



VADANZ

Voluntary Assisted Dying Australia and New Zealand

Dear <<First Name>>

Welcome back to our first newsletter of 2025! As the peak body for Voluntary Assisted Dying (VAD) health professionals, VADANZ is dedicated to supporting our members in providing high-quality care.

This year is shaping up to be a busy one, with our main priorities being education and remuneration, along with a member survey.

Our first webinar, focusing on VAD assessments, is scheduled for 19 February. If you haven't registered yet, you can find the registration details in this newsletter.

This month, VADANZ directors presented expert evidence to the UK Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill committee. It has been nearly six years since VAD was implemented in Victoria, and all states now have VAD laws operating, providing us with substantial experience to share.

However, we were sobered to read a recent [QUT study](#) indicating generally low levels of public awareness regarding VAD. The authors emphasised the crucial role of trained health professionals in increasing 'VAD literacy' and facilitating informed discussions with patients and their families.

We couldn't agree more, however Victoria, SA and New Zealand are still faced with a 'gag clause', which we are advocating to remove. The telehealth ban for VAD also urgently needs legislative reform.

We are stronger as an organization when we leverage the expertise within it. If you would like to know more about the VADANZ working committees on education and remuneration please get in touch via [email](#).

Looking even further ahead, we're excited to confirm [VADCON26](#) is happening in Melbourne in May 2026.



Dr Sally Cockburn | VADANZ President



VADANZ directors give expert evidence in the UK

VADANZ directors **Dr Chloe Furst** and **Dr Clare Fellingham**, along with VADANZ founder **Dr Cam McLaren**, were amongst Australian expert witnesses invited to speak before a committee examining the UK's **Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill**.

They fielded questions about eligibility, implementation and parallels between the UK and Australian models.

Dr McLaren took the opportunity to highlight the importance of VADANZ as a resource for practitioners, and forum for discussion issues.

What's next? After these consultations the bill will be further scrutinised, and it is likely there will be several amendments tabled. It will return for a third reading April 2025 at the earliest. [Read more on the next steps.](#)



2025 VADANZ Webinar series

Completing a VAD assessment

Time: 6pm AEDT, 8pm NZST
Date: Wednesday 19 February 2025

2025 Webinar series

Have you registered for our first VADANZ webinar of 2025? On February 19, three experienced VAD clinicians will explore how they navigate the more nuanced aspects of **Completing a VAD assessment** such as decision-making capacity, potential coercion,

On the panel are:

Clinical Associate Professor Peter Lange, an academic clinician geriatrician who has been involved in research, implementation and assessment for VAD in Victoria.

Dr Matthew Loft, a medical oncologist working in both public and private health care. He combines clinical practice with academic research at the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute and University of Melbourne.

The webinar will be hosted by **Dr Chloe Furst**, a dual trained geriatrician and palliative care physician who is the SA VAD clinical advisor.



Register for the webinar on VAD assessment

Meet the VADANZ board

This month, we meet VADANZ board member Professor Michael Dooley, director of Victoria's VAD Pharmacy Service.

How did you come to be involved in VAD?

I got approached by the Victorian Department of Health when VAD legislation passed to see whether I would take on a leadership role for developing the medication guidelines for VAD. Up to then I was not involved in any aspect of VAD. I'd had a lot of experience in developing strategies and implementing professional services relating to medication safety and was leading a large program at The Alfred as Director of Pharmacy. In addition, I also had a long-established role at Monash University within the Centre for Medicine Use and Safety (CMUS) and had been involved with a range of multidisciplinary collaborations. This, and my experience practicing in oncology, including in various roles at the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre, were factors in being asked to get involved. I had witnessed many patients and their families suffering and believed that VAD should be a choice for patients with appropriate safeguards in place. My family was very supportive and I have been involved since 2019 and continue to see patients and lead the Victorian Voluntary Assisted Dying Pharmacy Service, as well as helping implementations across the country.

What skills are you bringing to the board of VADANZ?

I have been on other boards and was the former president of the Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia with 4000 members so I've been in the position of advocating for members and championing clinical practice. I've also contributed to many national and international committees, forums and working parties related to improving the delivery of quality health care services.



What do you find most rewarding about working in VAD?

we started with a blank piece of paper in Victoria, about what to do and how to do it. At the time there were a lot of challenges associated with getting it right. I've had the privilege of spending time with many patients in Victoria that were accessing VAD and their courage in the face of their suffering has been inspiring.

Any hobbies?

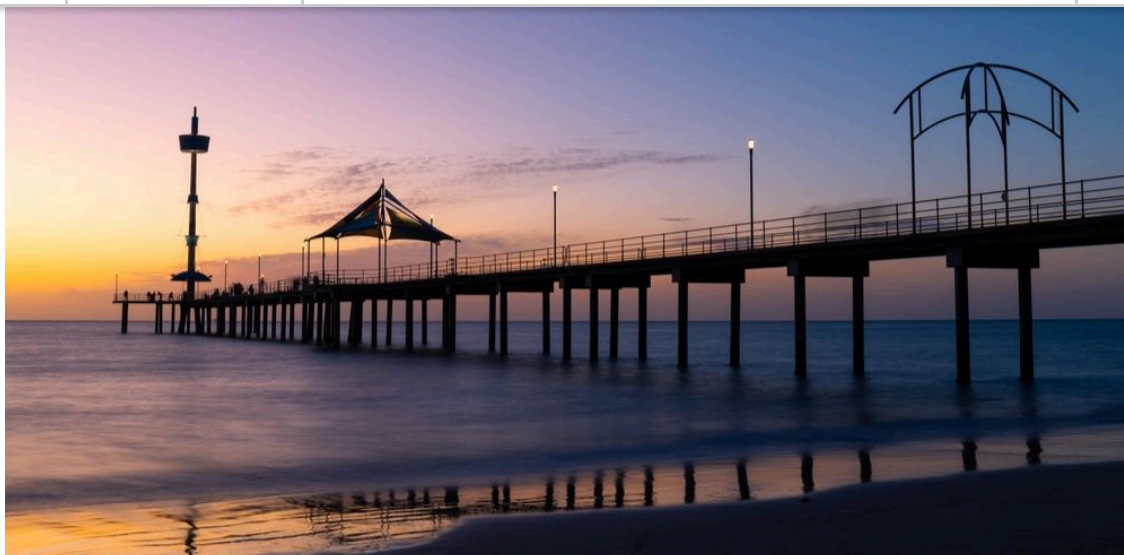
I'm trying to beat my 20-year-old son in golf. I've been playing for years and he's only been playing for six months and he's beating me!

**NZ update**

New Zealand's Assisted Dying Service has published its quarterly report for the period 1 October to 31 December 2024.

- There were 128 assisted deaths during this quarter, and 251 applications.
- There were 154 medical practitioners (including doctors and psychiatrists) on the SCENZ list of those providing assisted dying services. Read the report [here](#).

Following the [review of the End of Life Choice Act](#), the 'Exploring Early Experiences of the Assisted Dying Service in Aotearoa' Research Group has analysed the Ministry's recommendations against their own. The group found 13 of the 25 Ministry recommendations were in alignment. Read more in this [short report](#).



South Australia CPD recognition

The SA VAD Review Board released its quarterly report for July – September 2024 showing there were 67 VAD deaths this quarter - up from 43 last quarter.

The online mandatory VAD Training for Medical Practitioners in SA is now registered as a Continuing Professional Development (CPD) activity with the RACGP. GPs who complete the training will now receive now six hours of CPD for Education Activities.

The Board has also established a VAD Research Subcommittee with two new research projects approved which 1) aim to understand the experiences of patients, family and carers and 2) survey VAD clinicians on organ donation.

[Read the SA quarterly report here.](#)

End-of-Life Care Communication Masterclass



For nurses, doctors and allied health professionals
Learn how to respond to challenging questions and situations in
end-of-life care in clinical practice.



FACILITATOR
A/Prof Kim
Devery



SPEAKER
Dr David Holden
Palliative Care



SPEAKER
Melissa Bruno
Nurse Consultant



SPEAKER
Sara Fleming
Nurse

Communication masterclass

End-of-Life Essentials are running a free Communication Masterclass webinar for health professionals.

Date: Tuesday, 4 March 2025

Dr. David Holden – Medical Head of Unit, Northern Adelaide Palliative Service
Sara Fleming – Nurse Practitioner & Senior Lecturer, Flinders University
Melissa Bruno – Nurse Consultant, Northern Adelaide Palliative Service
[Register here.](#)



VAD Grief support

[Griefline](#) has announced their 2025 national online **Post-VAD Support Group Program**.

The program, in collaboration with Dying with Dignity Victoria (DWDV), is designed for those navigating the emotional aftermath of VAD.

Groups are facilitated by professionals who provide a safe space for individuals to share their experiences, find solidarity and support.

Registrations are open for expressions of interest to participate in the group [here](#).



World Watch

out, and they should have no duty to discuss assisted dying with patients - but nor should they be prohibited from raising it. "Doctors should be able to talk to patients about all reasonable and legally available options; a provision that limits or hinders open discussion about any aspect of death and dying is likely to be detrimental to patient care". [Read the full statement here.](#)

[VADANZ Website](#)[Facebook](#)

Copyright © 2024 VADANZ, All rights reserved.

admin@vadanzenz.com.au

Our mailing address is:

PO Box 596, Berwick VIC 3806

[unsubscribe here](#)