

Voluntary Assisted Dying Policy

Standard 1	Consumer Dignity and Choice
Consumer Outcome	I am treated with dignity and respect and can maintain my identity. I can make informed choices about my care and services and live the life I choose.
Organisational Outcome	The organisation has a culture of inclusion and respect for consumers; and supports consumers to exercise choice and independence; and respects consumers' privacy.

Preamble

Catholic Homes Incorporated (Catholic Homes) has a strong values-based organisational culture. This culture guides and sustains our care, our organisational values of Love, Joy and Hospitality, our Model of Care: Care with Purpose. The Aged Care Quality Standards, implemented in 2019, guide the provision of quality, compassionate care, and sound, sustainable management practices.

All policies and procedures for care, governance, and workforce management are guided by the principles of enabling choice, preserving dignity, respect for culture and diversity, effective communication and dignity of risk.

Purpose

This Policy sets out the position of Catholic Homes in relation to the Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2019 (VAD Act). This policy clarifies the organisation's stance against Voluntary Assisted Dying and underlines its role to ensure consistent and compassionate responses to requests for Voluntary Assisted Dying. Catholic Homes does not support Voluntary Assisted Dying and will not provide or facilitate Voluntary Assisted Dying, including the facilitation of assessment processes for Voluntary Assisted Dying. The policy will be in effect from 1 July 2021, the date upon which the VAD Act comes into effect.

Scope

This Policy applies to all Catholic Homes service users, employees, volunteers and agents.

Alignment to Vision, Mission and Values

This Policy supports the Vision, Mission and Values of Catholic Homes. As a Catholic organisation, Catholic Homes is guided by the healing ministry of Jesus and operates in accordance with the Code of Ethical Standards for Catholic Health and Aged Care Services in Australia.

It is written to uphold and honour each person from conception to their natural end of life, noting the moral responsibility to minimise pain and suffering and not to use means of sustaining life which are overly burdensome, futile or morally unacceptable. It acknowledges that Catholic Homes staff, volunteers and contractors shall neither unnecessarily prolong nor hasten death and should always ensure that residents and clients are, as much as possible, free from pain and suffering.

Catholic Homes does not support Voluntary Assisted Dying and will not provide or facilitate Voluntary Assisted Dying. Whilst it is illegal for a health professional to initiate discussion regarding Voluntary Assisted Dying, the issue may be raised by a resident or client, or their family members, in our care. In such cases, staff should respond in a timely and compassionate manner which is congruent with Catholic Homes' values of joy, love and hospitality.

Definitions

Voluntary Assisted Dying (VAD) refers to the legislated process where a person can end their own life by procuring and administering a life-ending prescription. It also includes the process by which, under some circumstances, a medical practitioner can administer a prescribed substance to bring about death in a person, if that person is incapable of self-administration. The legislative process is set out in the VAD Act.

Policy Statement

Catholic Homes does not support Voluntary Assisted Dying and will not provide or facilitate VAD.

Catholic Homes recognises and respects the dignity and uniqueness of each person throughout the entire continuum of life.

Catholic Homes does not support Voluntary Assisted Dying has deliberate intent of causing death and is incompatible with our commitment to the sanctity of life which is not simply a value but a 'given', founded in our creation in God. In accordance with the policy position of Catholic Health Australia (CHA), VAD is not viewed by Catholic Homes as 'medical care'.

Catholic Homes respects individual choices and preferences and will acknowledge a capable adult's right to cease or withdraw from medical treatment at any time, and to formulate advance care directives.

Staff are obliged as employees of Catholic Homes to respond compassionately and respectfully to the person requesting VAD and to demonstrate at all times our values of care and respect.

Medical practitioners and any other health professionals attending to residents and clients in Catholic Homes premises must never initiate discussions about VAD, which is both ethically appropriate and a legal requirement under the VAD Act.

Catholic Homes acknowledges that some people in our care who meet the criteria set out in the VAD Act might consider VAD as an option.

To support residents' security of tenure while respectfully responding to individuals' rights in law, Catholic Homes will not abandon our residents/clients and we will strive to provide the best possible services to ensure a full continuum of care before and after death.

Catholic Homes will work with residents, clients, families and staff to resolve any actual or potential conflicts about goals of care and the types and levels of services provided.

In applying this policy, Catholic Homes will:

- Continue to demonstrate a compassionate approach to all people in our care at all times.
- Continue to encourage conversations about death and dying and assist residents and clients in the development of Advance Care Plans that reflect their preferences and choices around treatment and end of life care (it should be noted that Advance Care Plans cannot contain requests or directives about VAD).
- Ensure high quality palliative care services and end-of-life care options that uphold the sanctity of life while relieving suffering and providing comfort are available to all residents/clients.
- Provide holistic care that is attentive to a person's medical, physical, spiritual, psychological and social needs.

- Support and accompany families and loved ones through the death and dying process in a way that provides them with opportunity to find meaning, healing and hope.
- Provide information to residents, clients, families, staff, volunteers, attending medical practitioners and all other stakeholders about Catholic Homes policy on VAD, including incoming residents who will be unfamiliar with the policy.
- Provide appropriate training to all staff about dealing with VAD and implement a mechanism to enable all staff to obtain advice and support.
- Comply with the Privacy Policy of Catholic Homes and respect personal client/resident information while meeting all legislative requirements.

Access to VAD Policy

The Catholic Homes Policy on VAD will be made available to all staff.

For all future agreements between Catholic Homes and incoming clients/residents to any of the organisation's premises, the VAD policy position will be made clear before admission is granted and included as a specific clause on all future agreements.

The Catholic Homes VAD Policy will be reviewed within 12 months of implementation to assess its functioning and to introduce amendments as necessary, as well as in response to any changes in legislation proposed or enacted.

Reference Documents	
OVA-S1-DRT-0001	Catholic Homes Position Statement Voluntary Assisted Dying
OVA-S1-POL-0010	Privacy and Confidentiality Policy
	Residence Agreement

References
Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2019 https://www.legislation.wa.gov.au/
Voluntary Assisted Dying, Department of Health online accessed 3 March 2021; https://ww2.health.wa.gov.au/voluntaryassisteddying
Catholic Health Australia – Enduring Life Commitment; available at https://www.cha.org.au/news/711-our-enduring-commitment-to-end-of-life-care