



ANMF (Vic Branch) Policy

Voluntary assisted dying

The Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2017 came into effect in Victoria on 19 June 2019, making voluntary assisted dying legal in Victoria. At all times registered nurses, enrolled nurses and registered midwives are obliged by both the law and their professional codes of practice and ethics, to practice within the law.

Internationally, voluntary assisted dying is now law in a number of countries around the world including some American states, such as Washington and Oregon, where the legislation has been in place for 20 years, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, Canada and Switzerland, to ensure patient choice free from improper influence and to provide legal certainty for health practitioners when assisting with voluntary assisted dying.

The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (Victorian Branch) [ANMF (Vic Branch)] maintains all nurses/midwives need to be reliably informed about, and have a sound understanding of, the possible ramifications for the profession and practice of nursing and midwifery.

The ANMF (Vic Branch) membership comes from diverse cultural, religious, and ethnic backgrounds, and holds a range of ethical views on voluntary assisted dying. We support an approach to voluntary assisted dying informed by the individuals' own moral and ethical dimensions of respect for self-determination; concern for quality of life; and compassion for those who suffer.

It is the policy of the ANMF (Vic Branch) that:

1. The ANMF (Vic Branch) has a responsibility to provide information for nurses and midwives on ethical/legal/clinical/cultural issues with respect to the practice of voluntary assisted dying.
2. The ANMF (Vic Branch) supports legislative reform that enables persons who meet the criteria to choose to die with dignity in a manner acceptable to them; and not be compelled to suffer beyond their wishes.
3. The ANMF (Vic Branch) supports the right of patients to high quality palliative care, but also recognises there are some circumstances in which palliative care cannot alleviate all pain and suffering.
4. As voluntary assisted dying can have ethical, legal and clinical practice implications for all health professionals, the role of nurses and midwives must be clearly prescribed and be within the boundaries of acceptable nursing/midwifery practice, including ethical, conduct and practice standards for registered nurses, registered midwives, enrolled nurses and nurse practitioners.
5. The ANMF (Vic Branch) supports voluntary assisted dying legislation.

6. The Department of Health provides a range of materials and specific information around voluntary assisted dying for health practitioners. This includes what nurses/midwives should do if they are asked about voluntary assisted dying. To access the most current information ANMF provides the following hyperlinks:

<https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/about/publications/policiesandguidelines/vad-information-for-nurses>

<https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/hospitals-and-health-services/patient-care/end-of-life-care/voluntary-assisted-dying>