Accessing voluntary assisted dying in Western Australia

Glossary of terms

Summary

This glossary is designed to help explain key terms often used when discussing voluntary assisted dying in Western Australia (WA). For exact definitions you may need to refer to the Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2019 or other legislation – this glossary is a general guide only.

Key terms

Administration decision – The decision a person makes in consultation with their Coordinating Practitioner to either self-administer the voluntary assisted dying substance or have it administered by a medical practitioner or nurse practitioner.

Administering Practitioner – The medical practitioner or nurse practitioner who administers the voluntary assisted dying substance to a person.

Advance Health Directive – A legal document which can be made by an adult with decision-making capacity to record their decisions about future health care treatments. Treatment decisions recorded in a valid Advance Health Directive must be followed when the maker can no longer make or communicate their decision/s.

Allied health professional – A qualified person who practices any of a wide range of health and related professions other than medicine and nursing (e.g., physiotherapist, speech pathologist, social worker, pharmacist etc.). Allied health professionals are often part of a multidisciplinary healthcare team.

Authorised Disposer – A registered health practitioner (pharmacist) who is authorised to legally dispose of the voluntary assisted dying substance.

Authorised Supplier – A registered health practitioner (pharmacist) who is authorised to legally supply the voluntary assisted dying substance. In WA Authorised Suppliers are part of the WA VAD Statewide Pharmacy Service.

Care Navigator – A health professional working for the Statewide VAD Care Navigator Service who can provide information and assistance regarding voluntary assisted dying.

Coercion – Persuading someone to do something by using dishonesty, force or threats. Under the law, a person's choice to access voluntary assisted dying must be free from coercion.

Contact Person – The person chosen by the person who has made a decision to self-administer the voluntary assisted dying substance – it is a specific and defined role under the law. This role is explained in Voluntary assisted dying in Western Australia – Being the Contact Person.

Consulting Practitioner – The medical practitioner who independently completes a Consulting Assessment.
**Consulting Assessment** – The independent assessment completed by the Consulting Practitioner to determine if a person meets the eligibility criteria for voluntary assisted dying. This occurs after a person has been assessed as eligible by the Coordinating Practitioner during the First Assessment.

**Coordinating Practitioner** – The medical practitioner who accepts a person's request for voluntary assisted dying and coordinates the process.

**Decision-making capacity** – A person's ability to make day-to-day decisions about their life. Under the law, a person must have and retain decision-making capacity regarding voluntary assisted dying.

**Eligibility criteria** – The set of conditions that a person must meet for access to voluntary assisted dying; or that a medical practitioner or nurse practitioner must meet to be able to provide services as part of the voluntary assisted dying process.

**End-of-life** – The time leading up to a person's death, when it is expected that they are likely to die soon from an illness, disease or medical condition. A person at end-of-life will likely die within the next 12 months.

**Enduring** – Lasting over a period of time. Under the law, a person's request for voluntary assisted dying must be enduring. The person's choice to participate is paramount. The person is not obliged at any stage of the process, even after completion of the request and assessment process, to take any further action in relation to voluntary assisted dying.

**Enduring Guardian/Enduring Guardianship** – A person appointed to make important personal, lifestyle and treatment decisions for someone else, in the event they become incapable of making these decisions themselves. This is not allowed for decisions relating to voluntary assisted dying.

**Final Request** – The request for access to voluntary assisted dying that a person makes to the Coordinating Practitioner after completing the Written Declaration. This is the third request a person must make to access voluntary assisted dying.

**Final Review** – The review of the request and assessment process that the Coordinating Practitioner must complete after receiving the Final Request.

**First responder** – A person whose job means that they are likely to be called to attend to an emergency (e.g., ambulance officers, police, firefighters etc).

**First Assessment** – The assessment completed by the Coordinating Practitioner to determine if a person meets the eligibility criteria for voluntary assisted dying. If assessed as eligible, this would be followed by the Consulting Assessment.

**First Request** – The clear and unmistakable request a person makes to a medical practitioner during a medical consultation for access to voluntary assisted dying.

**Healthcare worker** – A person who works in a healthcare setting such as a hospital, general practice or residential care facility. This includes health professionals and any other person who provides health services or professional care services.

**Health professional** – A properly qualified person who practices a range of medical, nursing and allied health professions.

**Medical consultation** – An appointment or meeting with a medical practitioner to seek medical advice or treatment.

**Medical practitioner** – A person registered in the medical profession (other than as a student). Also known as a doctor.
Neurodegenerative condition – A condition characterised by degeneration of the nervous system, especially the neurons in the brain (e.g., motor neurone disease, Parkinson’s disease, Huntington’s disease, dementia etc).

Nurse practitioner – A person registered in the nursing profession (other than as a student). A nurse practitioner is a registered nurse with an additional masters degree who works at an advanced practice level.

Ordinarily resident – Usually living in a place. Under the law, a person must have been ordinarily resident in Western Australia for at least 12-months to access voluntary assisted dying.

Palliative care – The care provided to a person who has a life-limiting illness, disease or medical condition and their family to support their quality of life, often provided by a specialised health service.

Practitioner administration – The process whereby a person is administered the voluntary assisted dying substance by a medical practitioner or nurse practitioner.

Request and assessment process – The part of the voluntary assisted dying process that involves the First Request, First Assessment, Consulting Assessment, Written Declaration, Final Request and Final Review.

Self-administer/self-administration – The process whereby a person prepares and ingests the voluntary assisted dying substance themselves.

WA VAD Statewide Pharmacy Service – The specific pharmacy service established to supply the voluntary assisted dying substance in WA.

Statewide VAD Care Navigator Service – The specific nurse-led service established to provide a state-wide point of contact for information and assistance relating to voluntary assisted dying.

Telehealth – The use of communication technology (e.g., phone call, videoconference etc) to provide healthcare over a distance.

Voluntary assisted dying – The legal process that enables an eligible person to access, administer or be administered the voluntary assisted dying substance for the purpose of causing their death.

Voluntary Assisted Dying Board – The statutory Board established to ensure compliance with the legislation and to recommend safety and quality improvements relating to voluntary assisted dying.

Voluntary Assisted Dying – Information Management System (VAD-IMS) – The online system that enables completion and submission of the required forms to the Voluntary Assisted Dying Board.

Voluntary assisted dying substance – The approved medication that will cause death.

Written Declaration – The formal written request for access to voluntary assisted dying that a person makes after being assessed as eligible by the Coordinating Practitioner and the Consulting Practitioner. This is the second request a person must make as part of the process to access voluntary assisted dying.