



# Voluntary Assisted Dying in South Australia Explained

Voluntary assisted dying is a process that enables an eligible individual to voluntarily access and self-administer, or in some circumstances have a medical practitioner administer, a medication that will cause their death, in accordance with the steps and process set out in the [Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2021](#) (the Act).

It is another end of life choice available to eligible South Australians as part of high-quality, person centred end of life care.

## Eligibility

To be [eligible](#) to access voluntary assisted dying in South Australia, a person must be assessed by a Coordinating Medical Practitioner and Consulting Medical Practitioner. A person must also meet as meeting **all** the criteria listed below:

- They are 18 years old or older.
- They are an Australian citizen or permanent resident.
- They live in South Australia and have lived in South Australia for at least 12 months at the time of making a first request.
- They have decision-making capacity in relation to voluntary assisted dying.
- They are acting freely and without coercion.

They must also have been diagnosed with a disease, illness or medical condition that meets **all** the criteria listed below:

- It is incurable, including if it can be managed but not cured.
- It is advanced in its trajectory.
- It is progressive, meaning that they are experiencing an active deterioration and will continue to decline and not recovery.
- It will cause death.
- It is expected to cause death within six months, or 12 months if it is a neurodegenerative disease.
- It is causing suffering that cannot be relieved in a manner that they consider tolerable.

## Mental health conditions and voluntary assisted dying

The [Voluntary Assisted Dying Pathway](#) is not available in South Australia to a person living with a mental health condition or disability without this person having been diagnosed with a terminal illness that meets the criteria outlined above.

We acknowledge the significant distress and limitations on a person's activities that can be associated with a mental illness and encourage people to access care, treatment, and support services. We encourage you to discuss any concerns about your mental health treatment and your recovery progress with your GP or by calling your mental health support service if you are already engaged with one. You can also visit the [Head to Health website](#) which can help you to find professional support.

## Voluntary Assisted Dying Pathway

The process to request access to voluntary assisted dying is set out in the Act. It includes many safeguards to ensure only [eligible people](#) access voluntary assisted dying, and to protect vulnerable people from coercion, abuse, and exploitation.

Only the person wanting to access voluntary assisted dying may initiate discussions with health practitioners about voluntary assisted dying. A request cannot be made on somebody else's behalf by a family member, friend, or carer.

At no time is a health practitioner allowed to initiate a conversation or discussion regarding voluntary assisted dying with a patient. This is to ensure that the request is completely voluntary and made without coercion. A health practitioner who has a conscientious objection has the right to refuse to participate in voluntary assisted dying.

If a person wants to request access to voluntary assisted dying, they will need to be assessed by a [suitably qualified medical practitioner](#) who will determine if the person is eligible. If the person is eligible, the process is repeated with a second medical practitioner who will need to conduct another assessment. The medical practitioners will make sure the person is making a fully informed decision and is aware of the palliative care options also available to them.

If the person making the request wishes to proceed, a written declaration witnessed by two independent individuals is required to confirm an informed, voluntary, and enduring decision to access voluntary assisted dying.

On receiving a final request, the medical practitioner will prescribe a medication that the person may use to end their life at a time of their choosing. The person must administer the medication themselves, unless they are physically unable to do so or digest the medication, in which case their medical practitioner may apply for a Practitioner Administration Permit.

Last updated 24 January 2023

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### For more information

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