

February 15, 2026

Update to VADSA Supporters

Three years since VAD commenced in SA

VAD has now been legal in South Australia for three years. During that time around 550 people have been able to use VAD to end their suffering, with another approximately 350 people being assessed as eligible to use the VAD substance (that means they have a VAD Permit and have completed all steps of the request process). The SA VAD Review Board provides this data in quarterly and annual reports. Other data shows that of those people issued with a VAD Permit

- 85% self administer the VAD substance
- 75% have cancer
- 80% are aged over 70
- 54% are men and 46% are women
- 80% are receiving palliative care
- 50% die at home, 40% in a hospital or hospice and 10% die in residential aged care
- It takes between 2 and 427 days from the first request to the issue of a VAD Permit, the median being 18 days
- The median number of days from the issue of a VAD Permit and the person's death without using the VAD substance is 26, with a range of 0 to 458 days
- 1.6% of deaths in SA are from a person using the VAD substance

(see <https://www.vadsa.org.au/factsheets>)

Attorney General and Deputy Premier, Hon Kyam Maher, highlighted the three year anniversary since commencement in a facebook post on January 31, including the comment

"Being involved in the Parliamentary process of passing VAD laws is probably the most important and fulfilling contribution to public life that I'll be involved in. My legislation that finally passed came after 17 other attempts over 26 years, and the advocacy of so many over so many years.

"Over the last three years I've now had people tell me of the experience with their dad, a good friend, a brother-in-law who went out on their own terms surrounded by love and family.

"Having people share the most intimate parts of their lives has been a rare privilege."

Thank you to Hon Kyam Maher, Hon Susan Close, who took the legislation through the House of Assembly, and to Hon Steph Key who worked hard over many years, tabling a number of Bills when other MPs did not want to talk about VAD.

Disability access to VAD

The SA VAD Review Board has not prioritised the collection of data on access to VAD by people living with a disability. We know that New Zealand and Canada collect and publish data on disability access. The VAD assessment process in New Zealand and Canada allows self reporting by people with a disability who later acquire an illness making them eligible for VAD.

The ABS estimates that around 20% of people in Australia live with a disability. It would be helpful to know if they are able to access VAD in similar numbers to their share of the population.

VADSA takes the view that it is likely to be more difficult for a person living with a long term disability to access VAD than it is for others in the community. There are many possible reasons: over time, people living with a disability become isolated, are known to have less access to medical services than others, may be unaware of VAD, or may be reluctant to mention it to their carers in case they oppose VAD and stop being their carer.

Many high profile disability advocates have historically opposed VAD, saying – without evidence – that VAD will be used to kill them. This argument is currently being used in the Scottish Parliament as they debate their VAD law.

In the absence of any data, and as the review of the SA VAD Act approaches in 2027, we will be unable to establish whether people living with a disability have equal, more or less access to VAD.

VADSA will continue to urge the SA VAD Review Board to collect data on disability access. If you know of someone living with a disability, who has now been diagnosed with a terminal illness and has had difficulty accessing VAD, please let us know.

VAD training

To undertake a VAD assessment, doctors must complete an eight hour VAD module managed by SA Health. To date 83 doctors in South Australia have completed that module. There are over 8,000 doctors registered in South Australia. So your doctor is unlikely to be one of the 83. If you wish to request VAD you will need to find and consult with a doctor you have never met before. And while we know that these doctors are universally wonderful, thoughtful, caring people, less than half of those doctors are carrying out the majority of the VAD assessments. And it is tiring and challenging work.

Australia – all states and the ACT - is the only jurisdiction which requires doctors to undertake specific VAD training before they can complete a VAD assessment. Other countries do not require such training. VAD is managed and implemented in other countries without apparent misadventure. The requirement for VAD training limits the number of doctors available to complete VAD assessments. VADSA is investigating whether, as part of the review of our VAD Act in 2027, consideration could be given to removing the requirement for VAD training, along with residency requirements, the gag clause and the time limited prognosis.

If you have a view on any of these matters, feel free to contact us on info@vadsa.org.au.

Dementia and VAD

And a reminder that the vadsa website includes up to date information on the discussion on VAD access for people with dementia. [Dementia and VAD](#)