

# Voluntary Assisted Dying FAQs

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## Frequently Asked Questions and Answers

What is Voluntary Assisted Dying (VAD)?.....	1
What is Calvary’s position on Voluntary Assisted Dying? .....	1
Will Calvary provide VAD services? .....	2
Why won’t Calvary provide VAD services?.....	2
How will VAD affect my care role at Calvary? .....	2
What will happen if a Calvary patient or resident asks to explore VAD? .....	2
How has Calvary prepared for the introduction of VAD? .....	2
What education, training and supports are in place?.....	3
Who can I speak to if this information is distressing?.....	3

## What is Voluntary Assisted Dying (VAD)?

In 2017, legislation was passed to allow Voluntary Assisted Dying (VAD) in Victoria. VAD will be available in Victoria from 19 June 2019.

**Voluntary Assisted Dying** is not **Euthanasia**, but is **Physician Assisted Suicide (PAS)**. This means a person with advanced disease who is clinically estimated to be living their last six months of life can be lawfully prescribed by a doctor a lethal medication that will cause their death.

Victoria is the only state or territory in Australia where VAD is a legal practice.

- **Euthanasia** - the intentional bringing about of the death of a person in order to relieve suffering. It can be either voluntary or non-voluntary.
- **Physician Assisted Suicide (PAS)** - the intentional giving of assistance, by a doctor, to someone to suicide.
- **Voluntary Assisted Dying (VAD)** - the term used to describe Physician-Assisted Suicide in the *Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2017 (Vic)*.

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

**Calvary does not support Voluntary Assisted Dying (VAD)**. For a detailed understanding of Calvary’s position, please read our [Position Statement on Euthanasia, Physician Assisted Suicide and Voluntary Assisted Dying](#).

Calvary respects the experiences of those advocating for or exploring the option of 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 subscribe to the view that assisting someone to suicide, or to end their life directly and intentionally, can ever be an expression of holistic care for a person. 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.

## Will Calvary provide VAD services?

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**Calvary is not and will not be involved in the implementation of any Voluntary Assisted Dying legislation. Calvary will not provide services permitted under this or any similar legislation.**

Calvary will not facilitate or participate in assessments undertaken for the purpose of a patient or resident having access or making use of the interventions allowed under the *Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2017* (Vic). Furthermore, we will not provide (or facilitate the provision of) a substance for the same purpose.

## Why won't Calvary provide VAD services?

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Calvary does not support Euthanasia, Voluntary Assisted Dying (VAD) or Physician Assisted Suicide (PAS). We do not recognise these interventions as medical treatments or expressions of holistic care for a person.

**Calvary will continue to provide our usual holistic, comprehensive end of life care.** We will continue to address the physical, spiritual, psychological and social needs of the patient, resident or client and their families.

While we will not participate in VAD, Calvary is committed to responding openly, respectfully, sensitively and without discrimination to anyone in our care who expresses a wish to explore or consider VAD.

## How will VAD affect my care role at Calvary?

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Voluntary Assisted Dying (VAD) will be available in Victoria from 19 June 2019. While our approach to the provision of comprehensive palliative and end of life care will not change, Calvary is aware that a member of our staff may be asked by a patient or resident to assist them to access VAD.

Any expressed wish to access or explore voluntary assisted dying **will be acknowledged with respect and without discrimination**; while being clear that our services **will not participate in or provide these interventions** and that **we will continue to provide our usual care.**

## What will happen if a Calvary patient or resident asks to explore VAD?

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Calvary recognises that patients may wish to explore the option of VAD while in our care. **We are committed to receiving all such enquiries in a compassionate and respectful manner.** We are committed to working with patients as valued partners in their health care.

Calvary will not participate in Voluntary Assisted Dying (VAD). We have a system in place that responds respectfully and compassionately to requests for VAD, including coordinating safe transfer of care across providers if a patient or resident wishes to pursue VAD.

**No patient or resident in Calvary's care will be discriminated against for any reason, including expressing an interest in exploring VAD.**

## How has Calvary prepared for the introduction of VAD?

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Calvary has developed a policy titled *Responding to Requests for Access to Voluntary Assisted Dying*. This policy applies to all Calvary employees, including Visiting Medical Officers (VMOs), students, volunteers, contractors and to any other people who may be acting on behalf of Calvary Health Care.

Calvary continues to work internally and with Catholic health, community and aged care peak body Catholic Health Australia (CHA) to develop the guidelines, educational materials and protocols necessary to ensure no person in our care is abandoned when navigating their end of life.

## What education, training and supports are in place?

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Calvary has adopted a tiered system to ensure a consistent, ethical and compassionate approach when responding to patients, residents or clients who express a desire for information or access to Voluntary Assisted Dying (VAD).

This system also ensures that all staff have the appropriate level of competency and support to respond to such requests in an informed and respectful manner.

Calvary staff have access to a Calvary Connect site titled [Voluntary Assisted Dying - Calvary's Response](#). This site has information about Calvary's VAD Tiered Response System.

## Who can I speak to if this information is distressing?

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If you are a Calvary employee and find this information distressing in any way, please discuss your concerns with your manager. If you find you require additional support, reach out to your local Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provider for assistance.

Members of the public who find this information distressing are encouraged to discuss their concerns with their GP or reach out to Lifeline Australia (13 11 14) or Beyond Blue (1300 224 636).

**If you are a patient or resident of a Calvary service, please ask a clinician about what counselling and/or pastoral care services are available to you.**