

# voluntary assisted dying


## Conversation Snapshot: Voluntary Assisted Dying Stakeholder Roundtables


### Disability and mental health communities


15 March 2023


“When we are talking about mental health and disabilities, there may be a range of lived experiences that need to be taken into consideration”


#### Topics most frequently discussed


 **Ensuring a person-centred approach** and consideration of lived experiences, both from the perspective of those accessing voluntary assisted dying and their families, friends and carers

 **The need for adequate support and communication**, including for family, friends and carers

 **A clear, safe, equitable, timely and accessible** process for people suffering near the end of their lives

 Requirement for **clear and strong definitions for eligibility and decision-making capacity**, including determining individual decision-making capacity and consider **enabling access** for people who meet the decision-making capacity requirement and then lose capacity as their condition progresses

 **Measures to ensure a person is not pressured by someone else** (coercion) and is given the right support, including consideration of **safeguards** such as independent advocacy and whether two reviewing medical professionals is necessary or burdensome

 Include consideration of being able to **pre-register** a request for voluntary assisted dying or incorporating into end of life plans

#### What you told us about how the ACT model could work

##### Eligibility

- A clear definition and criteria around the moment when people can make the decision
- Determining individual decision-making capacity and enabling access for people who have the capacity in the present but may not have the capacity as their condition progresses
- Defining what level of suffering would deem a person eligible to access voluntary assisted dying (through legislation)
- It is difficult to determine an appropriate age limit or process for young people
- Enable access to voluntary assisted dying within the ACT for those outside of ACT (include in legislation), but give consideration to impacts on the health system

##### Safe and effective process

- Ensuring eligible people have access, and a process that is equitable and timely
- A person centered process, including adequate information and support for families and carers to minimise stress or trauma as they support a person through the process
- Some felt that a second doctor or medical professional was not needed, while others thought it was an important safeguard
- Access for people living with disabilities or mental health issues, including consideration to be eligible if the person does not meet the pre-requisite capability requirement.
- Guidelines for where the person can take the substance or have the substance administered

##### Monitoring and compliance

- Being able to make independent decisions without external persuasion or coercion, which will require strong safeguards to support and enable access for people living with a disability or mental illnesses
- Policy and legislation needs to support death notification process, noting that not every person will want it on their death certificate
- Data capturing and de-identified reporting

##### Other important issues

- The need to consider a range of lived experiences regarding disability and mental illness
- Importance of person-centered care
- Access shouldn't be determined by financial status of the person wanting access to voluntary assisted dying
- Legal practicalities, such as personal insurances (e.g. life insurance)

“(We need)... adequate information, support and understanding of the process and the rights of individuals”

#### Roundtables held

##### Disability and mental health communities

First Nations communities



Health and aged care service providers

Health Professionals

Clinical health practitioners

 Attendees

- **9 attendees** from **7 ACT organisations** representing Canberrans living with disability and mental health

This roundtable was held online and the discussion focused on the themes of eligibility, a safe and effective process, and other matters important to attendees