

President's Report

I completed our September Newsletter with the words - *My sincere hope is that our next Newsletter will be headlined with the announcement that the proposed VAD amendments were successfully passed in the Victorian Parliament.*

And I am thrilled to say I can! We were absolutely delighted to witness the Voluntary Assisted Dying Amendments Bill 2025 pass decisively through the Legislative Assembly (67-14) and, to the profound relief of many, decisively through the Legislative Council (26-14) as well.

I was fortunate to observe almost the entire debate, which was conducted respectfully most of the time. As MPs from both major parties were afforded a conscience vote, we heard many heart-rending stories from individuals that traversed political boundaries, enabling us to see the deeply personal side of politics and acknowledge that our MPs must often grapple with complex moral questions.

The debate also highlighted the importance of language: words matter. The repeated use of destructive terminology - such as "assisted suicide", "euthanasia", "killing" and "poison" by a few MPs was deeply troubling, especially when a heartfelt plea to refrain from the use of such language was made by MP Emma Vulin and flagrantly disregarded.

We commend the Victorian Government for listening to the stories of individuals enduring intolerable suffering at the end of life, and for introducing reforms that will help ensure eligible Victorians will no longer face cruel and discriminatory barriers when accessing VAD. Michelle Hindson and I extend our sincere thanks to all parliamentarians who engaged with DWDV and met with us throughout the process, especially those who ultimately supported the legislation, and to Minister Mary-Anne Thomas for her leadership in advancing these reforms.

During the campaign we were honoured to be recognised as a key stakeholder and are grateful that our input was carefully considered and respected.



Jane Morris

We held our Annual General Meeting on Saturday November 8th. It was well attended, and we extend heartfelt thanks to all who braved the inclement weather to join us in person, as well as those who tuned in online. We sincerely apologize for the sound quality during the meeting and assure you we are committed to perfecting it for next year.

We were honoured that Julian Gardner AM accepted our offer to be the guest speaker. He delivered an extremely interesting account of the integral role he has played with VAD in Victoria, including his involvement with the VAD Ministerial Advisory Panel and the drafting of the VAD legislation, the implementation of VAD and his time spent as Chair of the Victorian VAD Review Board.

DWDV has had an extraordinary year, and we are so proud to have witnessed the growth and momentum of many of our initiatives from previous years. Our Young Ambassador program has continued to gain a lot of interest from within Australia and overseas.

Our VAD grief and support program, run in collaboration with Griefline, has been extremely successful with individuals from all over Australia participating. The additional inclusion of a 'drop-in' centre for those navigating the VAD path has also proved very valuable. I would like to thank Jane Nosworthy and Nicole Grundy for the incredible roles they have assumed in these groups as lived peer supports.

President's Report (cont.)

As a result of our attendance at several conferences this year, we have built up an amazing network of end-of-life collaborators, most notably many from the Palliative Care Community whom Dani Clarke and Danielle Jacobs met on the Gold Coast.

Our wonderful doctors Nick, Adam and Harriet have been extraordinary and somehow have always found time to respond to our numerous 'hands on' requests.

We were delighted to connect with so many VAD affiliated organisations and individuals at our Parliamentary event in September and look forward to maintaining a close relationship and collaborating with this wonderful community in 2026.

Many of our Board members were invited this year to engage in Podcast series. Our thanks go to Suzanne James, Catherine Ashton, and Laureen Lawlor-Smith, all of whom have interviewed multiple Board members.

This year we welcomed Eleanor Pallett as our social media manager. The results have been extraordinary.

I would like to thank Sue James for the great job she does compiling our newsletter and Dr Alison Thistlethwaite for her VAD round-up from Australia and around the world.

Many thanks also to 'Fancy Films' and Kerry Nossal for helping us to produce some wonderful and powerful videos, some of which can be seen on our website.

This year, our extraordinary volunteers have been the cornerstone of our success. Our witness volunteers are truly worth their weight in gold, and their dedication is deeply appreciated by all. We have also been incredibly fortunate to receive invaluable

contributions to our advocacy sub committee from Lisa Hindson, Emily Maguire, and Lissie Ratcliffe. Their insight and commitment have strengthened our work immeasurably and taught us all so much!

It has been a wonderful year in so many ways. I feel so very proud and lucky to work amongst such an extraordinary group of individuals. Every one of them restores my faith in humanity in these perilous times and it is impossible to express my profound gratitude to them for our incredible achievements this year.

My appreciation also extends to our fellow DWD organisations around Australia, Go Gentle Australia, overseas colleagues including Janie Lazar, End-of-Life Ireland, and a special mention to Peter Warren, the Executive Director of the World Federation of Right to Die Societies, whose support and enthusiasm for our organisation has been phenomenal.

Naturally, I cannot finish without mentioning the amazing Michelle Hindson, our Vice President, and Nat, our General Manager. I simply could not manage in this role without them. Their constant support, every minute of every day, along with the dedication of the entire Board, has made my role not only possible but truly enjoyable and fun, most of the time!

I hope the entire DWDV Community has a relaxing break over the holiday period, they so truly deserve it.

My very best wishes to you all and thank you for all your support and engagement this year.

Jane



Some of our Young Ambassadors.

L to R: Rory Godbold, Brennan Bast, Danielle Clarke, Liz Tower, Eve Crotty

Hugh Sarjeant – departing Board Member

by Jane Morris



Hugh joined the Board in November 2014, serving as President from November 2018 to November 2023, when he continued in the role as Treasurer from June 2024 to November this year. He played a pivotal role in DWDV's remarkable work that contributed to the successful passage of the Victorian Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill in 2017.

Hugh's expertise as a consulting actuary and computer programmer proved invaluable, not only to our organisation but also to other Australian DWD groups, to whom he generously offered his support. On a personal note, I will greatly miss Hugh's frequent—and often delightfully incomprehensible—Excel spreadsheet communications!

I have deeply valued Hugh's wise counsel and unwavering support, which instilled in me the confidence to take on the role of President. I would also like to extend heartfelt thanks to Hugh's wife, Diana, whose contributions to DWDV were equally significant. Diana, as a member of our finance subcommittee, brought enthusiasm, insight, and dedication, that we greatly appreciated. Thank you, Hugh and Diana. I will always remember your kindness, generosity, and love of all things numerical.

Will Allen – new Board Member

We were delighted, in November, to welcome Will Allen to the DWDV Board. Will is an Investment Adviser with a background in finance. He began his career at Deloitte in Assurance and Advisory, later transitioning into wealth management with Escala Partners and now LGT Wealth Management. Will holds a Bachelor of Commerce from Monash University, is a Chartered Accountant, and has a Diploma in Financial Planning.

Beyond his professional career, Will is committed to social impact and community inclusion. He is the Co-Founder and Director of Wheels In Motion, a not-for-profit organisation dedicated to empowering people with disabilities. Will brings a strong sense of purpose and advocacy to all areas of his life, aligning closely with Dying With Dignity Victoria's mission to support choice, compassion, and dignity at the end of life.



VADCON26

Following the huge success in 2024, Go Gentle Australia and VADANZ are delighted to announce the next Trans-Tasman Voluntary Assisted Dying Conference will be held in Melbourne on Monday 19 & Tuesday 20 October 2026. The conference will bring together VAD clinicians, policymakers and scholars from across Australia and New Zealand to examine how VAD laws are working in practice, present the latest research, and share insights from over seven years of clinical experience. More information: <https://www.gogentleaustralia.org.au/vadcon26>



The Rodney Syme medal

This year's recipient of the Rodney Syme Medal is Dr Cameron McLaren.

The Rodney Syme Medal recognises distinguished effort in pursuit of the Dying with Dignity cause.

Dr Cameron McLaren is a Medical Oncologist who has played an integral role in voluntary assisted dying (VAD) provision since it became operative in Victoria in 2019.

Cam was a highly respected and greatly valued DWDV Board Member from October 2019 until April 2024. He was also the founder and President of 'Voluntary Assisted Dying, Australia and New Zealand' (VADANZ), the peak body for health professionals and others working in assisted dying.

Cam is held in high esteem amongst the medical profession and all those who are lucky enough to have crossed paths with him. DWDV certainly values his friendship and recognises his exemplary humility, compassion and commitment to his patients and their families.

A most deserving recipient of the Rodney Syme Medal. Congratulations Cam!



Communications Report - November

by Eleanor Pallett



In November, Dying With Dignity Victoria saw an amazing amount of engagement across our social media networks.

Our content was viewed nearly 300,000 times across our Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn pages and we gained more than 1000 followers across all platforms, with the highest growth in our incredible Facebook community.

Thank you to all our supporters and followers for engaging with our content and continuing to support our work to affirm dignity and choice at the end-of-life.

Have you written a will?

As a not-for-profit charity, Dying With Dignity Victoria relies on the generosity of others to sustain our organisation. Bequests have played a vital role in enabling DWDV to pursue our aims for over 50 years. Leaving a bequest in your Will ensures that we can continue our work, so all Victorians have the choice of a good, dignified death.

People delay completing a Will for a variety of reasons, so DWDV has partnered with Gathered Here – an Australian platform – to encourage people to complete a simple Will. It's a completely free, quick way to make a legally binding Will. More information is on our website: https://www.dwdv.org.au/leave_a_bequest.

Of course, DWDV appreciates any financial assistance, but there is no obligation to include us as a beneficiary. If your circumstances change, Gathered Here Wills can be updated free, for life.



Emma Vulin, MP for Pakenham

by Jane Morris



"We must ensure that the (VAD) process moves at the pace of an illness and not at the pace of bureaucracy" Emma Vulin MP, October 30 2025

I am extraordinarily fortunate to call Emma Vulin a friend. From the moment I met her last year I was struck—as everyone is—by her warmth, humour, and deep compassion for others she so naturally radiates.

Two years ago, Emma was diagnosed with Motor Neurone Disease. Many might have expected her to slow down, but Emma has done quite the opposite. She has continued her parliamentary duties with remarkable energy and dedication, embodying an indefatigable commitment to her constituents that is hard to put into words.

Emma is not only devoted to her constituents of Pakenham but also a loving mother to two teenage children, a wonderful partner to Matt, and a loyal friend to many. Despite the challenges she has faced—including a severe stroke in 2016—Emma's grit and tenacity saw her fight back and she was elected to the Victorian Parliament in 2022.

Her advocacy extends far beyond her parliamentary role. Emma has given her time and voice to many organisations, with MND Victoria and the Stroke Foundation holding a special place in her heart.

This year, Dying With Dignity Victoria (DWDV) has been especially grateful for Emma's tireless efforts. She played an integral role in the successful passage of the Voluntary Assisted Dying Amendments Bill 2025. Her courage and willingness to speak with MPs across the political spectrum left a profound impression. Few could fail to acknowledge her determination, as evidenced by the numerous references to her by MPs in their parliamentary speeches.

Emma believes deeply in the importance of VAD as an end-of-life choice. With extraordinary honesty, she shares the reality that this may one day be a decision she herself contemplates. She finds comfort in knowing the choice exists—for herself and for others.

Emma Vulin is a shining example of resilience, compassion, and courage. Her legacy is not only in the laws she has helped shape but in the many lives she continues to touch with her unwavering spirit.

Thank you Emma, for everything you have done for DWDV but most importantly I would like to thank you for just being you and being my friend.



Email: dwdv@dwdv.org.au

Phone: 0491 718 632

Address: PO Box 22, Camberwell, VIC 3124

Voluntary Assisted Dying Amendment Act 2025

In excellent news last month, Victoria's Voluntary Assisted Dying (VAD) Amendment Act passed the Victorian Parliament in November.

The original Victorian VAD Act 2017 contained 68 safeguards. With the successful passage of the Amendments Act 2025, these safeguards now stand as follows:

- Twelve safeguards retained with slight modifications
- One new safeguard added
- Fifty-six safeguards retained unchanged



The amendments significantly improve access by removing the "gag clause" (allowing doctors to initiate VAD discussions), expanding the VAD workforce (including nurses), extending prognosis timelines to 12 months, and easing requirements for neurodegenerative conditions, aiming to make the system more compassionate and align with other states while maintaining strong safeguards.

We would like to see a phased implementation of these reforms before 19 April 2027, the date by which the amendments must be implemented.

Key Changes in the Amendment Act are:

- Remove "Gag Clause": Doctors are no longer prohibited from raising VAD as an option with patients.
- Information for Conscientious Objectors: Doctors who object must provide basic information about VAD and refer patients to other services.
- Prognosis Extension: Eligibility is extended from a 6-month to a 12-month life expectancy for most conditions.
- Neurodegenerative Conditions: The third prognosis assessment is removed for those with neurodegenerative diseases (like MND).
- Workforce Expansion: Introduces new roles, like Administering Practitioners (including nurses), to boost the VAD health workforce.
- Residency & Timelines: Amendments to residency rules and shortening the time between requests.

Reflux?

by Dr Nick Carr

I was 25 when I had my first heart attack. I woke at 2 o'clock in the morning with severe central chest pain and I knew right there and then that my end was nigh. But then I realised two things - the pain was burning in nature, not typical of myocardial infarction, and that I was a healthy young doctor. So I got up and had a glass of milk. My heart attack went away; my end was not yet nigh.



That was my welcome to the world of reflux, when acid from the stomach gets up into the oesophagus, or gullet. Symptoms can range from a bit of mild indigestion to episodes of severe pain and nausea, and 45 years later I am still occasionally woken by it.

With the festive season upon us, indulgence set to increase, it's likely that many DWDV members will become familiar with my tale, if not so already. So what's going on?

Reflux? (cont)

The stomach produces a lot of acid to help digest our food; for the chemists reading, the pH is between one and three, which is pretty close to the strength of battery acid. Ouch.

Now, while the cells in the stomach are tough little critters and able to cope with this acid, those in the gullet are a bit more fragile. So there's a muscular valve to stop the acid getting back up, which works really well - until it doesn't. Alcohol and smoking, pregnancy and obesity all loosen the valve and are risks for reflux. As well as an excess of turkey and Christmas pud.



But at 25, I was fit and healthy and not a smoker or drinker, and I certainly wasn't pregnant. Turns out that reflux is just one of those things, like asthma and diabetes, that can happen to anyone.

There's also a weird version called silent reflux. This is when the acid sneaks up your gullet, not enough to cause the burning, but enough to irritate the throat causing things like persistent cough or hoarseness of the voice.

So what can we do? Well, apart from the cigarettes and whiskey, there are some other things worth avoiding, like tomatoes, chocolate and various medications like anti-inflammatories. Curiously peppermint, which we generally see as healthy, also relaxes the muscular valve and can cause reflux. Tight clothes are another potential cause, so you might want to ditch the corset and the skinny jeans (the obvious fashion preferences of our members).

If despite all the lifestyle changes you still get reflux, and simple treatments like antacids don't work, then there are prescription medications called proton pump inhibitors, or PPIs. Brand names are things like Losec and Nexium, and they are available on prescription or over the counter at the pharmacy. They switch off the acid producing cells in the stomach and hey presto, reflux gone. Mostly.

A word of warning - if you're over 45 and develop reflux for the first time, or there are other symptoms like vomiting or weight loss, make sure to go get checked out. There are nastier things than reflux that can go wrong in our digestive systems.

There was a tricky question on a medical exam many years ago, "A 68-year-old man is found dead on the kitchen floor with white marks on his lips - what was the cause of death"*. So if your "reflux" causes severe chest pain, don't forget that, unlike me at the age of 25, it actually could be your heart, so don't hesitate to call 000.

Merry (in moderation) Christmas!

Nick Carr

December 2025



Photo Gallery

DWDV AGM



Danielle Jacobs, Dr Nick Carr



Danielle Jacobs, Danielle Clarke



Jane Morris, Julian Gardner



Dr Cameron McLaren with his Rodney Syme Medal



Jane Nosworthy

Christmas Drinks after Board Meeting



Dani Clarke, Dr Nick Carr, Young Ambassador Zoe Rickard



Liz Tower and Danielle Clarke



Danielle Jacobs, Lisa Hindson, Michelle Hindson



Hugh Sarjeant, Natalie, Dr Nick Carr, Will Allen



Danielle Jacobs, Natalie, Lisa Hindson, Hugh Sarjeant

NEWS FROM AUSTRALIA ...

Australian Capital Territory

VAD legislation came into effect for ACT residents from 3 November 2025. The key eligibility criteria for ACT patients are mostly consistent with the criteria for many other Australian jurisdictions, with two clear differences: 1) the ACT's scheme does not require someone to have a diagnosed timeframe until death, and 2) the territory's legislation also allows nurses to be qualified as voluntary assisted dying practitioners.



New South Wales

New South Wales celebrated the second anniversary of VAD implementation in late November, and the second annual report from the NSW VAD Board was released in early December, covering the period July 2024 to June 2025. The Susan Carter Bill to allow aged care facilities to not allow residents to access VAD in their homes was successfully defeated in NSW parliament in late November. A statutory review of the NSW VAD legislation commenced in late November, with the aim of seeking views on whether the VAD legislation is working well and efficiently, is equitable, especially with regard to people in regional NSW, and whether there are sufficient safeguards in place for both patients and health workers. Stakeholders are encouraged to make submissions before the February 27 deadline.



Northern Territory

The Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee tabled their final report on October 14th and formally recommended that the NT government adopt voluntary assisted dying. The report's recommendations include removing the six to 12 month prognosis timeframe, the need to develop a comprehensive palliative care strategy, protecting cultural safety and the need for a decentralised delivery model.



Tasmania

The Voluntary Assisted Dying Commission released its third annual report in early November, covering the 2024-2025 period. It reported that demand for access to voluntary assisted dying in Tasmania increased significantly when compared with the 2023-2024 reporting period. The statutory three-year review of the Tasmanian VAD scheme will commence soon, with the selection process for the review board members having commenced in early November.



Victoria

On November 14, the Victorian Legislative Council passed amendments that will bring Victoria's VAD legislation up to date and grant fairer access to applicants.



Western Australia

The Western Australian VAD Board report for 2024-2025 was released in late November. It noted an increase in VAD applications and VAD deaths in the state but also reports concerns of a shortage of VAD-trained practitioners.



... AND AROUND THE WORLD



Canada

Government of Canada released the Sixth Annual Report on MAiD for 2024 in late November. This report details that Health Canada received 22,535 MAiD requests in 2024, with 16,499 people receiving MAiD. Meanwhile, protests continue from anti-MAiD campaigners across the country.

France

A bill to grant the right to have an assisted death is still pending review in France's Senate after being passed by the National Assembly in May. The proposal has faced multiple delays in Senate review due to political instability and government changes, however France's government has committed to resolving debates on end-of-life issues, including palliative care and assisted dying, before the 2027 presidential election.

Italy

A bill remains under consideration in the Italian Senate to decriminalize assisted suicide. In 2022, Italy's lower house passed a bill regulating a patient's right to request medical assistance in dying based on certain conditions, such as being of legal age or suffering from an irreversible illness. The legislation was then sent to the Senate, which has been debating the proposal for three years.

Jersey

Assisted dying in Jersey is a step closer with the States Assembly supporting the principle of assisted dying. Next step will be an examination of the detailed legislation, which will be considered by politicians in January 2026.

Netherlands

In December, a group of Dutch advocates were not successful in their attempt to have "euthanasia" completely decriminalised. The lower court rejected their application and this rejection was then upheld in the Appeals Court.

Scotland

The Private Member's bill to legalise assisted dying in Scotland is still progressing through Scottish Parliament. MSP's scrutinising the proposed law have raised concerns about the bill putting the lives of disabled people at risk without incorporating adequate protections. The proposed bill contains a broad definition of terminal illness and also does not include a prognosis of life expectancy.

Slovenia

53% of Slovenian voters voted against assisted dying for terminally ill patients in a national referendum, meaning that the existing VAD law is now suspended. Supporters of assisted dying intend to continue to advocate for change.

... AND AROUND THE WORLD

Spain

The Supreme Court of Spain is considering under appeal whether a parent has the right to block an approved assisted death of their adult child. The Catalan High court had previously allowed a father to stop his son, who was approved for VAD in 2024, accessing the assisted death he wants, and the Catalan government is now applying to the Supreme Court to defend the original decision by the Catalan Guarantee and Evaluation Commission to grant VAD to the patient.

Switzerland

The founder of Dignitas, Ludwig Minelli, died on December 2nd at 92 years of age via an assisted death in the clinic that he founded.

United Kingdom

Progress of VAD legislation through the UK House of Lords remains slow as a small group of resistant peers employ stalling tactics during debate of the proposed amendments to the Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill. The Bill must pass all stages in the Lords and Commons before the UK's Spring 2026 to be successful.

United States

In late September, **California** Governor Gavin Newsome signed the bill to remove the sunset clause on California's End of Life Option Act, establishing that the law is now permanent in the state.

The Medical Aid in Dying Act for **New York State** still awaits review and approval by Governor Kathy Hochul. Both the New York State Assembly and the Senate have passed the bill.

In **Illinois**, the MAID Bill has progressed past the Senate and is awaiting signature by Governor Pritzker. Coroners, however, have raised an objection to the bill on the grounds that the language used removes deaths as a result of medically-assisted suicide from coroner oversight.

In **Massachusetts**, VAD legislation continued to progress through the state legislature, with the End-of-Life Options Act (S1486) advancing out of the Joint Committee on Public Health and moving before the Joint Committee on Healthcare Financing.

In **New Jersey**, Federal judges affirmed the residency requirements in NJ's assisted dying law after challenge by a Delaware resident. There is awareness that this ruling may open the door to similar challenges in Oregon and Vermont, states which have relaxed VAD residency requirements after successful court cases .

Uruguay

President Yamandú Orsi signed into law the so-called "Dignified Death" bill in late October. Next step is for the Uruguayan Executive Branch to draft the decree that will officially regulate the law's application, a task that they are allowed 180 days to complete.



DWDV Board



PRESIDENT

Jane Morris



VICE PRESIDENT

Michelle Hindson



SECRETARY

Jane Nosworthy



TREASURER

Dr Nick Carr

BOARD MEMBERS



*Will
Allen*



*Dr Harriet
Beevor*



*Danielle
Clarke*



*Danielle
Jacobs*



*Dr Adam
Steinberg*



CAN YOU HELP US WITH A DONATION?

Or do you have an event coming up at which rather than receive gifts or flowers from friends and family, you could ask them to make a donation to DWDV instead?

We are deeply appreciative of the amazing work done by all our volunteers, but we also rely on the generosity of donors and other benefactors to help us support the right to individual end-of-life choices through voluntary assisted dying, advocate for improvements to current laws and provide support and education for individuals, organisations and communities.

You can do so through our secure online form here: <https://www.dwdv.org.au/donate>
(All online donations are processed securely using Stripe.)

Alternatively, contact our office for details to make a payment by direct bank transfer or cheque.

We are a Deductible Recipient Charity, so all donations over \$2 are tax deductible.