



Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory

Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee

Voluntary Assisted Dying in the Northern Territory

First Interim Report

July 2025



Voluntary Assisted Dying in the Northern Territory – First Interim Report



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Contents	
Chair's Preface	4
Committee Members.....	5
Committee Secretariat	5
Terms of Reference.....	6
1 Actions to date	7
Overview	7
Training	7
Private Briefings	7
Committee Publications.....	8
Call for Submissions.....	8
Public Hearings.....	8
Appointment of Specialist Advisors	9
2 Inquiry Plan.....	10
Overview	10
Inquiry Approach.....	10
Timeline.....	10
Evidence Gathering	11
Communication Strategy	12
Public Hearing Schedule	12
Appendix 1 – List of Stakeholders Invited to Make a Written Submission.....	13

Chair's Preface

Voluntary Assisted Dying (VAD) is a complex issue that raises difficult and challenging questions for individuals, groups, and our society as a whole. What is clear though, is that it remains an unresolved subject matter in the Northern Territory, and a matter of significant interest to Territorians. With that in mind, the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee is pleased to have the opportunity to progress resolution of the issue in our polity.

I am pleased to present this First Interim Report on VAD in the Northern Territory to the Legislative Assembly, and public at large, as testament to the work undertaken to date by the Committee to address the VAD Inquiry Terms of Reference. The Committee has been working cooperatively and constructively, ably assisted by its Secretariat, to produce this document and ancillary materials in a timely fashion. We remain committed to engaging with the issues at hand systematically and fairly, and communicating our work regularly to keep Territorians abreast of our progress.

We trust this report will be of assistance to interested parties.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large loop followed by a series of connected strokes.

Dr Tanzil Rahman MLA

Chair

Committee Members

Chair:	Dr Tanzil Rahman MLA Member for Fong Lim
Deputy Chair:	Mr Matthew Kerle MLA Member for Blain
Members:	Mrs Oly Carlson MLA Member for Wanguri Mr Dheran Young MLA Member for Daly Mx Kat McNamara MLA Member for Nightcliff

Committee Secretariat

Executive Director Parliamentary Support:	Dr Caroline Williams
Committee Secretary:	Katie Helme
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Terms of Reference

On 14 May 2025, the Attorney-General requested the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee (the Committee) undertake an inquiry into the final report of the Voluntary Assisted Dying Independent Expert Panel, *Voluntary Assisted Dying in the Northern Territory- final report 2024* (the Inquiry). The terms of reference for the Inquiry are to:

- Prepare a consolidated consultation paper, drawing upon previous reports, inquiries, proposals, and the *Rights of the Terminally Ill Act 1995* (NT)
- Consult extensively with communities across the Northern Territory (NT), particularly in remote areas, to gather views on the possible introduction of voluntary assisted dying (VAD) in the NT
- Evaluate different VAD models and safeguards, with a focus on those that would be appropriate for the NT context
- Identify any specific challenges associated with delivering VAD in the NT
- If the Committee recommends adoption, provide drafting instructions for model legislation to give effect to VAD in the NT

The Attorney-General requested the Committee respond by the end of September 2025.

1 Actions to date

Overview

- 1.1 This Chapter outlines the preliminary planning and evidence-gathering stages of the Committee's Inquiry into VAD. It provides an overview of the Committee's actions to date.

Training

- 1.2 To inform its approach to the Inquiry, the Committee undertook training on the following areas:
- End-of-life law, facilitated by the Australian Centre for Health Law Research at the Queensland University of Technology (QUT) and focusing on the role of law in end-of-life care, VAD, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and end-of-life law.
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander palliative care and end-of-life choices, facilitated by the Gwandalan National Palliative Care Project.
 - Vicarious trauma provided by Phoenix Australia, covering the effects of trauma, signs of vicarious trauma and strategies to build resilience.

Private Briefings

- 1.3 The Committee received a number of private briefings to gather background information at the preliminary stages of its Inquiry. The Committee was briefed by the following individuals and organisations:
- Former Co-Chairs of the Independent Expert Panel on Voluntary Assisted Dying (VAD Panel), Hon Vicki O'Halloran AO CVO and Mr Duncan McConnel SC (7 July 2025)
 - Former VAD Panel member and VAD subject matter expert, Dr Geetanjali Lamba (7 July 2025)
 - Remote Information and Engagement Team of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Community Development (7 July 2025)
 - Go Gentle Australia (28 July 2025)
- 1.4 The Committee also invited input from other key stakeholders, including:
- Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance Northern Territory
 - Northern Land Council
 - Central Land Council
 - Tiwi Land Council
 - Anindilyakwa Land Council.

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- 1.5 The Committee thanks all the individuals and organisations that provided input and assistance in the preliminary phase of the Inquiry and hopes to work productively with them in the future.

Committee Publications

- 1.6 The Terms of Reference require the Committee to prepare a consolidated consultation paper, drawing upon previous reports, inquiries, proposals, and the *Rights of the Terminally Ill Act 1995* (NT).
- 1.7 On 14 July 2025, the Committee published its Consultation Paper on its website.¹ The Consultation Paper comprehensively outlines key issues and background information to assist individuals and organisations making a submission to the Inquiry.
- 1.8 In addition, the Committee has published a Short Consultation Guide, which sets out four key questions for submitters to address.² The Committee has translated the document into several languages, including:
- Translated versions in foreign languages (Greek, Nepalese, Filipino and Simplified Chinese)
 - Interpreted audio versions in several Aboriginal languages.

Call for Submissions

- 1.9 The Committee opened its Call for Submissions on 14 July 2025. The Committee is seeking both written and verbal submissions.
- 1.10 The Committee wrote directly to 232 stakeholders to invite them to make written submissions to the Inquiry and to invite other interested stakeholders to contribute. For a full list of invited stakeholders see **Appendix 1**. The Committee looks forward to receiving written submissions from all interested stakeholders. All submissions received by the Committee will be published on its website unless confidentiality has been requested and granted by the Committee.³
- 1.11 In addition, the Committee has also invited the community to make verbal submissions via its VAD Inquiry Hotline.

Public Hearings

- 1.12 The Terms of Reference require the Committee to consult extensively with communities across the Northern Territory. The Committee approached a number of remote communities to gauge interest in providing evidence to the Committee's Inquiry. The Committee will be responsive to community willingness to engage with

¹ NT Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee, *Consultation Paper – Inquiry into Voluntary Assisted Dying* (2025), https://parliament.nt.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/1543274/LCAC-VAD-Inquiry-Consultation-Paper.pdf.

² NT Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee, *Short Consultation Guide – Inquiry into Voluntary Assisted Dying* (2025), https://parliament.nt.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0009/1543275/LCAC-VAD-Inquiry-Short-Consultation-Guide.pdf.

³ See NT Legislative Assembly, *Voluntary Assisted Dying* (2025), <https://parliament.nt.gov.au/committees/list/legal-and-constitutional-affairs-committee/VAD>.

the Inquiry, interest, and availability. Subject to ongoing discussion with local stakeholders, the Committee intends to visit the following locations in August 2025:

- Ali Curung
- Alice Springs
- Ampilatwatja
- Borroloola
- Darwin
- Jabiru
- Gunbalanya
- Maningrida
- Ngukurr
- Papunya
- Tennant Creek.

Appointment of Specialist Advisors

- 1.13 The Committee has appointed specialist advisors to aid it in the technical aspects of its Inquiry.
- 1.14 On 7 July 2025, the Committee appointed Dr Geetanjali Lamba as a subject matter advisor on VAD in the NT to assist the Committee with its inquiry. Dr Lamba has reviewed the Committee's public facing documents for technical accuracy, including its Consultation Paper and Short Consultation Guide.
- 1.15 On 23 July 2025, the Committee appointed Professor Ben White (Queensland University of Technology (QUT)) as a specialist legal advisor for the Committee's Inquiry.

2 Inquiry Plan

Overview

- 2.1 This Chapter outlines the Committee's Inquiry Plan, including its approach to the Inquiry and forthcoming plans.

Inquiry Approach

- 2.2 The Committee acknowledges the complex and sensitive nature of discussing VAD and is committed to conducting a respectful, inclusive, and transparent Inquiry. The Committee values the diverse perspectives of stakeholders across the NT and will seek to engage in culturally appropriate ways.
- 2.3 As the Inquiry progresses, the Committee remains open to adapting its approach in response to community needs and emerging evidence. The Committee encourages all interested individuals and organisations to participate and thanks those who have already contributed to the Inquiry.

Timeline

- 2.4 The Committee is working according to the following timeline to complete the Inquiry:

Date	Task
7 July 2025	Deliberative Meeting (Parliament House) Private Briefings with: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Former Co-Chairs of the Independent Expert Panel on Voluntary Assisted Dying (VAD Panel), Hon Vicki O'Halloran AO CVO and Mr Duncan McConnel SC• Former VAD Panel member and VAD subject matter expert, Dr Geetanjali Lamba• Remote Information and Engagement Team of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Community Development Consideration of Inquiry Plan, Consultation Paper, Short Consultation Guide and remote hearing approach Approval of Inquiry Plan and Short Consultation Guide
9 July 2025	Deliberative Meeting (via Teams) Final approval of Consultation Paper and Call for Submissions Stakeholder List
14 July 2025	Publish and advertise Consultation Paper and Short Consultation Guide Open Call for Submissions

	Chair to write to stakeholders on behalf of the Committee inviting written submissions
14 July to 28 August 2025	Promote inquiry
23 July 2025	Deliberative Meeting (via Teams) to consider and appoint Specialist Legal Advisor
28 July 2025	Deliberative Meeting (Parliament House) Private Briefing with Dr Linda Swan, Go Gentle Australia Consideration of First Interim Report Meeting with Professor Ben White and QUT Team
5-7 August 2025	Public hearings
12-14 August 2025	Public hearings
15 August 2025	Close of Written Submissions
18 August 2025	Meeting with Professor Ben White and QUT Team
19-21 August 2025	Public hearings
25 August 2025	Meeting with Professor Ben White and QUT Team
26-28 August 2025	Public hearings
1 September 2025	Deliberative Meeting (Parliament House) Consideration of Second Interim Report
5 September 2025	Deliberative Meeting (Parliament House) Consideration of evidence, preliminary findings and recommendations
8 September 2025	Meeting with Professor Ben White and QUT Team
2-24 September 2025	Drafting of Final Report by Secretariat
25 September 2025	Final Report deliberation by the Committee
30 September 2025	Report back to Attorney General

Evidence Gathering

2.5 The Terms of Reference require the Committee to consult extensively with communities across the NT, particularly in remote areas, to gather views on the possible introduction of VAD in the NT. To enable consultation with broad sectors of the community, the Committee has adopted a multi-pronged approach using the following modes to support evidence gathering:

- Consultation Paper, to provide a detailed overview of the issues for consideration.

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- Short Consultation Guide, to simply and clearly summarise the key questions of the Inquiry in an accessible manner.
 - Flyers and radio broadcasts in Indigenous languages, developed in consultation with the Aboriginal Interpreter Service and tailored to each community and language.
 - Written translations in multiple foreign languages in the NT to enable engagement with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities.
 - Hotline within the Committee Secretariat, intended to enable people to call to provide a verbal submission with the assistance of the Secretariat or to ask a question about the Inquiry.

Communication Strategy

2.6 The Committee intends to distribute consultation materials to stakeholders via:

- Committee website
- Social media posts
- Radio broadcasting
- Regional networks.

2.7 The Committee Chair will communicate Inquiry progress to the public iteratively, pursuant to Standing Order 194(4) of the Legislative Assembly and under the authority of procedural motion 3.2 passed by LCAC on 30 October 2024.

Public Hearing Schedule

2.8 Noting the complexities of remote consultation, the Committee has adopted a flexible approach to its public hearing schedule. The Committee has considered and balanced the following factors in selecting individual locations to which it intends to travel:

- Population size of a remote community
- Representative geographic spread and demographic characteristics
- Incidence rate of long-term health conditions
- Logistical feasibility and timing
- Willingness, readiness and availability of community to be consulted on VAD
- Recent previous consultation on VAD.

Appendix 1 – List of Stakeholders Invited to Make a Written Submission

- Aboriginal Interpreter Service
- Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance Northern Territory
- Aboriginal Peak Organisations Northern Territory (APONT)
- Ace Care and Community Services
- Aged and Disability Advocates Australia (ADA Australia)
- Aged Care Industry Association
- Ageing Australia
- Ali Curung Primary Health Centre
- Alice Springs Hospital
- Alice Springs Senior Citizens Association
- Alice Springs Town Council
- Ampilatwatja Health Centre Aboriginal Corporation
- Anglicare NT
- Anindilyakwa Land Council
- Anyinginyi Health Aboriginal Corporation
- Atyenhenge Atherre Aboriginal Corporation
- Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW NT)
- Australian Centre for Health Law Research
- Australian Christian Lobby
- Australian College of Nursing
- Australian Doctors' Federation
- Australian Health Promotion Association NT Branch
- Australian Independent Retirees
- Australian Lawyers Alliance
- Australian Medical Association NT
- Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation NT
- Australian Psychological Society
- Australian Psychological Society - NT Branch
- Australian Regional and Remote Community Services
- Baptist Care NT
- Barkly Aboriginal Alliance
- Barkly Regional Council
- Bauhinia Health
- Bawinanga Homelands Aboriginal Corporation
- Beyond Blue
- Buddhist Society of the NT
- C3 Church Darwin
- Calvary Community Care
- Canberra Declaration Organisation
- Cancer Council NT
- CareLink NT
- Carers NT
- Casa Services Limited

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- CASPA Services
 - Catholic Diocese of Darwin
 - CatholicCare NT
 - Central Australia Sikh Cultural Centre
 - Central Australian Aboriginal Congress
 - Central Desert Regional Council
 - Central Land Council
 - Cherish Life
 - Christians Supporting Choice for Voluntary Assisted Dying
 - City of Darwin
 - City of Palmerston
 - Coroner's Office
 - Council on the Ageing Northern Territory
 - Danila Dilba Health Service
 - Darwin Acehealth Community Services (DAHCS)
 - Darwin Baptist Church
 - Darwin Community Legal Service (DCLS)
 - Darwin Languages Centre
 - Darwin Private Hospital by Healthscope
 - Darwin Working with Youth Network (DARWWYN)
 - Dementia Australia
 - Dementia Support Australia
 - Department of Chief Minister and Cabinet
 - Department of Health (NT Health)
 - Department of Housing, Local Government and Community Development
 - Department of People, Sport and Culture
 - Disability Advocacy Service Inc (DAS)
 - Dying with Dignity ACT
 - Dying with Dignity New South Wales
 - Dying with Dignity Queensland
 - Dying with Dignity Victoria
 - Dying with Dignity Western Australia
 - East Arnhem Regional Council
 - End of Life Choice Society of New Zealand
 - End of Life Directions for Aged Care (ELDAC)
 - ERMHA 365
 - Exit International
 - Family Voice Australia
 - Flinders Research Centre for Palliative Care, Death and Dying
 - Glory City Church Darwin
 - Go Gentle Australia
 - Gove District Hospital
 - Greek Orthodox Community of North Australia
 - Grief Australia
 - GROW
 - Gumatj Corporation
 - Gundjeihmi Aboriginal Corporation

- Headspace
- Hillsong Church Darwin
- Hindu Council of Australia NT Branch
- Hindu Society of Northern Territory
- Holy Spirit Catholic Church
- Hot North
- Ignite Potential
- Indigenous Allied Health Australia
- Institute for Aboriginal Development Incorporated
- Integrated disAbility Action Inc (IdA)
- Islamic Society of Darwin
- Islamic Society of Palmerston
- Julalikari Council Aboriginal Corporation
- Katherine Hospital
- Katherine Town Council
- Katherine West Health Board Aboriginal Corporation
- Larrakia Development Corporation
- Larrakia Nation Aboriginal Corporation
- Law Council of Australia
- Law Society NT
- Laynhapuy Homelands Aboriginal Corporation
- Legacy Australia - NT (Northern Territory Legacy)
- Life Without Barriers Aged Care Services (Darwin)
- Lifeline
- Linkcare Community Options (Anglicare)
- Ltyentye Apurte Arelhe-Ingkerrenyekekenhe Apmere Aboriginal Corporation
- Lutheran Care
- Mabunji Aboriginal Resource Indigenous Corporation
- MacDonnell Regional Council
- Mala'la Health Service Aboriginal Corporation
- Maningrida Progress Association Incorporated
- Marthakal Homelands Health Service
- Mates4Mates
- Mawurli and Wirriwangkuma Aboriginal Corporation
- Medika Care & Support Services
- Melaleuca Australia
- Mental Health Association of Central Australia
- Mental Illness Fellowship of Australia (NT)
- Menzies School of Health Research
- MGM Healthcare Pty Ltd
- Mission Australia
- Miwatj Health Aboriginal Corporation
- Multicultural Community Services of Central Australia
- Multicultural Council of the Northern Territory
- Multicultural Youth NT

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- National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation
 - National Disability Services Northern Territory
 - National Heart Foundation, Northern Territory Division
 - National Seniors Australia
 - Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (NPY) Women's Council
 - Ngurratjuta/Pmara Ntjarra Aboriginal Corporation
 - Nja-marleya Cultural Leaders and Justice Group
 - North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency (NAAJA)
 - Northern Land Council
 - Northern Synod of United Church of Australia
 - Northern Territory Council of Churches
 - Northern Territory Council of Social Service
 - Northern Territory Indigenous Business Network
 - Northern Territory Jewish Community Association
 - Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission
 - Northern Territory Mental Health Coalition
 - Northern Territory Primary Health Network
 - Northern Territory Public Guardian and Public Trustee
 - Northern Territory Voluntary Euthanasia Society
 - Northside Health NT
 - NSW Voluntary Assisted Dying Board
 - NT Aids and Hepatitis Council
 - NT Youth Round Table
 - Office of Senior Territorians
 - Office of Youth Affairs
 - Older Persons Advocacy Network
 - Options Health Services
 - Our Lady Help of Christians Catholic Church Palmerston
 - Palliative Care Australia
 - Palliative Care Northern Territory
 - Palmerston Regional Hospital
 - Papulu Apparr-kari Aboriginal Corporation
 - Papunya Community Health Centre
 - Partners in Culturally Appropriate Aged Care
 - Pharmaceutical Society of Australia
 - Pharmacy Guild of Australia NT Branch
 - Pintupi Homelands Health Service
 - Potters House Christian Church
 - Probus South Pacific Limited
 - Pro-Life Victoria
 - Queensland University of Technology
 - Queensland University of Technology

- Queensland University of Technology
- Queensland Voluntary Assisted Dying Review Board
- Red Dust
- Red Lily Health Board Aboriginal Corporation
- Regis Aged Care
- Relationships Australia Northern Territory
- Rirratjingu Aboriginal Corporation
- Roper Gulf Regional Council
- Royal Australasian College of Physicians
- Royal Australasian College of Physicians - Northern Territory Committee
- Royal Darwin Hospital
- Royal Flying Doctor Service SA/NT
- Sikh Association Northern Territory
- South Australia VAD Review Board
- Southern Cross Care Pearl Supported Care
- Speech Pathology Australia
- St John Ambulance NT
- St. Alphonsa Syro Malabar Parish
- Standby Support After Suicide (operated by Youturn Limited)
- Step Out Disability Services
- Sunrise Health Service Aboriginal Corporation
- Tasmania Voluntary Assisted Dying Commission
- TeamHealth
- Tennant Creek Hospital
- Territory Care and Support Services
- Territory Palliative Care
- The Clem Jones Group
- The Right to Life Australia
- The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists
- The Salvation Army NT
- Tiwi Islands Regional Council
- Tiwi Land Council
- Top End Mental Health Consumer Organisation (TEMHCO)
- TRACKS Care
- Two Two One Mental Health Charity
- U3A Darwin Inc
- Unidex Healthcare
- United Muslims of the NT (UMNT)
- United Workers Union
- Uniting Church Northern Synod
- University of the Third Age (U3A Australia)
- Urapuntja Health Service Aboriginal Corporation
- Victoria VAD Review Board
- WA VAD Review Board
- WA VAD Statewide Care Navigator Service

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- West Arnhem Regional Council
 - Western Desert Nganampa Walytja Palyantjaku Tjutaku Aboriginal Corporation (Purple House)
 - WildFire Wellbeing Services
 - Will Care Home Support
 - Women's Forum Australia
 - Wurli-Wurlinjang Health Service
 - Y Northern Territory (YMCA)
 - Yalu Aboriginal Corporation
 - Youth Law Australia
 - Yugul Mangi Development Aboriginal Corporation