VOLUNTARY ASSISTED DYING POSITION STATEMENT

Background

According to Queensland's Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2021, Voluntary Assisted Dying (VAD) means *administration of a voluntary assisted dying substance (a substance for the purpose of causing a person's death) and includes steps reasonably related to that administration.*[1]

The Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2021 was passed in the Queensland Parliament on 16 September 2021 and implemented from 1 January 2023.

Fitzroy Community Hospice (FCH) acknowledges that VAD invokes a broad spectrum of emotions, opinions, and levels of support within our community. It is a complex issue and opinions are formed by personal experiences as well as cultural, religious, and political beliefs. Our community is diverse, and as such, includes the spectrum of views and opinions regarding VAD.

1: Fitzroy Community Hospice considers Voluntary Assisted Dying to be separate from palliative care practice.

FCH concurs with the World Health Organisation's definition that *'palliative care affirms life, and regards dying as a normal process that intends neither to hasten nor postpone death. It improves the quality of life of patients and their families facing problems associated with life-threatening illness, through the prevention and relief of suffering by means of early identification and impeccable assessment and treatment of pain and other problems, physical, psychosocial, and spiritual.'*[2]

Whilst FCH believes palliative care is separate from VAD, we recognise that people we are caring for may also choose to access VAD. As such, an individual's beliefs, views, or intention to access VAD will not determine a person's eligibility for admission to FCH.

2: Fitzroy Community Hospice will comply with Queensland's Voluntary Assisted Dying legislation and guidelines.

As a minimum, FCH will abide by its obligations set out in the legislation.

FCH's Vision is that all members of our community have access to respectful care throughout the palliative care journey to allow everyone to die with peace, dignity and choice – this includes an individual's right to choose VAD. FCH will provide the highest quality of compassionate palliative and end-of-life care to patients, and their family and carers, regardless of whether they choose to explore or access VAD.

FCH is committed to supporting person-centred end of life care. FCH does not admit patients for the sole purpose of VAD administration. Our Clinical Team works in partnership with Queensland Voluntary Assisted Dying Support Service to guide appropriate care planning and ensure patients are directed to the most suitable care setting for their needs.

3: Fitzroy Community Hospice will support our workforce in respect to Voluntary Assisted Dying.
FCH recognises and respects that our staff, credentialled Healthcare Practitioners, and volunteers are representative of the community, and as such, may have differing opinions, views, and beliefs regarding VAD.

Staff, credentialled Healthcare Practitioners, and volunteers are required to act within the scope of their role in respect to the requirements of the VAD legislation and the position of FCH. They will be supported by clear procedures about VAD.

FCH believes it is the right of the health professional providing palliative care to make personal judgements about the extent of their individual participation in VAD processes, beyond the minimum required by legislation. As far as is practicable, FCH will endeavour to support the choices of our staff and credentialled Healthcare Practitioners regarding the extent of their participation. Any endorsed VAD Practitioner activities undertaken by FCH staff or credentialled Healthcare Practitioners will be done so outside their scope and engagement with FCH.

---

1. *Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2021 (Qld)*
2. *World Health Organisation and Worldwide Palliative Care Alliance (2020) Global Atlas of Palliative Care (2nd Ed).*