Schedule a meeting with the Facility Manager and share [this factsheet](#) from the aged care regulator with them.

At the same time, you may wish to raise a complaint (see next section).

Remember – if anything isn’t clear, or you need support, you can contact **OPAN (Older Persons Advocacy Network)** who provide free, confidential and independent information to older people in aged care. Call the Aged Care Advocacy Line on **1800 700 600** between 8am–8pm Mon–Fri and 10am–4pm Saturdays or visit opan.org.au.

Raising concerns and complaints

If you have any concerns or would like to make a complaint about your aged care home's response, you may want to:

- **Discuss your concerns with a trusted friend or family member**
- **Keep a record of conversations, emails and phone calls. Who did you speak to, when and what did they say?**
- **Print a copy of this booklet so you can take it along to meetings or show it to staff**
- **Contact the Aged Care Commission.**

There are several ways to make a complaint:

Speak to the Facility Manager – Raise your concern with the Manager first. In most cases, aged care homes will want to resolve complaints. To keep the process moving, you can request a response within five working days (or a shorter timeframe if that's more appropriate). You could also share this booklet with them.

Contact the Older Person's Advocacy Network – Older people, their families and support network can contact the Aged Care Advocacy Line on **1800 700 600** for information and support. Their hours are between 8am-8pm Mon-Fri and 10am-4pm Saturdays.

We encourage you to look at OPAN's Self Advocacy Toolkit which has easy-to-read guides and checklists about how to make an effective complaint about an aged care provider. [Find it here.](#)

Contact the Aged Care Commission - You have a right to make a complaint about an aged care provider. Call **1800 951 822** or complete [this online form](#).

Tell us your story

The best way to encourage aged care providers to do the right thing is to share examples of when they have done their job well – and when they haven't.

Please consider sharing your story with Go Gentle Australia. We respect your privacy. Visit our website: gogentleaustralia.org.au/submit_your_story

Go Gentle Australia is a national charity that advocates for fair and equitable access to end-of-life choice, including VAD. We are interested in your experience seeking VAD information and access in aged care. Your feedback helps us to improve access to VAD in Australia.



Information and resources

Find out if your aged care home supports VAD

Go Gentle Australia has rated 70 of Australia's largest aged care providers on how they support people who choose VAD. [To search for your provider, click here.](#)

Factsheet from the Aged Care regulator

If you run into problems, click on the link below and print out a copy of the factsheet for your aged care home. The factsheet is from the aged care regulator and aged care homes have to follow what it says.

→ [Voluntary assisted dying: The role of registered aged care providers delivering residential care' factsheet](#)

Advocacy toolkit from OPAN

The Older Person's Advocacy Network provides free, confidential and independent information to older people in aged care as well as their families and support network. They have lots of useful information on their website about your rights in aged care and a 'Self Advocacy Toolkit' to help you speak up to get the care and support you need.

opan.org.au/information/self-advocacy-toolkit/

Your rights under the new Aged Care Act

This video outlines what you can expect of your aged care home.

[Video about your rights under the new Aged Care Act](#)