

How will you answer their questions about **Assisted Dying** when it becomes a legal alternative in Australia?



70 - 85% of Australians support legalising assisted dying

Polling Body	Year	Result
Essential Media Communications	2015	73 per cent support ^(a)
Fairfax Ipsos	2014	76 per cent support ^(c)
ABC Vote Compass	2014	76 per cent support ^(d)
Australia Institute	2012	Greater than 70 per cent support ^(e)
Newspoll	2012	82 per cent support ^(f)
Australia Institute	2011	75 per cent support ^(g)
Newspoll	2009	85 per cent support ^(h)

(a) Note the precise question/s asked varied across polls. All polls national except Vote Compass 2014 (Victoria only) and Fairfax Ipsos poll (Victoria only).
(b) Essential Media Communications, 'Voluntary euthanasia', viewed 6 April 2016, www.essentialvision.com.au
(c) Julia Medew, 'Fairfax Ipsos poll: 3 out of 4 Victorians support people being given assistance to die if they want to', The Age, 14 November 2014, viewed 6 April 2016, www.theage.com.au
(d) Guy Stayner, 'Victorian Election 2014: Electorate overwhelmingly back voluntary euthanasia, Vote Compass reveals', ABC, 24 November 2014, viewed 6 April 2016, www.abc.net.au
(e) 'Survey shows support for legalised euthanasia', ABC, 16 November 2012, viewed 6 April 2012, www.abc.net.au
(f) Natasha Egan, 'Wide support for euthanasia: Poll', Australian Aging Agenda, 6 December 2012, viewed 6 April 2016, www.australainagingagenda.com.au
(g) Adele Horin, 'Euthanasia wins 75% support', Sydney Morning Herald, 6 January 2011, viewed 6 April 2016, www.smh.com.au
(h) AAP, '85 per cent support voluntary euthanasia - Poll', The Australian, 26 October 2009, viewed 6 April 2016, www.theaustralian.com.au

Ref: <http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/lsc/inquiry/402> (Date accessed: 5 September 2016)

“Where a person expresses a wish for assistance with dying, nurses should be educationally prepared to discuss the legal and medical parameters of this request as well as other options available to the person or seek the assistance of knowledgeable health care professionals.”

- Australian Nursing & Midwifery Federation

Ref: ANMP Position Statement - Assisted Dying, http://anmf.org.au/documents/policies/assisted_dyingFINAL.pdf Date accessed 5/9/2016.

Assisted Dying Framework proposed by Parliament of Victoria Inquiry into end of life choices (June 2016)

The committee recommended legalising assisted dying for adults with decision making capacity who are at the end of life, and suffering from a serious and incurable condition which is causing enduring and unbearable suffering that cannot be relieved in a manner that the person deems tolerable and who requests assistance to die. The proposed framework includes the following:

The person

An adult, 18 years and over, with decision making capacity about their own medical treatment. Patients whose decision making capacity is in question due to mental illness must be referred to a psychiatrist for assessment. Ordinarily resident in Victoria and an Australian citizen or permanent resident.

The condition

At the end of life (final weeks or months of life). Suffering from a serious and incurable condition which is causing enduring and unbearable suffering that cannot be relieved in a manner the patient deems tolerable. Suffering as a result of mental illness only, does not satisfy the eligibility criteria.

The request

Must come from the patient themselves.
Cannot be included in an advance care directive.
Must be completely voluntary, free of coercion.
Must be properly informed.

The primary and secondary doctor must each properly inform the patient:

- Of the diagnosis and prognosis of their condition, as well as the treatment options available to them, including any therapeutic options and their likely results
- Of palliative care and its likely results
- That they are under no obligation to continue with a request for assisted dying, and may rescind their request at any time
- Of the probably result and potential risks of taking the lethal drug.

Must be repeated three times:

- An initial verbal request
- A formal written request, which must be signed by two independent witnesses
- A final verbal request.

Must be enduring. The primary and secondary doctors must be independently satisfied that the patient's request is enduring and that a reasonable amount of time has passed between the patient's initial request and the provision of a lethal drug. In making this judgement the primary and secondary doctors must also assess the reasonableness of the request. This is to ensure that the patient truly understands and appreciates the nature and consequences of the decision to request assisted dying, as well as the alternatives to assisted dying, and that the patient's request is not ambivalent. Patient may withdraw their request at any time. Once withdrawn, the request becomes void, and the primary and secondary doctor must assess any subsequent request from the beginning.

The framework also includes a robust oversight, review & reporting structure, including:

- An Assisted Dying Review Board
- End of Life Care Victoria, a new entity established to work with existing health entities to champion end of life care, and provide information and guidance on end of life care to health services, practitioners and the Victorian community
- The Academic position of Chair in End of Life Care to conduct ongoing research into end of life care in Victoria.

Ref: <http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/lsc/inquiry/402> (Date accessed: 5 September 2016)

When are we going to become knowledgeable health care professionals about assisted dying and join the conversation?