

Submission to the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee Inquiry into Voluntary Assisted Dying in the Northern Territory

August 2025

Dementia Australia welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee's Inquiry into Voluntary Assisted Dying (VAD) in the Northern Territory.

Dementia is one of the largest health and social challenges facing Australia and the world. In 2025, it is estimated there are 433,300 people living with all forms of dementia in Australia.¹ This number will continue to grow to an estimated 812,500 by 2054. In the NT it is estimated there are 1,800 people living with all forms of dementia in 2025.² This figure is projected to increase to an estimated 3,600 by 2054.³

As the peak advocacy body for people impacted by dementia, Dementia Australia reflects the diversity of opinion amongst people impacted by dementia with respect to the issue of VAD and advocates for a greater engagement with people impacted by dementia to understand how to best empower them to make decisions about their life and death.

We commend the Expert Advisory Panel's 2024 final report for its comprehensive consideration of the complexities surrounding dementia and access to VAD. In particular, we acknowledge the Panel's exploration of the limitations of current VAD legislation for people with dementia, the implications of progressive cognitive decline on decision-making capacity, and the need for future national discussion on dementia-inclusive VAD framework.

Dementia is a progressive, life-limiting condition, and while some people with dementia retain decision-making capacity for extended periods, others may experience more rapid decline. Dementia Australia supports every person's right to

¹ Dementia Australia (2023) Dementia Prevalence Data 2024-2054, commissioned research undertaken by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

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make informed decisions about their care, including end-of-life options, while also emphasising the need for safeguards to protect against coercion or misuse.

We encourage the Committee to discuss the issues raised by VAD with people living with dementia directly and to consider the needs of people living with dementia to ensure that any future VAD legislation in the NT is inclusive, ethical, and respectful of individual rights and autonomy.

Dementia Australia welcomes the opportunity to remain engaged in the VAD legislation process.