

Position Statement on Voluntary Assisted Dying

Bethesda is committed to:

- providing excellent palliative care to the community of Western Australia through our services
- improving the quality of end-of-life and palliative care available to all
- advocating for better access to specialist palliative care for those who need it.

Palliative care is:

An approach that improves the quality of life of people & their families facing problems associated with life-limiting illness, through the prevention & relief of suffering by means of early identification & impeccable assessment & treatment of pain & other problems, physical, psychosocial, & spiritual.

The Parliament of Western Australia passed a law in December 2019 which permits eligible people to access voluntary assisted dying (VAD). The law came into effect on 1 July 2021. Bethesda Health Care (Bethesda) acknowledges this legislation, and recognises VAD as a legal care option for some people in Western Australia. This law also permits clinicians to decline to provide VAD to patients.

The law is called the *Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2019*. Information is available at ww2.health.wa.gov.au/voluntaryassisteddying.

Bethesda Health Care, and our clinicians, elect not to intentionally end the life of any person in our care under the VAD legislation. Bethesda does not allow VAD interventions or services to be provided on our premises.

Bethesda Health Care is a faith-based organisation affiliated with the Churches of Christ. We believe all lives are precious, and that we cannot intentionally cause or hasten the death of any person, or assist them to take their own life, even to relieve their suffering.

In most cases discussions about VAD will be undertaken by the senior Bethesda doctor responsible for the patients care.

Bethesda staff will offer to have open and sensitive discussions with people in our care who consider VAD and provide information about Western Australia's Statewide Care Navigator Service (which is designed to provide information on WA's VAD system) helping ensure they understand their care and treatment options. Our staff will advise that we will not provide VAD services.

Bethesda believes all people should receive effective symptom management at the end-of-life, and our staff will provide the very best specialised palliative care to all our patients, including those who may later choose VAD.

Bethesda's specialist palliative care teams include doctors, nurses, social workers, etc.