



# VADANZ

Voluntary Assisted Dying Australia and New Zealand

Dear <<First Name>>

VADANZ has undergone a period of dramatic evolution over the past 18 months. We've formally relaunched the organisation, successfully applied for charity and deductible gift recipient (DGR) status, and appointed **an experienced Chair in Dr Sally Cockburn**.

This has left our heads spinning, but we remain focused on addressing our members' priorities that were made clear at our first trans-Tasman VAD Conference; including the risk involved in conducting VAD processes through carrier services, and **ensuring sustainability of the VAD workforce** (including recruitment, training, and remuneration models).


To help us refocus our efforts, the VADANZ Board members will be meeting for a strategy day this month - but we need to know what issues are most important to our members. We are always open to hearing from you via [email](#) or on the [VADANZ forums](#), but the best way is to **attend our [second annual trans-Tasman VAD Conference \(VADCON24\) in Brisbane from 28-29th October](#)**. As the organisation continues to go from strength to strength, I can't overstate how crucial your voice is to us.

This year's VADCON24 will feature **VADANZ's inaugural AGM on the conference eve, 27 October**, and focused discussions on issues such as **prognostic timeframes, conscientious objection, assessing capacity and supporting VAD clinicians**. For the first time, **there will be a dedicated research theme**, curated and chaired by the leading VAD researchers from across Australia and New Zealand.

This will truly be a conference not to miss. I'm looking forward to sharing experiences, perspectives, and ideas with as many of you as possible in Brisbane in October.



**Dr Cam McLaren**  
**VADANZ President**



Have your say

## Important message for AMA members

VADANZ members who are also AMA members - we need your voice of support! This week is the last chance to have your say on the AMA's Revised ***Position Statement on Voluntary Assisted Dying***.

The Member Consultation Draft includes updated terminology and addresses a range of issues related to accessing VAD services including the need for a well-educated, trained and supported workforce.

VADANZ President Dr Cam McLaren said: "It's a balanced and thoughtful statement and is helpful for us to move forwards to providing a system where healthcare professionals are supported to provide excellence in VAD care.

"I strongly encourage AMA members to provide feedback and make sure their views are heard."

AMA members will have received an invitation to provide their views on the Member Consultation Draft in the form of an anonymous five-minute survey. **The survey will close on 8 September at 11:59pm. Please [contact the AMA](#) if you are a member and have not received your survey.**



### Lunchtime learning

[End of Life Law for Clinicians](#) (ELLC) has updated its 13 free online training modules for health professionals about **the law on end of life decision-making**.

providing pain and symptom relief, and withholding and withdrawing life-sustaining treatment. Register for free at [ELLC](#). **CPD hours available.**

**Ausmed** is running an online [lecture series on voluntary assisted dying](#). The first lecture is available now, with associate professor Dr Linda Starr providing an in-depth look at Australian **VAD legislation** and discussing the roles of healthcare professionals. Dr Starr (PhD) is an associate professor in the College of Nursing and Health Sciences at Flinders University. You can sign up and listen to the lecture [here](#) (CPD 25 minutes).



## NZ review

A [review of NZ's End of Life Choice Act](#) is underway, and will conclude in November 2024.

Part one is a **review of the operation of the Act**, which considers whether the legislation is operating well and achieving its intended purposes. Part two is an [online process to gather public feedback](#) about changes that could be made to the Act. [Public consultation is open until 26 September.](#)

[Radio program RNZ](#) recently featured a 20 minute segment with End-of-Life Choice Society of New Zealand president Ann David and Wellington Palliative Care specialist, Dr Astrid Adams. Ann David is calling for an end to the six-month eligibility criterion as it excludes people with 'slow killing' diseases like Parkinson's and MS; and a lifting of the so-called 'gag clause'. Dr Adams is calling for more funding of palliative care and no expansion of current eligibility criteria; as well as an independent review of assisted dying and more stringent monitoring of coercion risk. You can [listen to the program 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**. These events are free and open to all VADANZ members, whether attending the conference or not. [Register your interest here](#).

The **clinical session, hosted by VADANZ Chair Dr Sally Cockburn and President Dr Cam McLaren**, will feature experts speaking about the VAD successes and challenges in each jurisdiction. After the session, there will be complimentary networking drinks.

If you are arriving early for the conference and wish to meet up with colleagues, **breakout rooms are available for VADANZ members** from 1pm on Sunday to book for groups of up to 30 people. To express interest in booking a room, [please email here](#).

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

**1pm:** Breakout rooms available for groups of up to 30 people. [Email here](#) to book

**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  
The logo for Queensland University of Technology (QUT), consisting of the letters 'QUT' in a stylized font.

## Conference countdown

Only 53 days to go! 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 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, conveniently located in the heart of Brisbane CBD - a 20 min walk from the conference venue at QUT Gardens Point. VOCO is offering conference ticket-holders a special rate on rooms. [Use this link](#) when booking your room to access the discount. 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 and depression

**How to determine the capacity of a person with depression who requests voluntary assisted dying?** A new academic paper lead by researchers from the Australian Centre for Health Law Research looks at the common but mistaken **assumption that those who request VAD while they are depressed cannot have capacity to request it.**

However as the authors explain, what the law requires is an **assessment of the person's decision-making ability**, that is, whether they are able to understand information about a decision, use and weigh that information to make a decision, and communicate the decision in some way. Provided a person can do those things, whether they have depression or any other mental condition, the law allows them to decide for themselves.

Therefore, provided a person with depression can do those things, under Australian law, **they should be found to have capacity to request VAD.** [Read the full paper here.](#)



### VAD in the news

in VAD; supporting a [Telehealth joint statement](#) also signed by VADANZ.

SHPA president Tom Simpson: "Patients seeking assessment for VAD, especially those from rural and remote areas, are uniquely disadvantaged by the current Code as most states only have one VAD service centre and pharmacy."

**MJA's Insight Plus** published an op-ed '[A Good Death: the silver lining of Voluntary Assisted Dying](#)'.

Go Gentle Australia CEO Dr Linda Swan: "Every person's needs and preferences are different and access to VAD allows time to plan your last days, create the environment you would prefer and to die on your own terms."

**SBS News In Depth** podcast featured VAD practitioner Dr Bhawani O'Brien in its [Weekend One on One podcast](#), talking about "the huge privilege" of her work.

"You meet the most incredibly courageous people. It gives me faith in people again."

The **SMH** [interviewed Sarah Mitchell](#), the daughter of a UK woman with early-onset dementia who stopped eating and drinking, as she could not access VAD. Sarah Mitchell is speaking at the [International Dementia Conference in Sydney](#) this Friday.



## World Watch

**Ireland** | The biennial [conference of the World Federation of Right to Die Societies](#) is being held in Dublin this month, September 19-21. There is a [pre-conference workshop](#) open to clinical practitioners in Ireland who wish to find out more about assisted dying, with Australian Palliative Care Clinician [Dr Greg Mewett](#).

bill and publish a report before a debate in the Chamber.

**Italy** | [A local health authority has rejected a request for assisted dying from a 49-year-old woman with progressive multiple sclerosis](#) There is no Assisted Dying legislation in Italy but a Constitutional Court in 2019 has made it permissible in some circumstances.

**US** | In [West Virginia](#), a controversial amendment to ban assisted dying will be up for voters in November to decide. House Joint Resolution 28 proposes amending West Virginia's constitution to prevent any medical professional from helping a patient end their life.

[VADANZ Website](#)

[Facebook](#)

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