

Voluntary Assisted Dying Statewide Pharmacy Service

What is the voluntary assisted dying statewide pharmacy service?

- The voluntary assisted dying statewide pharmacy service will be run by the pharmacy department at the Alfred Hospital in Melbourne.
- The statewide pharmacy service will provide a number of services including:
 - preparing the voluntary assisted dying medications;
 - providing the voluntary assisted dying medications (in a locked box) to patients who have a voluntary assisted dying prescription;
 - providing patients with information and support to self-administer the voluntary assisted dying medications;
 - supporting medical practitioners, patients, families and carers throughout the process;
 - receiving and disposing of any unused voluntary assisted dying medications.
- The service will provide pharmacy services for voluntary assisted dying for all of Victoria.

Why is there a statewide pharmacy service?

- The Government wants to ensure voluntary assisted dying occurs in a safe and compassionate way. A statewide pharmacy service ensures the medications are stored and dispensed safely, patients are given clear information about administration, and unused medications are returned for destruction if not used.
- The statewide pharmacy service will have expertise in voluntary assisted dying and will be able to support people who are accessing it.
- Voluntary assisted dying will only ever be used by a small number of people. It would not be practical for pharmacies across Victoria to develop expertise in voluntary assisted dying when they would receive no more than one or two prescriptions per year, and many will receive none.
- The service will also help medical practitioners who are providing voluntary assisted dying because there will be a clear source of advice and support when they are prescribing voluntary assisted dying medications.

How will people who cannot travel to the statewide pharmacy service access the pharmacy service?

- The statewide pharmacy service will support people across Victoria.
- For people too sick to travel, and those in rural areas, the pharmacy service will deliver them their medication, provide information on administration and collect any unused medications if a person or their contact person is unable to return the medications.

What medications will be used for voluntary assisted dying?

- There are a range of suitable medications available for voluntary assisted dying.
- The appropriate medications will depend on the individual person and their medical condition. The statewide pharmacy service will support medical practitioners to prescribe appropriate medications.
- To minimise any risk of abuse or misuse it is not appropriate to publicly detail the voluntary assisted dying medications.

How will medical practitioners know what voluntary assisted dying medication to prescribe?

- The statewide pharmacy service will provide phone support and advice to medical practitioners about the prescription of voluntary assisted dying medications.
- A key project of the Voluntary Assisted Dying Implementation Taskforce has been the development of medication protocols for use in voluntary assisted dying.
- Medical practitioners will follow these medication protocols when prescribing voluntary assisted dying medications.
- The medication protocols will not be publicly available. They will be made available to medical practitioners who have completed voluntary assisted dying training.

Does the medication have to be returned if a person lives longer than the expected 6 or 12 months?

- Voluntary assisted dying is only for people who have an incurable, advanced and progressive disease, illness or medical condition, that is expected to cause their death within 6 months (or 12 months for neurodegenerative conditions) and who are experiencing intolerable suffering.
- There is no obligation for voluntary assisted dying medications to be returned if a person who has received the medications lives longer than the expected 6 or 12 months.

How much will the voluntary assisted dying medications cost?

- Patients will not be required to pay for the voluntary assisted dying medications. The costs will be paid by the Government as part of the funding provided to the statewide pharmacy service.

How will medical practitioners and people who are seeking information about their own prescription contact the statewide pharmacy service?

- The statewide pharmacy service will provide phone support and advice to medical practitioners about the prescription of voluntary assisted dying medications.
- The pharmacy service will also be available to provide information to people who have a prescription for a voluntary assisted dying medication.
- The service will also deliver the voluntary assisted dying medications and collect any unused medications if a person or their appointed contact person is unable to travel to return the medications.

Who will oversee the statewide pharmacy service?

- The statewide pharmacy service will need to follow the requirements set out in the *Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2017*, which cover the provision of information and medications, destruction of unused medications, and reporting and other requirements.
- The Voluntary Assisted Dying Review Board will review each case of voluntary assisted dying, which will include the activities of the statewide pharmacy service.