



# VADANZ

Voluntary Assisted Dying Australia and New Zealand

Dear <<First Name>>

I'm immensely proud of how VADANZ has evolved over the last 18 months and at the upcoming VADANZ AGM I will share some more details about our progress and achievements.

Last month I had the chance to personally meet the new board members at our annual VADANZ strategy and planning session. I couldn't be more confident in the next phase of the organisation's growth. The new board has all the required skills and expertise to steer VADANZ in the right direction and help deliver on our strategic goals.

As the organisation is now well set up for growth and success, it became clear to me that this was the right time for me to step away. This will also give me some much needed time to focus on my young family and busy clinical practice. So this is my last newsletter as President!

My resignation has led to some changes within the VADANZ director team. Dr Sally Cockburn has gracefully accepted the nomination to be the President-Elect of VADANZ and will transition to the role of President at the AGM on October 27 in Brisbane. Ray Pliberseck, who is the VADANZ Secretary, has kindly agreed to also take on the role of Acting Chair until the board determines how to fill the Chair and/or Secretary roles.

I'm grateful to both of them for stepping up and I know VADANZ will be in excellent hands. I would also like to specifically acknowledge and thank the Go Gentle Team whose support has been immense, and who have taken the spark I had, and added the kindling and the breath needed to start this fire.

Meanwhile I look forward to speaking with as many of you as possible at the second [trans-Tasman VAD conference](#) in Brisbane later this month.



***Dr Cam McLaren***

***VADANZ President***



### **Mate whakaahuru - NZ review**

The **VADANZ New Zealand sub-committee** has made a submission to the public consultation being undertaken as part of the [review of NZ's End of Life Choice Act](#). The submission incorporated feedback from the wider New Zealand VADANZ membership, as well as the VADANZ board. Key issues raised included:

- The so-called '**gag clause**' whereby health care professionals cannot initiate discussions about assisted dying with patients, even as part of a conversation about end-of-life options.
- **Institutional 'conscientious' objection.** While individual conscientious objection is permitted in the law, the Act has been interpreted to allow institutional non-participation. A number of people seeking AD have been obstructed by hospitals and hospices who do not allow AD on their premises. This needs review to ensure patients can access assisted dying in any government-funded institution.
- **The '48-hour rule'.** For an assisted death to be expedited for clinical reasons, a minimum of two working days is required for Registrar approval. This is a barrier to timely and appropriate care.



### VAD education and research news

Do you have medical colleagues in WA who would like to know more about VAD? There will be a free **education workshop for health care professionals in Perth** on 7 November organised by the Cancer Council WA's Palliative and Supportive Care Education (PaSCE). Alice Morison and Dr Margherita Nicoletti will discuss VAD implementation, the status of VAD in WA, as well as addressing common myths and challenges followed by questions and discussion. More [information and registration here](#).

**QUT's Australian Centre for Health Law Research** is seeking to [appoint a new Postdoctoral Research Fellow](#) for a 3-year appointment. The Postdoctoral Research Fellow will work with Professors Ben White and Lindy Willmott on a range of research projects about voluntary assisted dying and other aspects of end-of-life decision-making. Find out more on the [QUT careers website](#).

Dr Ruthie Jeanneret of the Australian Centre for Health Law Research at QUT has completed a PhD thesis examining **how patients and family caregivers influence VAD systems**, both within Australia and Canada. A summary of the research can be found [here](#).



## VADANZ Innovation Award - nominations closing soon

**Do you know an emerging researcher doing great work in the field of VAD?**

The inaugural [VADANZ Innovation Award for Emerging Research in Voluntary Assisted Dying](#) will be presented at the [Trans-Tasman Voluntary Assisted Dying Conference dinner](#) on Monday 28 October in Brisbane.

The award is designed to recognise and support emerging researchers who are advancing the field of VAD in Australia and New Zealand. This award aims to encourage innovative research that makes a significant contribution to the development of evidence-based, high quality VAD care.

The award is intended to capture a broad definition of research - including clinicians involved in health and medical research as well as early career academic researchers. It will consider research that addresses all aspects of VAD, including but not limited to clinical practice, patient experiences, ethical considerations, policy development, and support systems.

[Nominations](#) are open until **October 17**. Individuals can also nominate themselves.

**[Nominate for the VADANZ Innovation Award here](#)**



## VAD Review Board annual reports

**Queensland, Victoria and Tasmania's VAD review boards** all released their annual reports for 2023-24.

### Queensland

The Voluntary Assisted Dying Review Board annual report showed there were **793 VAD deaths** in the reporting period, and 52 per cent of people lived in regional, rural or remote parts of the state.

As at 30 June 2024, there were **381 authorised VAD practitioners** in the state; half are medical practitioners, six per cent are nurse practitioners and 45 per cent are registered nurses. The report recommended a review of the current pharmacy model which involves drugs being dispensed across Queensland from a central pharmacy in Brisbane, noting: "The level of demand in regional and remote areas may mean that a single centralised pharmacy distributions mechanism is not the most appropriate model". Read the report [here](#).

### Victoria

In Victoria, there were **371 VAD deaths**. There were 822 medical practitioners who have registered for VAD training (as of 30 June 2024) with **394 completing the training** and registering in the portal. More than half (59%) of active VAD practitioners live in metropolitan Melbourne and 41 per cent in regional Victoria. Board Chair Julian Gardner expressed concern about the sustainability of the program because of a shortage of VAD practitioners. "We are concerned about the ongoing sustainability of the program given that the data shows there are only seven medical practitioners trained to provide voluntary assisted dying per 100,000 adults in Victoria," he noted.

[Read the report here](#).

### Tasmania

Tasmania's Voluntary Assisted Dying Commission recommended the Tasmanian Government continue to advocate for amendments to the Commonwealth Criminal Code to remove the limitations on telehealth in VAD as a priority, as well as reform of the MBS. [Read the full report here.](#)



## VADCON24 pre-conference program

The **VADANZ Annual General Meeting** will be held at **3pm on Sunday October 27 in Brisbane**, the eve of the [trans-Tasman Voluntary Assisted Dying Conference](#).

There will be a **bonus clinical session and complimentary drinks immediately after the AGM**. The clinical session, held under the Chatham House rule, includes representatives from each jurisdiction's VAD review board and promises to be thought-provoking and informative.

The clinical 'taster' session is free and open to all VADANZ members, whether attending the conference or not. [Register your interest here.](#)

### [Pre-conference events](#) **Sunday October 27**

**3pm:** VADANZ Annual General Meeting (VADANZ Members only)

**4pm:** Clinical session hosted by VADANZ (all welcome)

**5:30pm:** Networking drinks (all welcome)

Don't forget to register for pre-conference events using the form below so we can track numbers and plan accordingly.

[Register for pre-conference program Sunday 27 Oct](#)

# Voluntary Assisted Dying Conference 2024

Brisbane  
28-29 October



Go Gentle  
Australia

VADANZ  
Voluntary Assisted Dying Australia and New Zealand

Queensland  
University  
of Technology  


## Conference countdown

It's not too late to book! Don't forget to enter **discount code VAD24ANZ** in the box on the top left hand corner and click 'apply' for your member 10% discount.

### Conference details

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

**When:** Monday 28 & Tuesday 29 October 2024, plus VADANZ AGM & bonus pre-conference program on Sunday 27 October.

**Program:** [Click here to view the full program.](#)

VOCO **Brisbane City Centre** is the official accommodation partner, located in the heart of Brisbane CBD - a 20 min walk from the conference venue at QUT Gardens Point.

[Use this link](#) when booking your room to access a discounted rate. 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.

[Register for VADCON24](#)



## VAD in the news

The **Queensland coroner** released findings from the [inquest into the death of a man who ingested the VAD substance intended for his wife](#), and has recommended changes to the system including practitioner-supervised administration. Read the full coroner's report [here](#).

**ABC Radio Perth** held a Spotlight forum asking [Should access to voluntary assisted dying be expanded?](#) with an expert panel including VAD clinical lead and **VADANZ board member Dr Clare Fellingham**. The forum included discussion on capacity and dementia.

In **New Zealand**, ACT MP Todd Stephenson has [lodged a private member's bill](#) to expand eligibility requirements. The [End of Life Choice \(Extended Eligibility\) Amendment Bill](#) removes the requirement for a terminally ill person to demonstrate a six-month prognosis.



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