

18 December 2020



Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **Health**

Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2019

Implementation Update

Implementation Leadership Team - Communique December 2020

Message from the Chair, Dr Scott Blackwell

Leading up to Christmas and a well-earned break for many, the Implementation Leadership Team (ILT) finds itself at a corner in the road towards the implementation of voluntary assisted dying on 1 July 2021. Much of our work has been about the content of many of the aspects of voluntary assisted dying as well as infrastructure to give it functionality. Over recent weeks we have seen a transition to finding a home for the various aspects of voluntary assisted dying, as well as the commencement of establishing a state of readiness within the health system and the community at large.

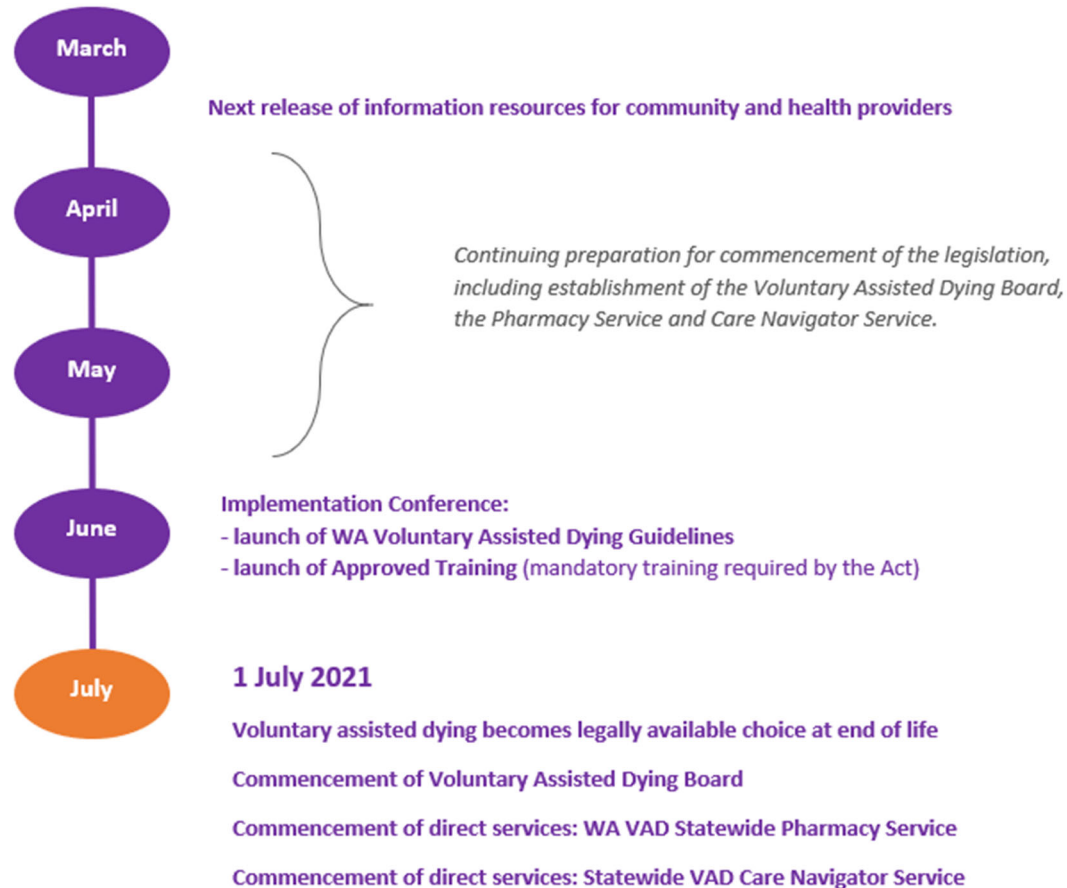
Around the corner into the New Year, we will become more focussed on each program within voluntary assisted dying becoming functional, including the new entities of the Voluntary Assisted Dying Board, the Care Navigator Service and the Voluntary Assisted Dying Pharmacy Service. The ILT will also be more focussed on readiness. Readiness of health professionals, Health Service Providers, and the people of Western Australia.

I wish you all a happy and peaceful Christmas.

Dr Scott Blackwell

Chair - Implementation Leadership Team, Western Australia

2021 Implementation Timeline - Key dates



Progress update

The ILT and Department of Health continue to progress towards implementation of voluntary assisted dying in Western Australia (WA) on 1 July 2021.

Development continues on a number of key implementation projects:

- **The Voluntary Assisted Dying Board** - the implementation of this statutory Board is an essential component of the way in which voluntary assisted dying will work in WA. There are many detailed aspects to

establishing the Board and it will be well supported by the Department of Health when it commences on 1 July 2021.

- **Statewide VAD Care Navigator Service** - this Statewide service is currently being developed. The Care Navigators will be involved in the preparations for commencement of the legislation ahead of starting their full patient navigation roles from 1 July 2021. Education and information relating to voluntary assisted dying in WA will be a significant focus.
- **WA VAD Statewide Pharmacy Service** - this Statewide service development is also progressing. Ensuring safe and appropriate access to the voluntary assisted dying substance is of utmost importance and the pharmacy service is essential to that access across WA.
- **Participating Practitioner Training** - the Queensland University of Technology (QUT) is currently developing the training for practitioners with participating roles in the voluntary assisted dying process. This training will be an online format and designed to enable access for practitioners across the state.
- **Information resources** - work continues on the development of accurate information resources for consumers, carers and health providers. This is being well informed through feedback from stakeholders received during consultation. There are a number of resources already available (link [here](#)) and more will be released in 2021.

Practitioners preparing for voluntary assisted dying in Western Australia

The implementation of voluntary assisted dying will introduce further choice for eligible Western Australians approaching end of life. This is a choice that can be accessed through the process outlined in the legislation. That means that relevant health practitioners need to have awareness of voluntary assisted dying and be prepared as to how they (and their health service) will respond to a person requesting voluntary assisted dying.

The ILT has recently hosted a series of webinars in partnership with Victorian service providers which gave an opportunity to hear their experiences and learnings. The guest presenters from Victoria discussed the approach of their services and themselves to the implementation of voluntary assisted dying, what worked well and learnings of implementation. Four webinars were held during November for:

- **Palliative care providers** - Alison Smith and Dr Becky Chapman (Bendigo Health) and Dr Greg Mewett (Grampians Regional Palliative Care Team) presented on the impact of voluntary assisted dying on palliative care.
- **Hospital and related service providers** - Eliza Armstrong and Suzie Hooper (Epworth Healthcare), Dr Danielle Ko (Austin Health) and Dr Mark Boughey (St Vincent's Hospital) presented on the approach of their hospital service to implementation of voluntary assisted dying.
- **General Practitioners and Nurse Practitioners** - Dr Deb Harley (General Practitioner, Victoria) presented on her approach to the implementation of voluntary assisted dying as a general practitioner and how this was working in practice. Dr Scott Blackwell and Stephanie Dowden from the ILT also discussed how voluntary assisted dying may look in WA for general practitioners and nurse practitioners.
- **Residential aged care providers** - Dr Peter Lange (Geriatrician, Victoria) presented on their approach to the implementation of voluntary assisted dying as a geriatrician and how voluntary assisted dying looked like for residential aged care facilities in Victoria. Dr Scott Blackwell from the ILT also discussed how voluntary assisted dying may look in WA for residential aged care providers.

Slides from the webinars can be accessed from the voluntary assisted dying website [here](#).

Guiding resources on practitioner and service preparedness are available [here](#).

Implementation Conference

An implementation conference will be held prior to the commencement of the legislation. Registration details will be released closer to the event (expected to be held in the first week of June).

The conference will provide an opportunity for health practitioners to become informed regarding voluntary assisted dying and will include sessions on:

- Information and resources for health practitioners
- Participating Practitioner Approved Training
- Voluntary Assisted Dying Board (and IT system)
- Statewide Care Navigator Service
- Statewide Pharmacy Service
- Community of practice
- Information resources for consumers and carers

Subscribe for updates [here](#) to be kept informed about details of the implementation conference.

Resources

A number of resources are available on the Department of Health voluntary assisted dying website.

Health Service Providers

The webinars provided an opportunity for health service and related care service providers to consider what preparations their service requires prior to commencement of the *Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2019* ([the Act](#)) on 1 July 2021.

Resources are available to assist health service and related care service providers in their preparations for voluntary assisted dying:

- [Fact sheet - Health service or related care service provider preparation](#)
 - [Presentation - Introductory information for health and other service providers](#)
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- [Fact sheet - Health service and other service providers](#)

General community

Resources are available for community members interested in knowing more about the implementation of voluntary assisted dying:

- [Fact sheet - General community](#) (also available in audio format and in other languages)
- [Presentation - Introductory information for general community](#)

Subscribe now and further information

WA Department of Health website on voluntary assisted dying (link [here](#)).

If you would like to receive future editions of the ILT communique, please subscribe [here](#).

Support Services

Some people may find issues relating to end of life care distressing. If reading the material in this communique or thinking about end of life care has raised some issues regarding grief or bereavement or personal crisis, there are helplines and services available to provide support and counselling 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

- **Lifeline:** Ring 13 11 14 for telephone support and counselling 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. You can also visit Lifeline's crisis support chat online, 7pm to midnight, 7 days a week
 - **Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement:** Ring (03) 9265 2100 or 1800 642 066 (free call, Australia-wide) for information about bereavement services and support
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<https://ww2.health.wa.gov.au/voluntaryassisteddying>

VADimplementation@health.wa.gov.au

PO Box 8172

Perth Business Centre

Perth WA 6849

Australia

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