

Response to NSW Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2022

St Vincent's Health Australia has a long and proud tradition of providing quality and compassionate end-of-life care that has faithfully been serving the Australian community since 1857.

When our patients are experiencing a life-limiting illness, we assist them to die in comfort and with dignity. We do this through deep commitment to:

- heal and never harm;
- relieve pain and other physical symptoms of illness and frailty;
- address psychological distress;
- withdraw life-prolonging treatments when they are medically futile or overly burdensome, or when a person wants them withdrawn; and
- never abandon our patients.

We do not consider that the prescription of a lethal substance to a person to help them end their own life, nor the administration of a lethal substance to a person by a health practitioner to end their life, are part of end-of-life care. Our position is consistent with the Australian Medical Association and the World Medical Association. It is these acts which became legal under NSW 'Voluntary Assisted Dying' (VAD) laws.

Hospitals

From November 28th 2023, NSW laws allow healthcare facilities to choose whether or not to participate in the state's 'Voluntary Assisted Dying' (VAD) system. St Vincent's Health Australia has decided not to have VAD services provided at any of our facilities. This means we do not participate in the VAD process including assessments or administration of the VAD substance. We are also unable to accommodate other clinicians providing these VAD services at our facilities.

We recognise that some patients may wish to explore the option of VAD while under our care. We are committed to receiving any enquiries about VAD in a compassionate and respectful manner.

Patients who request specific information about the VAD process will be guided to relevant government resources such as the NSW VAD Care Navigator Service.

Similarly, if a patient wishes to access VAD services available elsewhere, we will always respect this decision, not impede them, and support release and transfer of care. Patients remain welcome at our facilities for all their other care needs. We will abide by all relevant NSW legislation.

We acknowledge individual patient-centred care is required, and each patient's needs will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Information about NSW VAD laws is provided by NSW Health:

<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/voluntary-assisted-dying/Pages/default.aspx>