

Choosing a witness for practitioner administration

Voluntary assisted dying

If you have made a practitioner administration decision, you need to choose a witness.

The person you choose as a witness will have responsibilities under the *Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2021* (the Act).

The witness for practitioner administration has an important role, and you should choose someone who you think can handle the responsibility. This will include being present when the voluntary assisted dying substance is administered by the administering doctor or nurse.

The person you choose as a witness should also be someone you are comfortable having present when you die.

Eligibility

Your witness for practitioner administration must be 18 years or older.

Your witness can be:

- your partner or spouse
- a family member
- a friend
- a carer
- your contact person
- a healthcare worker involved in your care
- any person you trust to take on the role.

Your witness cannot be your administering doctor or nurse.

If you cannot choose someone to be your witness, you can:

- ask another healthcare worker involved in your care if they would be willing to be your witness
- contact the Queensland Voluntary Assisted Dying Support Service (QVAD-Support), who may be able to help you find a witness.

Role of the witness

The purpose of a witness for practitioner administration is to provide a safeguard to ensure that:

- your request for voluntary assisted dying is voluntary
- you are not being pressured into accessing voluntary assisted dying by someone else.

Your witness will need to fill in the witness section of the *Practitioner Administration Form*. This form is for your administering doctor or nurse to make a record of the administration of the substance. This form is completed after you die. Your witness will need to certify in the form that:

- you appeared to be acting voluntarily and without coercion
- they were present when the doctor or nurse administered the substance to you.

Voluntarily and without coercion

Your witness may talk to you about voluntary assisted dying. If they are concerned you are not acting voluntarily or believe you are being pressured into accessing voluntary

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assisted dying, they will raise their concerns with your administering doctor or nurse.

Note: Your administering doctor or nurse must certify you still have decision-making capacity and are acting voluntarily and without coercion. If your administering doctor or nurse, do not believe you are acting voluntarily and without coercion, or if you no longer have decision-making capacity, you will not be administered the voluntary assisted dying substance.

Present during administration

Your witness will need to be present when your administering doctor or nurse administers the voluntary assisted dying substance.

Change of witness

After they have been appointed to the role, the person you choose can withdraw from their role as your witness for practitioner administration, for any reason. They should tell you that they no longer want to be the witness, but they do not have to tell you why.

You can also change your mind about who you want to be your witness for practitioner administration. You should tell the person you have changed your mind.

You do not need to fill out any forms to change your witness for practitioner administration.

Legal protections

Under the Act, if you die by having a doctor or nurse administer a voluntary assisted dying substance, you are not considered to have died by suicide. There are specific

protections in the Act for people who assist a person accessing voluntary assisted dying or are present when the person dies.

This means that your witness will not be breaking any laws in Queensland by carrying out their responsibilities as a witness for practitioner administration.

QVAD-Support

QVAD-Support provides advice to all Queenslanders about voluntary assisted dying.

QVAD-Support is run by care coordinators who are medical, nursing, and allied healthcare workers. Your witnesses can contact QVAD-Support if they have any questions about their role as a witness to the second request or voluntary assisted dying.

You can talk to a care coordinator Monday to Friday, 8.30am-4pm.

Phone: 1800 431 371

Email: QVADSupport@health.qld.gov.au

Support Services

Different people will need and want different levels of support. Support is available for you, and those close to you. Call one of the helplines below for support and counselling:

24/7 crisis services

- Mental Health Access Line call 1300 64 22 55 (24/7)
- Lifeline call 13 11 14 (24/7 – phone, text, online)
- Suicide Call Back Service call 1300 659 467 (24/7 – phone and online)

Support services

- Beyond Blue call 1300 22 4636 (24/7 – phone, online)
- Griefline call 1300 845 745 (6am to midnight AEST, 7 days a week)
- Queensland Transcultural Mental Health Centre call 3317 1234 or 1800 188 189 (outside Brisbane) or 1300 64 22 55 (24/7)
- World Wellness Group (multicultural support) call 1300 079 020
- 13YARN (13 92 76) for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

For more information and support visit <https://www.qld.gov.au/health/mental-health/help-lines>.



Help in your language

If you need an interpreter, ask your doctor for one. It is free.

For help reading this information call:

- Multicultural Connect Line free hotline number: 1300 079 020
- Interpreter Service (Help with English): 13 QGOV (13 74 68) and ask for an interpreter
- Translating and Interpreting Service: 13 14 50