

MEDIA RELEASE

Friday, 24 July 2026

AMA NT welcomes voluntary assisted dying bill but flags need for changes

The Australian Medical Association Northern Territory (AMA NT) has welcomed the introduction to the territory's parliament of a Bill that will legalise voluntary assisted dying (VAD) in the NT but says it has serious concerns about parts of the proposed legislation.

AMA NT Vice President Dr Dayna Duncan said the AMA NT's primary concern was a proposed 12-month requirement, where a doctor must say a patient is expected to die within a year, and a proposed gag clause preventing doctors from raising the topic of VAD with patients.

"That means the onus will rest entirely on the patient to be aware of the VAD option and to be able to proactively raise it with their doctor before it can be discussed.

"That is not in keeping with the wider and long-established relationship between doctor and patient, where the doctor is responsible for providing an expert and balanced analysis to provide the patient with all of their treatment options."

The AMA NT is also calling on the government to ensure there is equal access to VAD across the territory.

"The Territory's geography presents the single greatest challenge to delivering an equitable VAD service," Dr Duncan said.

"More than 45 per cent of the population live in rural and remote areas, so any model that relies solely on in-person consultations in major centres will systematically fail a significant portion of the population.

"The national AMA has [written to the Attorney General](#) warning that patients with serious life-limiting illnesses in regional and rural areas, are being disadvantaged by laws preventing doctors using telehealth to discuss VAD.

"AMA NT supports calls for urgent amendments to the *Criminal Code Act 1995* specifically sections 474.29A and 474.29B, due to their potential to negatively impact on the provision of voluntary assisted dying (VAD) services, where legal, throughout Australia.

"Patients with serious life-limiting illnesses, particularly those in regional and rural areas, are being disadvantaged by laws preventing doctors using telehealth to discuss voluntary assisted dying (VAD). "

Dr Duncan said the NT Government must also ensure palliative care remains properly funded and resourced.

"The committee's final report must recommend a separate, protected, and significantly increased funding stream for palliative care, to be implemented in parallel with any VAD legislation," Dr Duncan said.

Earlier this week, the chief minister indicated the Country Liberal Party has the numbers to pass the bill when it is voted on in August, regardless of opposition or crossbench support.

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[Read the AMA NT's submission to the Bill](#)

[Read the federal AMA's position statement on voluntary assisted dying](#)

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