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**To:** [LA VAD](#)  
**Subject:** Submission for VAD - Nannette Helder  
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Hello,

I am writing in support of VAD in NT. My Mum , Nannette Helder, was diagnosed with an aggressive cancer in late January 2021, cancer of unknown primary which spread quickly throughout her abdomen. She passed away on 11 April 2021. She was originally from the Netherlands where VAD is available, and her aunt choose to die with dignity after a terminal cancer diagnosis a few years before my Mum's diagnosis. Ten days before my Mum died she asked me to type up her thoughts about VAD. She desperately wanted to go on her terms, not wait for her body to be completely destroyed. It was awful watching her fade away to nothing after being a very fit, healthy and happy 58 year old. The only thing we felt we could do was to request the nurses to give her more morphine. She did not get to die with dignity. Her contribution to the NT as the NT's first licenced female surveyor was significant and there is now an overpass on the Stuart Highway, 10km north of Katherine, named in her honour. She should have been allowed to go on her own terms. At Mum's request, we had a petition at her funeral in support of legalising VAD in the NT.

These were her thoughts:

### **Mum's view on the right to die. 01/04/2021**

Palliative care seemed a reasonable alternative to euthanasia, not as if there was a choice. Palliative care sounded like it could be the closest thing to a natural death. What is a good death anyway? I think it is one where you still feel somewhat in charge, relatively pain free, and relatively short, with maximum dignity and minimal suffering. Supposedly morphine takes away the suffering. This week I cannot really eat anything, I can hardly walk, I can hardly talk, I can hardly read, I cannot think clearly, I consider I am suffering. The pain is more or less under control, but I have no control. My body will hang in there for a few more weeks. My mind is ready to go, my body is not allowed to go. I am not on medication, only pain killers. There is a very aggressive cancer in my body, it has now been let loose after chemo stopped, because it was spreading. It seems an acceptable thing to do in the medical system to let a cancer spread and spread and spread so it attacks vital organs. Slow deterioration is the result. There is considerable loss of dignity and I'm suffering. There are more weeks to go. Weeks. Not days. Weeks. It will keep going downhill. My nearest and dearest have to watch this. Why? The fluid in my abdomen is building up again, it will add another 5L, as in 5kg, to my body, my already very fragile body. If I were a dog, my caring owner would have put me down. But I am a human being in a so-called civilised society, life above all.

I'm very happy to be contacted for any further information.

I hope we can see VAD legalised in the Territory and help give people like my Mum an option to die with dignity.

Thank you,  
Zoe Knight

