

# Information for home care workers

Voluntary assisted dying gives people who are suffering and dying, and who meet eligibility criteria, the option of requesting medical assistance to end their lives. It is available to eligible Queenslanders from 1 January 2023.

This fact sheet is intended for health and aged care workers who provide home care services and contains essential information about voluntary assisted dying in Queensland.

## The voluntary assisted dying process

Voluntary assisted dying is a process where an eligible person requests medical help to legally access a substance that will cause their death. To start the process, the person must specifically ask to access voluntary assisted dying. They then go through a series of assessments and need to make two further requests to access voluntary assisted dying. Two medical practitioners must independently assess the person as eligible.

More information on eligibility criteria for people accessing voluntary assisted dying is available on the [Queensland Health website](#).

## Health and aged care worker involvement in voluntary assisted dying

Health and aged care workers who provide home care services may become involved in the voluntary assisted dying process in a number of ways, including:

- responding to questions and providing information about voluntary assisted dying
- providing ongoing care, treatment and support for the person and their family
- medical practitioners, nurse practitioners and registered nurses may apply to become an authorised voluntary assisted dying practitioner (see the [Queensland Health website](#) for more information on the roles and responsibilities of authorised practitioners, the eligibility criteria and the authorisation process).

## Conscientious objection

A health or aged care worker can decide not to participate in voluntary assisted dying. Deciding whether to participate in voluntary assisted dying can be a difficult decision. The position of a health or aged care worker's employer or workplace may also impact the decision. For example, some organisations may have faith-based or in-principle objections to voluntary assisted dying.

When a health or aged care worker decides not to participate in voluntary assisted dying because of their personal beliefs, this is called 'conscientious objection'. Registered health practitioners

(for example, a doctor, nurse, or physiotherapist) and speech pathologists have specific obligations under the *Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2021* (the Act) if they conscientiously object to participating in voluntary assisted dying. They must:

- inform the person that other health practitioners, health service providers or services may be able to assist
- give the person information about where they can get further information and support, or the details of the Queensland Voluntary Assisted Dying Support Service (QVAD-Support).

***QVAD-Support is the statewide support service for anyone who requires information about voluntary assisted dying and can be contacted at [QVADSupport@health.qld.gov.au](mailto:QVADSupport@health.qld.gov.au) and on 1800 431 371 (Mon-Fri, 08.30-16.00, excluding public holidays – available from 1 January 2023).***

Health and aged care workers who are not registered health practitioners or speech pathologists (for example, personal care workers) do not have any particular legal obligations regarding voluntary assisted dying but may also wish to conscientiously object to participation.

More information about conscientious objection and the specific obligations of registered health practitioners and speech pathologists is available on the [Queensland Health website](#). All health and aged care workers may find it helpful to discuss their roles and responsibilities in relation to voluntary assisted dying with their manager or employer.

## Responding to questions about voluntary assisted dying

Conversations about death and dying can be complex. If a person raises the topic of voluntary assisted dying, it is important to respond appropriately and with respect for the person's views.

Any health or aged care worker can provide information about voluntary assisted dying to a person who requests it, if they feel comfortable and have the knowledge to do so. More information about responding to requests for information about voluntary assisted dying is available from:

- the [Queensland Health website](#)
- QVAD-Support
- an online education module on voluntary assisted dying, accessible by all health and aged care workers internal and external to Queensland Health (see the Queensland Health [iLearn website](#)).

## Starting a conversation about voluntary assisted dying

The Act is very strict regarding who can start a conversation with a person about voluntary assisted dying. Only doctors and nurse practitioners are allowed to initiate a conversation about voluntary assisted dying if, at the same time, they inform the person about treatment options available and the likely outcomes of that treatment, and palliative care and treatment options

available and the likely outcomes of that care and treatment. All other health and aged care workers can respond to requests for information about voluntary assisted dying, if they feel comfortable doing so, but are not permitted to bring up the topic of voluntary assisted dying before the person raises the issue themselves.

## More information

Queensland Health: [\*Voluntary assisted dying in Queensland\*](#)

Queensland Health: [\*Queensland Voluntary Assisted Dying Handbook\*](#) - the Handbook provides detailed information regarding all aspects of the voluntary assisted dying process in Queensland.

*Voluntary assisted dying education module for healthcare workers* – an online module accessible to Queensland Health staff via [iLearn](#) and to staff external to Queensland Health via the [Queensland Health website](#).

QVAD-Support: [QVADSupport@health.qld.gov.au](mailto:QVADSupport@health.qld.gov.au) - QVAD-Support can provide information and support for the person accessing voluntary assisted dying and health and aged care workers who have questions or need information about voluntary assisted dying.

Check with your professional association about the resources they may have developed regarding voluntary assisted dying.

Ask your employer about any resources and policies they may have about voluntary assisted dying, as well as support available for health and aged care workers providing services in home care settings.