

Ambulance Employees' Association of South Australia

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POSITION STATEMENT

Voluntary Assisted Dying

For the purposes of this position statement, voluntary assisted dying (VAD) is defined as intervention by a health professional, in a medical procedure, to end or to assist, directly or through the provision of medication, the life of another person at that person's request and with their informed consent; the primary intent being the relief of intolerable suffering.

It is the position of the Ambulance Employees Association that:

Society's approach to voluntary assisted dying should be informed by the moral and ethical dimensions of:

- respect for self-determination
 - equity
 - concern for quality of life; and
 - compassion for those who suffer
1. We support legislative reform so that persons who have an incurable illness that creates unrelieved, unbearable and profound suffering shall have the right to choose to die with dignity in a manner acceptable to them and shall not be compelled to suffer beyond their wishes.
 2. Voluntary assisted dying is not currently legal in South Australia and it is therefore not appropriate for our members to initiate such conversations. Where a person expresses a wish for assistance to die, our members should understand their obligations and limitations under law of this request.
 3. First responders are often exposed to the unintended consequences of operating within a state without VAD laws. Some people with incurable illnesses resort to ending their lives without medical assistance. These cases and the cumulative pain and suffering of terminally ill patients and their relatives, can have an emotional toll on our members, and law reform enabling VAD would help mitigate this.
 4. We support advance care planning whereby individuals consider end-of-life decisions while they have the capacity to do so, and to provide instructions about their wishes for future treatment as direction for their family and health professionals.
 5. Our membership comes from diverse cultural, religious, and ethnic backgrounds, and our members hold a range of ethical views on the subject of voluntary assisted dying. Members have the right to hold their own opinion and for their opinion to be respected.
 6. We will continue to participate in the debate to legalise voluntary assisted dying in South Australia and ensure the voice of our members is represented in this matter.
 7. The AEA supports improvements to palliative care services.