

How you can get involved in

Queensland's voluntary assisted dying campaign



Voluntary Assisted Dying





Pictured above: Alison, and her father Geoff

Alison's Story

My dad Geoff died in palliative care in Brisbane from skin cancer that went to his spine and brain.

In the last two weeks of his life, his lungs filled with fluid which was very frightening to him. He was breathless and felt like he was drowning.

I think if Dad had had the option to control the timing and manner of his death, he would have seriously considered voluntary assisted dying.

There was no hope for him. Death was lurking. The knowledge he could ask for medication to end his life if it all got too much would have been enough comfort, even if he hadn't availed himself of it.

Voluntary assisted dying will never be compulsory. It will be a choice for dying people at the very end of life, if they want and if they need.

I support voluntary assisted dying and palliative care. Both are essential in providing the care needed as we die.

Please help us change the law to give terminally ill Queenslanders, like my dad, the choice to die without suffering.

How can you make a difference?

The most important thing you can do is to contact members of the Queensland Parliament and ask them to vote for the Voluntary Assisted Dying bill.

In November 2018, Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk launched an inquiry into legalising voluntary assisted dying in Queensland. The inquiry received more than 5,000 submissions from health practitioners and members of the public, and the Law Reform Commission has since drafted legislation.

The bill will come before Parliament later this year and each MP will be given a conscience vote. In other words, they are free to make their own minds up on the issue, rather than 'towing the party line'. For the bill to pass, we must make sure MPs represent the 86% of Queenslanders who want access to voluntary assisted dying.

The best way to influence your MP is to contact them and explain what this legislation means to you - and why you want them to support it. Telling your personal stories can be a very powerful way to change your MP's mind and reassure them they are reflecting the wishes of their constituents. There are a number of ways you can do this, explained in this booklet.

Politicians need to be reminded that this is an important issue for Queenslanders. End of life choices affect all of us. The more they hear, the more confident they will be to support voluntary assisted dying laws.

2021 must be the year voluntary assisted dying laws are approved by Queensland Parliament - especially when more than half of Australians already have access to end of life choice laws.

It is now an issue of fairness and equity. Why should some Australians be denied access to these laws simply by virtue of their postcode?

This booklet explains how you can help persuade your MP to support voluntary assisted dying laws in Queensland.

How to get in touch with your local MP

Your local MP is your representative in Parliament. There are 93 MPs in Queensland, each representing an electorate. They will be your voice in Parliament in relation to VAD laws.

The best way you can make an impact is to get in touch with the MP for your local electorate. You can find out your MP's contact details using Go Gentle Australia's look-up tool here:

www.gogentleaustralia.org.au/mp_lookup

Write to your local MP

Letters can be powerful, especially if they include your own personal experiences with death and dying. If you are a healthcare professional, please mention this.

Put pen to paper or write an email to tell your local MP why you support voluntary assisted dying laws. Consider including a photograph, perhaps from a happier time, so MPs realise we are talking about real people who are loved. Handwritten letters and personal emails are most effective.

Please be sure to use a respectful tone when explaining why you support a change in the law. Remember, this is one of the most difficult issues your MP is likely ever to be asked to vote on. They will be nervous about making a mistake. It is our job to reassure them that voting Yes is what their community wants and is the right thing to do.

For tips and background information about assisted dying laws, please visit www.gogentleaustralia.org.au

If you're unsure about what to say or you would like someone to read your letter before you send it, please email: contact@gogentleaustralia.org.au or call 0468 464 360 (Mon-Fri 9-5 AEST).

Call your local MP

Members of Parliament receive phone calls from constituents every day. They actively encourage members of the community to get in touch to share their views. So why not pick up the phone and let them know how you feel?

It can be as simple as “Hi, I’m calling to ask my local MP to support voluntary assisted dying laws.” You can also share your personal story. Again, remember to be respectful.

You can then ask your local MP to meet with you so you can explain why you want them to support voluntary assisted dying laws.

Things to ask your MP

When you contact your MP, ask them to:

- Confirm they will consider the wishes of their electorate, and constituents like you, when voting on voluntary assisted dying laws
- Confirm they will review the evidence, listen to the experts and cast their vote based on the facts
- Commit to a respectful debate in Parliament
- Respect the separation of the church and state, and not allow a minority’s religious views to determine the end of life choices accessible to dying people

Other ways you can help

Connect supportive healthcare professionals

Are you a healthcare professional in favour of VAD, or do you know someone who is? Please contact the national group Healthcare Professionals for Assisted Dying Choice (HPAD Choice). More than 1200 healthcare professionals have already joined, but we need more. Doctors, nurses, psychologists and all allied healthcare workers are welcome, whether student, practising or retired. Support among healthcare professionals is very important in influencing MPs. Visit www.hpadchoice.org.au

Write a letter to the editors of newspapers

We know members of Parliament take an interest in the content of newspapers, especially in regional areas. Your letter can remind politicians of the public pressure to act on this issue. You can also make online comments on a newspaper's website or Facebook page.

Contact your local newspaper to find out the editor's details.

Hints for getting your letter published - get in early and be concise:

- **Provide contact details** - Give your full name, address and phone number
- **Give your qualifications** - If you are a healthcare worker or minister of religion, please mention this
- **Keep it short** - Letters should be no longer than 150-200 words max
- **Get in early** - Send your letter in the early morning
- **Keep it simple** - Try to make just one or two clear points
- **Quality over quantity** - Don't bombard editors. A few good letters will be more effective than sending lots of messages.
- **Keep it civil** - Be respectful and polite, especially if you are writing about your local member of Parliament
- **Keep it relevant** - Your letter should refer to a recent story in the paper or respond to another published letter
- **Keep it exclusive** - Don't copy your letter to other newspapers

Call talk back radio

Talk back radio has a lot of listeners in Queensland and can be very influential with politicians. Why not get your message out to a broader audience and encourage listeners to contact their MPs too? You can also send text messages.

Volunteer at a community stall

You might have seen VAD advocates at a community stall in a shopping centre or local market. Perhaps that's where you picked up this booklet. Being visible in the community helps us recruit new supporters and raise the profile of our campaign. In the lead up to Parliamentary vote, advocates such as Dying with Dignity will be running even more stalls. Come along!

Help us on the phones

Members of Parliament aren't the only ones we need to call. There are thousands of known supporters across Queensland and we need your help to encourage them to join the campaign. You can help out from home and we can provide you with all the training and information you need to get started.

To help with phoning or volunteer at a stall, contact **Dying with Dignity Queensland**. Their website can be found at www.dwdq.org.au

Talk to family, friends and colleagues

There is nothing more powerful than a one-on-one conversation with someone you know.

Help us spread the word. The time for action is now. Talk to your family, friends and colleagues and tell them what's going on. Encourage them to contact their own members of Parliament or volunteer with you.

You can also spread the word on your social media. Share your story on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram alongside a photo and the hashtag #qld4vad for the most powerful impact. If you don't have any photos, **you can take a photo of yourself holding up the back cover of this booklet.**

Follow us on social media

Follow us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram and share our posts to help spread the word.

 **Facebook** [@GoGentleAus](https://www.facebook.com/GoGentleAus) and [@DWDQLD](https://www.facebook.com/DWDQLD)

 **Twitter** [@gogentle_aus](https://twitter.com/gogentle_aus) or [@DWDqld](https://twitter.com/DWDqld)

 **Instagram** [@gogentle_aus](https://www.instagram.com/gogentle_aus)

Don't forget to use the hashtags **#qld4vad** **#qldpol**



#QLD4VAD



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