Voluntary Assisted Dying Policy

iMH Hospitals in the Australian Capital Territory

This policy outlines how iMH Deakin Private Hospital will comply with the requirements of the Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2024 (ACT) (the Act) and the Voluntary Assisted Dying Regulation 2025 (ACT) (the Regulation), and ensure that patients are supported with compassion, respect and dignity when seeking information about access to voluntary assisted dying (VAD).

This Policy applies to iMH Deakin Private Hospital which operates in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) and to all staff, accredited health practitioners, contractors, students and volunteers.

iMH Deakin Private Hospital recognises the legal right of eligible people in the ACT to choose VAD as an end-of-life option in accordance with the Act.

iMH Deakin Private Hospital will provide high-quality, compassionate care to all patients, regardless of whether they are considering or accessing VAD. Our hospital treats all patients, carers and staff with dignity and respect, in accordance with the Human Rights Act 2004 (ACT), recognising the diversity of values, beliefs and cultural perspectives within the community.

iMH Deakin Private Hospital responds openly, sensitively and respectfully to all patients and residents who express a wish to explore or consider VAD.

Provision of VAD services

iMH Deakin Private Hospital does not provide VAD services. Staff will not initiate, prescribe, administer or otherwise participate in any part of the VAD process.

iMH Deakin Private Hospital will, however, comply with its obligations under the Act to allow reasonable access for residents and patients who wish to seek information about or access VAD services.

iMH Deakin Private Hospital will not block or impede a patient or resident from accessing VAD.

Providing information about VAD

When a patient or a resident requests information about VAD, iMH Deakin Private Hospital will:

- Provide, as soon as practicable and within two (2) business days, the written contact details of the Voluntary Assisted Dying Care Navigator Service (VAD CNS), in accordance with s 107 of the Act;
- Record the request in accordance with hospital policies and procedures, but, in particular, in accordance with Privacy Policy; and
- Offer the individual privacy and treat the individual with respect and compassion when making or discussing their request;

Access for Authorised VAD Practitioners and VAD-Related Visitors

iMH Deakin Private Hospital will allow reasonable access to Authorised VAD Practitioners and VAD-Related Visitors to provide information or access to VAD to a patient or resident who requests it, in accordance with s 104 of the Act.

Obligation to consider and facilitate transfer of individual who wants access to VAD

If the Authorised VAD Practitioner or VAD-Related Visitors cannot visit the patient or resident on site, iMH Deakin Private Hospital will facilitate a transfer to and from another suitable place where VAD steps can occur, consistent with s 105 of the Act.

When considering whether a transfer is reasonable, iMH Deakin Private Hospital will consider:

- The risk of the person losing decision-making capacity during the transfer;
- Any risk of undue delay or prolongation of suffering;
- The availability of an appropriate receiving facility; and
- Potential cost or logistical implications for the individual or their carers.

The decision to approve or deem a transfer unreasonable will be made by the Deciding Practitioner in consultation with the individual and facility management. All transfer decisions and related correspondence shall be documented.

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Further access where transfer is unreasonable

If the Deciding Practitioner determines that a transfer is unreasonable, iMH Deakin Private Hospital will allow Authorised VAD Practitioners and VAD-Related Visitors reasonable access to the patient or resident within the facility, as required by s 105 and s 106 of the Act.

Continued care

iMH Deakin Private Hospital will not withdraw, reduce or refuse to provide care to any patient or resident who is considering or accessing VAD.

The hospital will continue to provide the same level of care to patients, consistent with the individual's needs.

Conscientious objection

iMH Deakin Private Hospital acknowledges that individual staff members may conscientiously object to involvement in VAD.

A staff member who holds a conscientious objection must:

- Promptly inform their immediate manager; and
- Provide the contact details of the VAD CN to the patient requesting information.

iMH Deakin Private Hospital will ensure that the staff member's objection is respected while ensuring continuity of care and compliance with statutory obligations.

Privacy and confidentiality

iMH Deakin Private Hospital will manage all information relating to VAD in accordance with the Act, the Health Records (Privacy and Access) Act 1997 (ACT), the Privacy Act 1988 (Cth), and our Privacy Policy.

Private spaces will be provided, where possible, for discussions concerning a patient seeking VAD.

People at the heart of everything we do.

Support and wellbeing

iMH Deakin Private Hospital will make available appropriate support for patients, r, families and staff affected by the VAD process, including:

- Access to pastoral and spiritual care;
- Counselling and Employee Assistance Programs (EAP); and
- Bereavement support where available.

Training

iMH Deakin Private Hospital will ensure all staff receive appropriate training on:

- The requirements of this Policy, the Act and the Regulation;
- Procedures for responding to requests for information or access; and
- Privacy and Confidentiality obligations.

Accessibility of this policy

This Policy is available:

1. On iMH Deakin Private Hospitals website; and
2. In printed form at the reception and admission areas on request.

The policy will be provided to any person upon request within two (2) business days, in accordance with s 108 of the Act.

Contact information for VAD enquiries

The VAD CNS is operated by Canberra Health Services.

For further information about VAD, individuals can contact:

ACT Voluntary Assisted Dying Care Navigator Service
Email: VAD.carenavigators@act.gov.au
Phone: 5124 1888
This service is available Monday to Friday 8:30am to 5.00pm (excluding public holidays)