

Voluntary Assisted Dying – Position Statement

Catholic Healthcare's Mission is to "promote dignity, life, and spirituality of older people through connected and inclusive communities." As a living expression of the healing ministry of Jesus, Catholic Healthcare upholds the dignity of the human person and the sanctity of life, lived through the values of courage, compassion, and integrity. The core underlying principles are outlined in the "Code of Ethical Standards for Catholic Health and Aged Care Services in Australia."

Catholic Healthcare ensures that all people who receive any of our care and services receive quality palliative care so that they can die with comfort and dignity. We also provide direct support to their families and significant others.

We respect every individual choice and preference, acknowledging a capable adult's right to choose their clinical care, including the right to cease or withdraw from medical treatment at any time. We do not and will not seek to prolong life. This includes the right to refuse or discontinue treatment that is burdensome and will not improve the prognosis of the illness or quality of life. We encourage and support the use of Advanced Care Planning and Directives as the choices made by a person for their death.

Catholic Healthcare does not facilitate, or participate in voluntary assisted dying (VAD). All people who receive our care and services and their families are advised of our conscientious objection to VAD as part of onboarding to Catholic Healthcare. It is publicly available on our website and in the relevant handbooks. We will always take the time to answer any questions in accordance with our VAD policy and procedure documents.

Catholic Healthcare adopts a rights-based approach to care and respects each person's personal choice. We will never abandon an older person pursuing a VAD pathway, treat them any less favourably, and always demonstrate a compassionate approach to all people in our care. We will not change or alter the provision of safe, high-quality care and services when a person chooses to access VAD. Catholic Healthcare has a governance structure including policies, procedures, and training for all workforce members, including volunteers and contractors.

We will not impede a person from pursuing VAD or hinder access to information about VAD. We will allow responsible registered health professionals and State Navigator Service employees to freely access an individual expressing their right to access and choose VAD.

If a resident or client seeks information or access to VAD services, we will direct them to contact their general practitioner or the State Health Department's VAD Care Navigator Service. We will always maintain our commitment to care for residents who are considering or pursuing 'VAD'. We will abide by all relevant Queensland, and New South Wales legislation.