

# Voluntary Assisted Dying FAQs

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## Frequently Asked Questions and Answers

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## What is Calvary's position on Voluntary Assisted Dying?

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Calvary does not support Voluntary Assisted Dying (VAD).

Calvary respects the *experiences* of those advocating for VAD. At the same time, Calvary is raising important issues, such as respecting life and protecting ourselves in a world where often people are treated carelessly and life is not valued.

We don't believe that assisting someone to commit suicide, or to end their life directly and intentionally, can ever be an expression of care. All people are valuable, no matter what they are experiencing.

Our mission is focused on healing and accompanying the dying.

We seek to relieve people's suffering – whether this suffering is physical, emotional, psychological and/or spiritual. We do this, not by killing them or supporting them to kill themselves, but rather by alleviating the causes of the suffering.

## What does VAD mean for health care professionals?

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If Voluntary Assisted Dying (VAD) is introduced via legislation, there will be significant impacts on our health system which Calvary believes have not been fully considered.

Calvary believes that the proposed legislation fails to provide information about the proposed clinical regimen, including its known complications, safety and effectiveness.

Without a clear understanding of what drugs will be used, who will administer them and how complications, including vomiting, fitting, and failure to die will be managed and the proposed protocols are approved by the relevant medical Colleges, it is premature to pass legislation.

Calvary believes there should be much more focused consultation with the health sector, who will be responsible for overseeing and administering this system change; and the Commonwealth, who have responsibilities for aged care services, primary care, policy leadership for palliative care and workforce training.

Furthermore, we believe there is a risk of undermining the inherently precious commitment of health professionals to do no harm to their patients.

The proposed legislation is reshaping the role of health practitioners to propose that clinicians actively participate in bringing about the death of people, their patients, who are not necessarily dying. Questions which remain to be addressed include

- What are some of the risks?
- What are the proposed procedures?

- What are the complications?
- What are other implications?

For a fuller discussion and to view Calvary's position statement, visit <https://www.calvarycare.org.au/about-you/voluntary-assisted-dying/>

## What is Calvary doing?

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Calvary wishes to balance the debate.

You may be familiar with the proposition that VAD allows death with dignity. This has driven much of the publicity and in some part, has set the agenda for a number of Bills that are or have been under consideration in Victoria, NSW, Tasmania and South Australia.

Calvary believes this is only one side to the story.

Other Catholic Health and Aged Care providers share our view and we are working together with Catholic Health Australia (CHA) to share our concerns in the media and privately with Members of Parliament (MPs). Details of our progress are available at [www.calvaryvad.org.au](http://www.calvaryvad.org.au)

## What does this mean for me?

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You can help to normalize discussions about death and dying; encourage conversation as well as understand people's fears and wishes.

- Talk with colleagues, friends and families about death and dying. Listen to their fears and your own.
- You may be approached by an individual, a family member or a member of the community who expresses their concerns or asks your opinion – think about what you might say in response.
- Listen to the fears and the desires being expressed in the debate, think about how you would accompany someone expressing these fears and these desires.

Visit [www.calvaryvad.org.au](http://www.calvaryvad.org.au) to keep up to date with Calvary's activities and position on Voluntary Assisted Dying including all parliamentary submissions. Think about the issues identified in this FAQ together with the questions raised in Calvary's submissions to the Victorian Ministerial Advisory Panel and to MPs.

## What happens if legislation is passed?

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Calvary will communicate that VAD is not part of our practice and is not something Calvary can assist any person with in their home or in any Calvary services.

As a Specialist Palliative Care Service, with a particular mission to care for those approaching the end of life, Calvary WILL continue to support and care for people who may contemplate accessing VAD legislation. Calvary WILL also take steps to ensure that staff and volunteers receive the counselling and support required if a person they have been caring makes such an irreversible decision.

**Authorised by Mark Green, National Director of Mission**