

**March 10, 2025**

**Update to VADSA Supporters**

### **Three significant VAD developments**

We have three pieces of news to share with you on voluntary assisted dying.

1. VADSA public meeting, April 13
2. News for South Australia from Victoria's VAD Review
3. Go Gentle Australia's free webinar on March 19, answering all your questions on VAD.

### **Voluntary Assisted Dying in Dementia: There are Ways**

VADSA Public Meeting

**2.15pm, April 13**

Box Factory, Regent St South, Adelaide

**Guest speaker Em Prof John Willoughby**

*Em Prof John Willoughby is a member of VADANZ and a VAD trained neurologist, with a long research career based at Flinders University.*

Dementia is the leading cause of death for women in Australia, second overall. There is ongoing debate about whether a person with dementia can access VAD using current legislation, which requires both decision making capacity at every stage and a 12 month prognosis. By the time a person with dementia has less than 12 months to live, it is understood that they are likely to have lost decision making capacity. VADSA takes the view that the 12 month prognosis is an unreliable and ineffective safeguard. Removal of the prognosis, as legislated by the ACT and Canada, would allow a person with dementia to access VAD.

### **News from the VAD Review in Victoria**

We have some hopeful news to share on VAD. The Victorian Government has released the report of their VAD Act review. An eight page addendum to the report has identified six amendments to the VAD Act to enhance the operation of VAD in Victoria and bring more consistency across Australia now that every state has VAD as a legal end of life choice. These amendments are

- Removal of the "gag clause" to allow health practitioners to initiate VAD discussions
- Amending the time period between first and final VAD requests
- Amending citizenship and residency requirements
- Simplifying the permit process
- Requiring additional reviews of the operation and scope of the Act
- Changing to a 12 month prognosis for all medical conditions.

The reason this is good news in South Australia is that our VAD Act is exactly the same as Victoria's (except for the inclusion of institutional conscientious objection in SA). And the Victorian Government has confirmed that it will table amendments to the VAD Act later this year after further community consultation.

There was initial disappointment with the Terms of Reference for the review as it was limited to investigating operational matters – the administration, training, services to support VAD – with no intention to consider amendments to the legislation. However the professional monitoring and evaluation team in Vic Health who undertook the review listened to the community, considered the range of submissions – and added an addendum to their report identifying the six legislative amendments.

South Australia's review is not scheduled until 2027, by which time the amendments in Victoria will have had time to take effect (assuming they pass the Parliament). And there will be evidence from the operation of VAD in the ACT, where there is no requirement for a six or 12 month prognosis (VAD is due to commence in the ACT in November 2025).

***That may all sound a bit complicated, but it is excellent news that despite the narrow terms of reference for the review, the outcome is a plan to table amendments to the VAD Act in Victoria which we have also identified as necessary and important in SA.***

Further details and links to the review report and statement from the Victorian Government are available [here](#).

### **Go Gentle Australia webinar**

#### **Your questions answered on who can apply for voluntary assisted dying.**

**Go Gentle Australia** will be hosting a webinar on March 19 at 11.30am (SA time). The experienced and well informed panel (see below) will answer all your questions, and the ones you haven't even thought of.

On the panel are

- Dr Clare Fellingham - VAD Clinical Lead at East Metro Health Service, Perth
- Susan Jury - Director of the Vic VAD Navigator Service
- Professor Ben White - from the Australian Centre for Health Law Research at QUT
- and GGA's Dr Linda Swan

Register through this link [https://www.gogentleaustralia.org.au/2025\\_webinar\\_series](https://www.gogentleaustralia.org.au/2025_webinar_series)

We hope you can join us for these two big events and appreciate, as we do, the promising news from Victoria.