

Media release

Thursday 20 June 2019

Leadership in exceptional circumstances as Voluntary Assisted Dying begins in Australia

With the formation of the Voluntary Assisted Dying Board, Victoria yesterday became the first jurisdiction in Australia to allow people in the late stages of advanced disease to take medication to induce their death at a time of their choosing, with hospital pharmacists central to the rigorous process.

Following the [passing of the Voluntary Assisted Dying Act](#) in November 2017, the Victorian Government engaged Alfred Health to develop a state-wide pharmacy service to support the new legislation, with the responsibility to import, store, prepare and dispense medications while providing education and support for Victorians who choose to access voluntary assisted dying.

SHPA Chief Executive Kristin Michaels says the government's entrusting of hospital pharmacists to oversee the complex and critical processes involved is a testament to their standing as medicines experts.

'With majority legislative and public support, attention now turns to upholding diligent protections and procedures to facilitate voluntary assisted dying in Victoria.'

'As practitioners with unique medicines management experience in the challenging environments of acute and palliative care, it is fitting hospital pharmacists are at the frontline supporting the dignified and respectful implementation of this service.'

Victorians with a terminal illness will be able to make an initial request to access voluntary assisted dying, via the Voluntary Assisted Dying Board, which will review each case to ensure high safety standards are met, receiving reports from health practitioners, monitoring the dispensing of medications, reporting to Parliament and referring any potential issues to relevant authorities.

Ms Michaels says while SHPA does not hold a publicly stated position on voluntary assisted dying, members are supportive of person-centred care.

'SHPA members are also committed to evidence-based practice and it is appropriate the Voluntary Assisted Dying Board will govern strict eligibility criteria for Victorians to request access to voluntary assisted dying.'

'This is a milestone moment for health care in Australia and SHPA is proud our members will be key to the safe delivery of the new service.'

The Victorian Government anticipates up to 150 people a year will use the scheme.

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About SHPA

The Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA) is the national, professional, for-purpose organisation for leading pharmacists and pharmacy technicians working across Australia's health system, advocating for their pivotal role improving the safety and quality of medicines use. Embedded in multidisciplinary medical teams and equipped with exceptional medicines management expertise, SHPA members are progressive advocates for clinical excellence, committed to evidence-based practice and passionate about patient care.

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