

What Does Helping Hand Think About:

Voluntary Assisted Dying

The Context

Voluntary Assisted Dying is accessible by law in South Australia from 31 January 2023. The Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2021 (the Act) was passed by the South Australian Parliament in June 2021.

Voluntary assisted dying allows a person who is in the late stages of an incurable, advanced and progressive disease, illness or medical condition and is suffering in a way that cannot be relieved in a manner they deem acceptable to access a substance that will allow them to choose the time and manner of their death.

The process will enable eligible people to voluntarily access and self-administer, or in some circumstances have a health practitioner administer, a medication that will cause their death, in accordance with steps and process set out in the Act.

A person will be eligible for voluntary assisted dying if they:

- are aged 18 or over;
- are an Australian citizen or permanent resident of Australia, and have been ordinarily resident in South Australia for 12 months before making a first request;
- have decision-making capacity in relation to voluntary assisted dying;
- have a disease, illness, or medical condition that is:
 - incurable, advanced, progressive, and will cause death;
 - expected to cause their death within 6 months (or in the case of a person with a neurodegenerative disease, illness or condition, within 12 months);
- are suffering intolerably because of the disease, illness, or medical condition; and
- are acting freely and without coercion.

Aged care organisations are required to provide access to information to consumers who ask for information about voluntary assisted dying and/or who make requests to access voluntary assisted dying.

Aged care organisations must also allow a medical practitioner to access consumers at a care home to conduct an eligibility assessment, or, if the medical practitioner is unavailable to attend the care home, take reasonable steps to facilitate the consumers transfer for an assessment.

Helping Hand's Position

Helping Hand supports the introduction of and access to voluntary assisted dying.

Where a consumer requests information about voluntary assisted dying, or requests to access voluntary assisted dying, the organisation will:

- ensure there are staff available to speak openly, carefully and considerately with consumers and families
- be transparent with access to accurate and compassionate information for consumers and families
- partner with consumers in their choices and ensure there is timely and sensitive access to each step outlined in the Act
- be mindful and sensitive with consumers who may want to access voluntary assisted dying but are not able to, such as consumers who do not have decision-making capacity to qualify for voluntary assisted dying.

Helping Hand respects the wishes of those who are conscientious objectors to voluntary assisted dying. Any staff who are conscientious objectors will not need to participate in conversations, or provide information, about voluntary assisted dying.

While Helping Hand will support consumers who choose to access voluntary assisted dying, we will not manage, administer or dispose of the voluntary assisted dying substance.



Why we think this

Helping Hand supports people to live the life they choose which includes the right to choose the way they navigate their end of life experience. The organisation supports people in our care to live and die with dignity and to express autonomy, control and agency over their life.

Helping Hand supports personal choice including best practice in palliative care and voluntary assisted dying and provides spiritual care, support and services to consumers, families and staff throughout the end of life journey.

Our position on voluntary assisted dying speaks to our Vision which is to be the most trusted partner in aged care and wellbeing services and strongly reflects our values, specifically respect and compassion.

