Implementation Taskforce
Voluntary Assisted Dying

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Role of the Taskforce

The Panel set out a central role for the Taskforce in preparing for the practical implementation of the Act, and recognised that establishing a Taskforce is essential to providing the expertise, focus and leadership in developing the necessary resources, processes and systems over the period leading up to the commencement of the Act.

Voluntary assisted dying implementation needs to be considered in the context of existing care options available to people at the end of life. This will support existing therapeutic relationships and allow voluntary assisted dying to be reviewed as part of overall safety and quality monitoring and review processes. As such, the Panel has charged the Taskforce with facilitating resources that support existing therapeutic relationships; ensuring continuity of care across a range of treatment options based on a person’s treatment preferences and values; and overseeing early planning to give health practitioners, consumer and professional bodies, and service delivery organisations time to build capability, models of care and organisational responses in preparation for the commencement of the Act.

The Taskforce will also play a central role in partnering with key stakeholders and working with other entities that will take responsibility for the ongoing maintenance of reports, resources and support materials in relation to voluntary assisted dying.

The Taskforce also has a significant role in providing the Victorian community with the assurance that they are bringing to bear their expertise and experience to manage the implementation of voluntary assisted dying in a safe and compassionate way.

The Taskforce will advise government, through the Department of Health and Human Services (the department) on the implementation of voluntary assisted dying and have a coordinating role in overseeing and facilitating the work set out in the attached implementation work plan which incorporates the recommendations of the Panel.
Terms of Reference

The Taskforce will provide considered and expert advice on the details of voluntary assisted dying implementation and ensure the work plan is completed within the necessary timeframe, including:

- In partnership with Safer Care Victoria, establishing the Voluntary Assisted Dying Review Board 12 months before the commencement of the Act and supporting the Board to meet its legislative obligations including:
  - establishing collection requirements, processes and platforms for receiving and recording data,
  - developing procedural requirements related to its review, reporting and quality functions,
  - engaging with other bodies and agencies that will play a role in implementing voluntary assisted dying, for example, the Coroners Court, VCAT and the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages, to ensure practical protocols for sharing information are in place,
  - identifying a collaborative research program that supports clinical, policy and practice issues and priorities.
- Undertaking a gap analysis of the proposed End of Life Care Victoria functions in relation to existing entities and their role and making recommendations about the role of the proposed agency, including any ongoing resource and funding implications. Recommendations will take into account:
  - How information about voluntary assisted dying is incorporated into existing end of life, palliative care and advance care planning information provision arrangements,
  - The interaction with policy, planning, quality assurance and improvement functions of existing entities
  - The possible overlap in roles between the Board and EOLCV, particularly in relation to data reporting, research and analysis.
- Establishing guidance, support resources, and organisational service models which have been developed and tested in consultation with key clinical, consumer and professional bodies and service delivery organisations in the areas of:
  - Health care workforce information and support resources
  - Clinical guidelines for health practitioners
  - Consumer and community information and communication
  - Service delivery frameworks and models of service delivery
  - General education and training modules, such as communication skills
  - Regulations and legislative guidance
- Working with agencies that will have an ongoing responsibility in relation to voluntary assisted dying by establishing a coordination process that periodically reviews resources to ensure these are up to date and reflect best practice as informed by experience and data.
- Developing the specified training program on the obligations and requirements under the Act.
- Engaging with a pharmacy department to undertake research on the identification of best practice substances for use in voluntary assisted dying, including formulations, dosages, and clinical and patient information and guidelines.
- Overseeing the work that will be undertaken by the department to establish the voluntary assisted dying permit approval process and engage with the Commonwealth in relation to the voluntary assisted dying substance.
- Overseeing and advising on the development of the Voluntary Assisted Dying Regulations.
- Providing leadership and focus for stakeholder and community communication strategies.
Outcomes

The outcomes of the work of the Taskforce are:

- Supporting the safe delivery of voluntary assisted dying
- Establishing a clear system of oversight and governance for voluntary assisted dying
- Developing system and practitioner capacity in voluntary assisted dying
- Integrating care options for people at the end of life

Engaging with key stakeholders

The Taskforce will engage with key stakeholders with a range of perspectives about the implementation of voluntary assisted dying. The Taskforce will do this by ensuring key stakeholders are included in project governance and through working groups established to oversee the development of necessary resources. The Taskforce will approach stakeholder engagement based on a set of principles that:

- Puts the person, and the needs of the person, at the centre in considerations about implementing voluntary assisted dying.
- Respects the expertise and knowledge of the range of people supporting others approaching the end of their life.
- Acknowledges the differing views among providers about voluntary assisted dying, recognising that individuals may wish to contribute to implementation activities, but choose not to participate in voluntary assisted dying.
- Focuses on problem solving and the resolution of contentious issues to ensure compassionate and safe implementation of voluntary assisted dying in Victoria.
- Implements voluntary assisted dying in a way that respects the diversity of culture and values among Victorians.

The Taskforce will consult with a range of stakeholders, including but not limited to:

- Medical bodies
- Health service providers
- Pharmacy organisations
- Health professional bodies
- Consumer and carer groups
- Disability advocacy groups
- Mental health providers
- Legal organisations
- Commissioners
- Health administrators
- Other subject matter experts
- Relevant government agencies
Appointments and term

The Taskforce will support the successful implementation of the Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2017. This includes the development of the necessary policies, guidelines, resources, processes and systems to ensure capacity across the health and regulatory system to respond to the commencement of the Act on 19 June 2019.

Members will be appointed for a period of eighteen months and will meet quarterly at a minimum.

Members

Membership will include a range of representatives and experts who have the appropriate skills and experience to provide the balance of expertise, focus and leadership required to develop the resources, processes and systems to support the establishment of safe and compassionate voluntary assisted dying in Victoria.

Working Groups

The Taskforce members will also be expected to Chair and/or participate in specific Working Groups that will be established to undertake key projects. The Working Groups will be required to meet more regularly and will draw their membership from the Taskforce as well as other relevant subject matter experts.

Secretariat

The Taskforce will be supported by the department through the Secretariat in Person Directed Care team in the Health Policy and Planning Branch, Health and Wellbeing Division. The Secretariat will coordinate the advice and input needed to inform the legal, clinical, service system arrangements, governance and data considerations that will support the implementation of compassionate and safe voluntary assisted dying activity in Victoria. This will include drawing on the expertise of the Drugs and Poisons Regulation and Legal Services areas of the Department, and collaborating with Safer Care Victoria in the establishment of the Voluntary Assisted Dying Review Board.