

## Accessing voluntary assisted dying in Western Australia

# Making the First Request

### Summary

This information sheet is for people who want to know more about starting the process to access voluntary assisted dying by making a First Request.

### Key points include:

- A person can start the voluntary assisted dying process by making a First Request to a medical practitioner during a medical consultation.
- The request should be clear and unambiguous, so the medical practitioner knows exactly what is being asked of them. Using the words 'voluntary assisted dying' will help the medical practitioner understand that a First Request is being made.
- If the medical practitioner does not agree with voluntary assisted dying (has a conscientious objection) they must tell the person **immediately** and provide them with the *Approved information for a person making a First Request for voluntary assisted dying* booklet.
- If the medical practitioner doesn't have a conscientious objection to voluntary assisted dying, they must inform the patient within two (2) business days after the First Request is made whether they accept or refuse the First Request.
- The Western Australian Voluntary Assisted Dying Statewide Care Navigator Service (SWCNS) can help to connect a person with a medical practitioner who is willing and eligible to participate in the voluntary assisted dying process.

### Making the First Request

If you have made the decision that you want to access voluntary assisted dying, you will need to start the process by making a request for access to voluntary assisted dying. This is known as the First Request.

For your request to be considered a First Request, you must:

- make the request to a registered medical practitioner (such as a GP or a specialist doctor)
- make the request during a medical consultation (an appointment or meeting with the GP or specialist doctor)
- make the request in person, or if that is not practicable make the request using audiovisual communication (a method of electronic communication that allows you and the medical practitioner to see and hear each other simultaneously)
- make it clear that you want to access voluntary assisted dying (so the medical practitioner can be certain about what it is you are asking).

While you don't have to use the words 'voluntary assisted dying', it will help the medical practitioner understand that you are making a First Request. A suggested way of making your first request is to ask: 'Will you help me to access voluntary assisted dying?'

The most important thing is to make it clear that you are asking for help to end your life in this way. You may find that the medical practitioner asks you questions to clarify that you are asking for assistance to die.

### **Outcome of the First Request**

Once you have made the First Request to a medical practitioner, they must decide whether to accept or refuse it.

If the medical practitioner intends to refuse your request because they have a conscientious objection to voluntary assisted dying, they must inform you **immediately** and give you the *Approved information for a person making a First Request for voluntary assisted dying* information booklet. This will include important information about accessing voluntary assisted dying, including other resources and people you can contact to assist or support you.

If the medical practitioner doesn't immediately accept your First Request, they must within two (2) business days after you make the First Request, inform you whether they accept or refuse the request. Not all medical practitioners will be able to accept a First Request for voluntary assisted dying, even if they would like to. They may not be eligible (e.g. they haven't been a doctor for long enough) or able (e.g. they can't commit the time required) to participate.

**Regardless of whether the medical practitioner accepts or refuses your request, they must give you the *Approved information for a person making a First Request for voluntary assisted dying* booklet.**

### **After the First Request**

If the medical practitioner accepts your First Request, they become your Coordinating Practitioner. They will then begin the assessment process with you. The full voluntary assisted dying process is described in the information sheet *Accessing voluntary assisted dying in Western Australia – Overview of the process*.

If the medical practitioner did not accept your First Request, you can choose to make a new First Request to a different medical practitioner.

### **What if I can't find a medical practitioner to ask for voluntary assisted dying?**

If you need assistance to find a medical practitioner who is eligible and willing to support your First Request, SWCNS can help.

Email: [VADcarenavigator@health.wa.gov.au](mailto:VADcarenavigator@health.wa.gov.au)

Phone: (08) 9431 2755

### **Voluntary Assisted Dying Regional Access Support Scheme (RASS)**

If you live outside of the metropolitan region and are not able to access a medical practitioner in your local area, the Care Navigators may be able to support you through the RASS. This scheme can assist you to travel to a medical practitioner to access voluntary assisted dying or, if you are unable to travel, it can support a medical practitioner to travel to you.

The services provided by SWCNS are outlined in the *Accessing voluntary assisted dying in Western Australia – What is the Western Australian Voluntary Assisted Dying Statewide Care Navigator Service?* information sheet.

## Where can I find more information?

For further information please visit the Department of Health WA website [ww2.health.wa.gov.au/voluntaryassisteddying](http://ww2.health.wa.gov.au/voluntaryassisteddying)

## Glossary of terms

Refer to *Accessing voluntary assisted dying in Western Australia – Glossary of terms* for explanations of key terms used within this information sheet.

### Acknowledgement

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