



VADANZ

Voluntary Assisted Dying Australia and New Zealand

Happy one year anniversary VADANZ

Dear <<First Name>>

What a busy 12 months it has been!

VADANZ was re-launched one year ago on August 18, 2023, as the peak body representing multidisciplinary health care professionals providing VAD services in Australia and New Zealand. Since then, VAD has been implemented in NSW, joining all other Australian states, and laws have also passed in the ACT.

We now have more than 200 members, and expect the organisation to continue to grow as we enter our second year. We have welcomed a new board chair, Dr Sally Cockburn, and are excited by her energy and experience in both health advocacy and in VAD care delivery through her previous role on the Victorian VAD Review Board.

We continue to advocate on the issues that matter to you, such as the telehealth ban, the 'gag clause' that exists in many jurisdictions, remuneration, and delivering high-quality care. We have launched a New Zealand subcommittee of VADANZ as we have recognised that although there are many similar issues facing VAD practitioners in both countries, there are also many differences that need to be discussed locally. My personal thanks go to Dr Laura Chapman for her work in establishing and driving this.

Importantly, we are providing opportunities for you to connect with your colleagues and share expertise, whether it be through our website [forums](#) or in person at our first AGM on October 27 in Brisbane, just before the [Trans-Tasman Voluntary Assisted Dying Conference](#). We're also offering professional development through our [2024 webinar series](#).

It feels as though VADANZ's engine is revving. The normalisation of VAD as part of health care in both Australia and New Zealand continues, and I'm excited to start getting some traction on the issues that matter to you most.

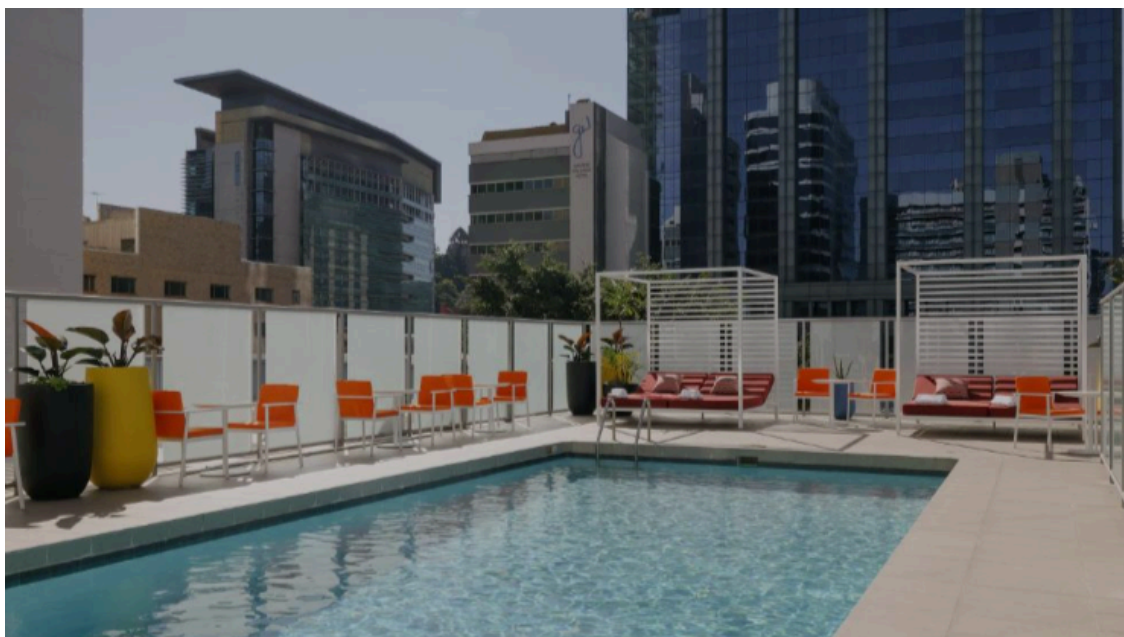
Above all, we're committed to our stated purpose of representing your voices, so you can deliver evidence-based, high quality VAD care.

In light of this commitment, we need your help. The VADANZ Board is attending our first strategy day soon. We need to know more about what matters most to you, in order to direct the efforts of our organisation. Please visit the forums, or [email us](#) with your thoughts and suggestions.



Dr Cam McLaren

VADANZ President



VADCON24 accommodation

We can announce **voco Brisbane City Centre** as our accommodation partner for the [2024 Trans-Tasman Voluntary Assisted Dying Conference](#). The hotel is conveniently located in the heart of Brisbane CBD - a 20 min walk from the conference venue at QUT Gardens Point. Voco are offering conference ticket-holders a special rate on rooms. [Use this link](#) when booking your room to access the discount. The hotel has complimentary WiFi, comfy bedding, and rooms come with city and river views. [Check out their website](#). Voco is also the venue for our networking drinks and ticketed conference dinner on Monday 28 October.

If you haven't booked your conference tickets yet, don't forget to enter discount code VAD24ANZ in the box on the top left hand corner and click 'apply' for your additional member 10% discount.

Conference details

Where: Queensland University of Technology - QUT Gardens Point, Brisbane

When: Monday 28 & Tuesday 29 October 2024. **Please note the VADANZ Annual General Meeting will be held in Brisbane on the afternoon of Sunday 27 October, so factor this**

Register for VADCON24



Trans-Tasman 'snapshot' of the State of VAD

The Minister for Health and Aged Care, Hon Mark Butler MP, joined broadcaster Andrew Denton and Dr Gordon Reid MP in Australian Parliament House to launch the **State of VAD report** on 12 August.

With VAD now available in all Australian states and New Zealand, the report from *Go Gentle Australia* collated data from each jurisdiction's oversight body to present an evidence-based 'snapshot' of how laws are working across the trans-Tasman.

The report found:

- A typical VAD applicant is aged 70-79 years, more likely to be male, and have cancer
- The majority are well educated, speak English as their preferred language and around 4 in 5 (79%) are receiving palliative care
- Health professionals are delivering compassionate, person-centred care to people who seek this choice.

The report highlighted there were barriers to access in some jurisdictions such as:

- So-called 'gag clauses' in NZ, Vic and SA which prevent health professionals from raising the topic of VAD with patients.
- A ban on the use of electronic communications, including phone, email and telehealth, in the VAD process in Australia.

Recommended reforms include:

- Recognise VAD as part of high-quality end-of-life care and include it in clinical standards and guidelines
- Grow the VAD health workforce to meet demand, with fair compensation

Read the State of VAD report



VADANZ in the news

In an opinion piece for [Medical Observer](#), VADANZ chair **Dr Sally Cockburn** wrote about the findings of the State of VAD report. Dr Cockburn encouraged GPs to be ready for conversations with patients about VAD and consider VAD training. She also highlighted the important issue of remuneration, identified in the report as an area needing reform in Australia.

"We need to discuss this as a profession and ensure Medicare and the states adequately support the patients we are looking after for VAD. VAD doctors are going above and beyond to support their patients and make sure they are not out of pocket, but the system can't rely on their goodwill. Doctors cannot be expected to work pro bono. Adequate remuneration is essential to ensure the VAD workforce is sustainable."

[Read the article here.](#)



NZ review

The Ministry of Health has released more information about this year's [review of the End of Life Choice Act](#), which it says will be undertaken in two parts:

Part one is a **review of the operation of the Act**, which considers whether the legislation is operating well and achieving its intended purposes. The Ministry will consider whether changes are needed to address:

- the meaning and interpretation of rules or settings in the Act
- the effectiveness of mechanisms in the Act, such as those intended to support access and provide safeguards
- how the Act supports the administration of assisted dying
- the roles and responsibilities of those involved
- alignment of the Act with other pieces of legislation and the wider health system

Part two is an [online process to gather public feedback](#) about changes that could be made to the Act. [Public consultation](#) is now open, until 26 September 2024. The review concludes in November 2024



NT panel recommends VAD laws

The Northern Territory is currently the only jurisdiction in Australia without VAD laws.

An [expert panel report released on July 31](#) recommended the NT introduce legislation "broadly consistent" with those in other states and the ACT.

A person would need to have "a serious and incurable condition causing intolerable and enduring suffering", with a 12-month timeframe to death.

As in all other jurisdictions, a person would have to have **decision-making capacity** at all stages, ruling out the possibility of VAD for dementia.

This is despite a community survey of 1396 people undertaken as part of the report finding 71 per cent were in favour of advance care directives requesting VAD once capacity was lost.

The report acknowledged the "significant interest" in availability of VAD for dementia but said any widening of eligibility to include dementia needed to be part of a national dialogue.

In a point of difference from other jurisdictions, the report **did not recommend proof of citizenship or permanent residency for eligibility**. However patients would need to have lived in Australia for two years and in the Territory for 12 months.

Another key feature of the report was a recommendation that **VAD services be separate from NT Health** to ensure cultural safety for Indigenous residents, who make up 31 per cent of the Territory's population, and that their needs be addressed as a core part of VAD provision.

The report also recommended **telehealth be permitted** provided there was at least one one face-to-face assessment.



Seeking NZ research participants

The [Assisted Dying Research Network](#) would like to hear from NZ assisted dying providers and would appreciate referrals for patients who:

- formally applied with the Ministry of Health who were assessed as eligible, ineligible or changed their mind, or
- asked for assisted dying from a health professional but were told that they couldn't or shouldn't apply for some reason.

Interviews over Teams or phone. All information is confidential. This research aims to produce an evidence-based submission to the upcoming Act review and create resources that will support people using or providing the service.

Email assisteddyingresearch@vuw.ac.nz, phone 04 887 3140, or find more information on our [website](#). Alternatively, complete this [short survey](#).

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