



# Do people know that voluntary assisted dying is now legal in Queensland?



## What is the research about?

Voluntary assisted dying (VAD) became legal for eligible terminally-ill individuals in Queensland on 1 January 2023. People need to be aware that VAD is a legal end-of-life option so they can discuss it with their health practitioner if they want to. Little is currently known about community understanding of VAD in Queensland. This study is the first in Australia, and one of the few globally, to examine community knowledge of VAD as a legal option.



## What did we do?

We conducted an online survey of 1,000 Queensland adults 17 months after VAD became legal. We set quotas for age, gender, and geographical location to ensure the people we surveyed matched the Queensland population.

Our survey asked:

- Whether people knew VAD was legal in Queensland
- Whether people knew how to access VAD if they wanted to
- Where people would look for information about VAD.



## What did we find?

### 1. Awareness that VAD is legal is low

Our research showed relatively low levels of knowledge that VAD is legal in Queensland. Only 33% of people surveyed correctly identified that VAD is legal. But this awareness was higher for those people surveyed who are health practitioners (62%).

People mainly found out that VAD was legal through the media (especially news reporting) and through professional or personal experiences like being a health practitioner or knowing someone who had asked about or requested VAD.

### 2. Few people know how to access VAD

Only 26% of people surveyed knew how to access VAD if they wished to. This means many people may not know how to seek VAD even if they knew it was legal.

### 3. Preferred sources of information about VAD

Most people surveyed (86%) said they would seek information about VAD online, particularly via search engines. They would also seek information from health practitioners, especially doctors.

#### 4. People called for improved access to information about VAD

People surveyed wanted information about VAD to be more available. To increase awareness, they suggested using social media campaigns, advertising, and sharing information through Centrelink, health clinics, and other trusted community channels.



### What should happen next?

#### 1. Community information and education initiatives

Information about VAD is already available but more needs to be done to ensure it reaches the public.

Public awareness campaigns are needed to share this information, for example, through online platforms, news, social media, television, radio, health services, and government agencies. Tailored information is needed to support awareness of diverse groups.

#### 2. Targeted education initiatives for patients who may be eligible for VAD

Patients who may be eligible for VAD should receive information about the eligibility criteria so they know if VAD can be one of their options. They should also receive information about the steps to take if they want to choose VAD and who to contact for more information.

#### 3. Health practitioner education and training

Health practitioners, particularly GPs and specialists working in end-of-life care, are trusted sources of information about VAD. Targeted training is needed for these practitioners so they can confidently discuss VAD with patients and families. However, information about VAD should also be included in broader health education and training for all health practitioners.

### For more information

This research briefing is based on Ben P White, Rachel Feeny and Lindy Willmott, 'Community knowledge of voluntary assisted dying: A cross-sectional survey of the public in Queensland, Australia' (2025) *Death Studies* (early online). More information about study limitations, research ethics and disclosures are available in the article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/07481187.2025.2452490>

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