



### Discussion guide 3 of 5

## What process should a person follow to access voluntary assisted dying?

The ACT Government acknowledges the many Canberrans who have experienced, or are experiencing, suffering in the face of illness, disease, and medical conditions. We also acknowledge the hardships and grief experienced by their loved ones and carers.

This Discussion Guide contains information that may be distressing or uncomfortable. If you need support, contact [Lifeline](#) on **13 11 14** or [Griefline](#) on **1300 845 745**.

### Introduction

Voluntary assisted dying is a safe and effective medical process that gives an eligible person the option to end their suffering by choosing how and when they die. The ACT Government invites Canberrans to share their views on how a voluntary assisted dying model is designed for the ACT. We are committed to understanding our community's experiences in developing our approach to voluntary assisted dying in the ACT.

To help you provide your views on voluntary assisted dying, a series of short Discussion Guides are available. These Guides summarise five key themes explored in a longer Discussion Paper including an introduction, eligibility, the

process, the role of health practitioners and health services, and monitoring and compliance.

### What process should a person follow to access voluntary assisted dying?

An eligible person should have information, support and protection to help them make decisions about voluntary assisted dying. That process could include finding the right health professionals, getting information and support, and taking time to think about decisions.

To help you think about this topic and provide your views, here is a summary of the process a person must follow in other places in Australia:

1. The person asks a qualified and experienced doctor (first doctor) to help with voluntary assisted dying
2. The first doctor assesses if that the person is eligible to access voluntary assisted dying
3. The person asks a different qualified and experienced doctor (second doctor) to help with voluntary assisted dying
4. The second doctor assesses that the person is eligible to access voluntary assisted dying
5. The person makes a written request to the first doctor, witnessed by independent witnesses
6. The person makes a final request to the first doctor
7. The first doctor makes sure the person is still eligible for voluntary assisted dying, submits paperwork, and arranges

- for a pharmacist to supply a prescribed voluntary assisted dying substance
8. The person dies by taking the voluntary assisted dying substance when they choose to do so, either by taking the substance themselves or by asking a health professional to help them take the substance.

### **Finding a health professional who can help**

We want to know your views on how health professionals should be involved in helping a person access voluntary assisted dying.

In other places in Australia, two qualified and experienced doctors help a person access voluntary assisted dying. The doctors decide if a person is eligible to access voluntary assisted dying. The doctors can also seek advice or another opinion if they are not sure if the person is eligible to access voluntary assisted dying. For more information about when a person should have access to voluntary assisted dying, see [Discussion Guide 2: Who should have access to voluntary assisted dying?](#).

It can sometimes be hard to find a health professional who can help with voluntary assisted dying. We want to make sure it is not difficult for a person to find the right health professional to help them to access voluntary assisted dying.

For more information, see [Discussion Guide 4: The role of health professionals and health services in voluntary assisted dying](#).

### **Having the right information and support**

We want to know your views on what kind of information and support a person needs to make important decisions about voluntary assisted dying. A person can get information from their health professionals and other sources.

### **Making sure the person freely chooses voluntary assisted dying**

We want to know your views on how to make sure an eligible person freely chooses to access

voluntary assisted dying and is not pressured by anyone else.

In other places in Australia, a person can only access voluntary assisted dying if they take a few days to think about it before making a final request for voluntary assisted dying. Also, a person can only access voluntary assisted dying if other people witness at least one written request. The witnesses must be someone who will not benefit personally or financially from the person's death.

### **Taking the voluntary assisted dying substance to die**

In other places in Australia, if an eligible person completes the process to access voluntary assisted dying, a doctor can arrange access to a voluntary assisted dying substance. A voluntary assisted dying substance is a medication prescribed by a doctor that when taken, causes a person's death at the end of the voluntary assisted dying process.

A person can choose when to use the substance. The person can also choose to never use the substance – some people just want to have the option to end their suffering when they are ready.

We want to know your views on how we can give a person dignity and choice, but also protect them from harm. In most states in Australia, a person must use the substance themselves, but if this is not possible or not appropriate, a doctor can help them use the substance. Other states allow a person to choose whether to use the substance themselves or ask a health professional to help them use the substance.

### **Notifying and registering a person's death**

When a person dies in the ACT, the person's health professional notifies Access Canberra. Access Canberra then updates the births, deaths and marriages register, and can provide a death certificate for a person.

Because death certificates are used for various legal, insurance and other purposes, sometimes a person's family might not want the death

certificate to include details of how a person died. Sometimes, Access Canberra can provide a death certificate that excludes this information. Around Australia, some states make sure that a death certificate says a person's death was caused by their illness, and not caused by voluntary assisted dying. We want to know your views on how a person's death should be notified and registered if they die from a voluntary assisted dying substance.

### **How can I share my views?**

To share your views on how a voluntary assisted dying model is designed for the ACT, visit the [YourSay website](#) by 6 April 2023. There are many ways you can have your say.

If you need help to access information or have your say, please call Access Canberra on 13 22 81.

**If you would like some more detailed information about these issues and why we want your views, please read the [Discussion Paper](#).**