

MEDIA RELEASE

15 May 2025

COTA NT urges Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee to listen to lived experience

COTA NT has been strongly advocating for voluntary assisted dying (VAD) legislation in the NT alongside other national and Territory advocates. COTA NT is pleased to see the NT government put VAD back on the agenda following the statement released on 14 May 2025 from the Northern Territory Attorney-General.

In this statement, the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee (LCAC) were asked to undertake an inquiry into the *Voluntary Assisted Dying in the Northern Territory - final report 2024*.

(The statement on Voluntary Assisted Dying in its entirety from the Attorney General is included at the end of this release.)

"We have waited almost 30 years for VAD legislation for Territorians and whilst we are pleased that the current NT government is taking action, we are disappointed with their approach," said Sue Shearer, CEO of COTA NT. "It appears the wheel is being reinvented with a committee made up of politicians asked to duplicate the work already completed by an Expert Panel with backgrounds in social justice, law, medicine, psychiatry and palliative medicine."

"However, we hope the committee chooses to listen to the 85% of the Territorians already consulted about VAD for the NT in 2023 and 2024. COTA NT knows from the testimony of many Territorians with real life and lived experience that VAD legislation is wanted - and wanted now."

"My concern is that the present government is not serious about adopting VAD legislation," adds Shearer, "The Attorney General refers to 'a possible' introduction of VAD legislation and that the committee will provide 'drafting instructions for model legislation to give effect to voluntary assisted dying in the NT' with a proviso. This being that drafting instructions will be made **if** the committee recommends adoption of VAD legislation. We would much rather have read 'when' the committee recommends adoption. This would have given us and other advocates more confidence that by the end of September 2025, the process of introducing VAD laws for the NT may begin."

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(Available for interview from 12pm Friday 16 May)

Further information

[Attorney General Statement Voluntary Assisted Dying](#)

This morning, I have written to Dr Tanzil Rahman, the Member for Fong Lim, in his capacity as Chair of the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee (LCAC).

I have requested that the LCAC undertake an inquiry into the 'Voluntary Assisted Dying in the Northern

COTA Northern Territory is the peak advocacy and representation organisation for senior Territorians advocating for and working towards an age-friendly, just, inclusive and equitable society since 1969

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Territory - final report 2024.'

The proposed terms of reference for the Committee 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, particularly in remote areas, to gather views on the possible introduction of voluntary assisted dying in the NT. Evaluate different voluntary assisted dying models and safeguards, with a focus on those that would be appropriate for the Northern Territory context. Identify any specific challenges associated with delivering voluntary assisted dying in the Northern Territory. If the Committee recommends adoption, provide drafting instructions for model legislation to give effect to voluntary assisted dying in the NT.

I have requested the Committee's report by 30 September 2025.

Voluntary Assisted Dying in the Northern Territory - final report 2024 (132pp) delivered by the Expert Panel in July 2024

The report outlines their work which included:

- Consulting extensively with communities across the NT through August 2023 to May 2024
Consultation was with 350 individual participants through public forums and meetings, met with around 60 organisations, received 98 written submissions and almost 1,400 survey responses. 85% of Territorians wanted it.
- Evaluating different VAD models and safeguards
- Identifying challenges associated with delivery of VAD in the Northern Territory specifically.

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