

# Voluntary assisted dying

Karen MacKellar  
VAD CNC



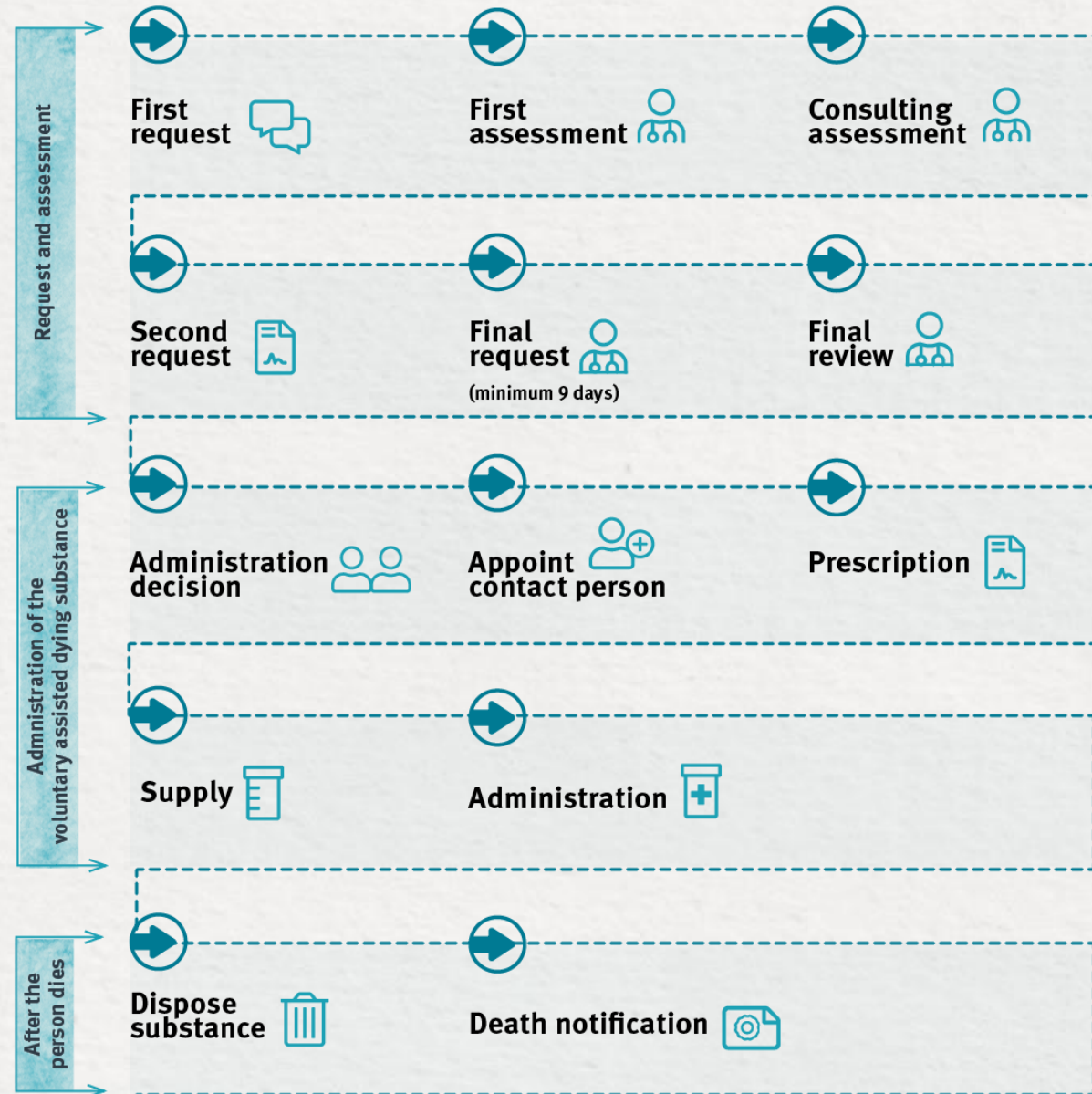
**Voluntary assisted dying gives people who are suffering and dying, and who meet eligibility criteria, the option of requesting medical assistance to end their lives.**

**It became available to eligible Queenslanders from 1 January 2023.**

# Eligibility criteria

1. Have an **eligible condition**:
  - is advanced, progressive and will cause death, and
  - is expected to cause death within 12 months, and
  - is causing suffering that the person considers to be intolerable
2. Have **decision-making capacity**
3. Be **acting voluntarily and without coercion**
4. Be at least **18 years** of age
5. Fulfil **residency and citizenship requirements**

# Overview of the process



# Authorised VAD practitioners

Role	Functions	Who can act in this role
<b>Coordinating practitioner</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Coordinates the voluntary assisted dying process</li><li>• Primary voluntary assisted dying contact for the person</li><li>• Conducts eligibility assessment</li><li>• Prescribes the voluntary assisted dying substance</li><li>• As a default, acts as administering practitioner (if practitioner administration)</li></ul>	Eligible <b>medical practitioner</b> who has completed mandatory training and been endorsed as an authorised voluntary assisted dying practitioner
<b>Consulting practitioner</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Conducts eligibility assessment</li></ul>	Eligible <b>medical practitioner</b> who has completed mandatory training and been endorsed as an authorised voluntary assisted dying practitioner
<b>Administering practitioner</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Only involved in practitioner administration (not self-administration)</li><li>• Administers the voluntary assisted dying substance</li><li>• Disposes of any unused or remaining voluntary assisted dying substance</li></ul>	By default, this will be the coordinating practitioner, but the role can be transferred to another eligible <b>medical practitioner, nurse practitioner, or registered nurse</b> who has completed mandatory training and been endorsed as an authorised voluntary assisted dying practitioner

# Role of healthcare workers

		Medical practitioner	Nurse practitioner	Registered nurse	Other registered health practitioner	Other healthcare workers
Authorised VAD practitioners	Act as the <b>coordinating practitioner</b> (if eligible, verified, completed training)	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗
	Act as the <b>consulting practitioner</b> (if eligible, verified, completed training)	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗
	Act as the <b>administering practitioner</b> (if eligible, verified, completed training)	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
	<b>Initiate a conversation</b> about VAD in the course of informing about all treatment and end of life options	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗
	<b>Provide information</b> about VAD to a person who has <b>requested it</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Accept referral to determine whether the person has an eligible <b>diagnosis, prognosis</b> , is <b>suffering intolerably</b> , or has <b>decision-making capacity</b> in relation to VAD	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
	Accept referral to determine whether the person is <b>acting voluntarily and without coercion</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Continue to <b>provide care</b> to a person and their family, knowing they are accessing VAD	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

## Conscientious objection

All healthcare workers can conscientiously object to participating in any stage of the VAD process. However, registered health practitioners and speech pathologists have specific obligations under the Act. They must inform the person other health practitioners, health service providers or services may be able to assist and give the person:

- information about a health practitioner/provider/service they believe is likely to be able to assist; or
- the name and contact details of the Queensland Voluntary Assisted Dying Support Service (QVAD-Support).

## Healthcare worker participation

Although most healthcare workers will not participate directly in the process, they may provide care and support for patients who choose to access VAD.

Healthcare workers must only undertake tasks relating to VAD if they have the appropriate skills and training. Check with your organisation or professional body for any specific guidance.

# Conscientious objection

## Registered health practitioners

- Have the right to refuse to participate in any stage of the voluntary assisted dying process
- If refusing to participate because of a conscientious objection, they must:
  - Immediately inform the patient of their refusal to participate and, for a medical practitioner who refuses a first request, the reason for their refusal
  - Advise of another health practitioner or health service who they believe is likely to be able to assist, such as QVAD-Support

## Speech pathologists

- Have the right to refuse to participate in any stage of the voluntary assisted dying process
- If refusing to participate because of a conscientious objection, they must:
  - Inform their employer or patient of their conscientious objection
  - Advise of another speech pathologist or speech pathology service who they believe is likely to be able to assist
  - Not intentionally prevent someone's access to speech pathology services

## All healthcare workers

- Can conscientiously object to participating in any stage of the VAD process
- Only registered health practitioners and speech pathologists are required to provide information to the patient; however, it is good clinical practice to:
  - Inform their employer and the patient of their objection
  - Ensure the patient's access to treatment or care is not impeded by providing information to enable them to obtain services elsewhere

# Registered health practitioner obligations

All registered health practitioners who refuse to participate in any part of the process due to conscientious objection must:

- **inform the person** that other healthcare workers, health service providers or services may be able to assist the person
- **provide information** about where the person can get further information or support, such as a colleague or the details of **QVAD-Support**
- **respect** their patient's autonomy, beliefs, values, and the choices they make about end-of-life care, including voluntary assisted dying and treatment decisions
- **continue to support** a person and be involved in their care.

A person's access to care and treatment must not change or be compromised due to their decision to ask questions about or access voluntary assisted dying

# The first request

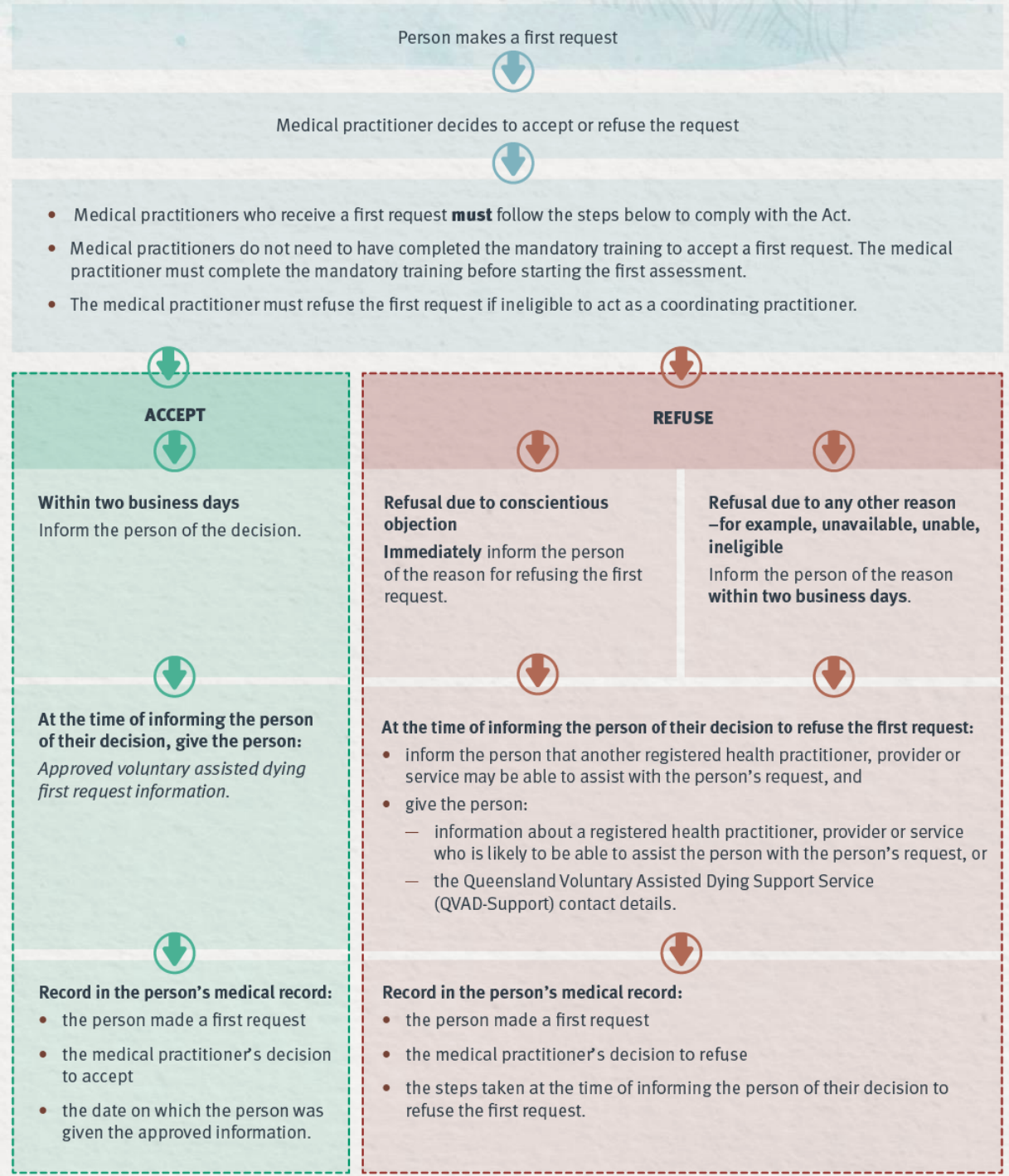
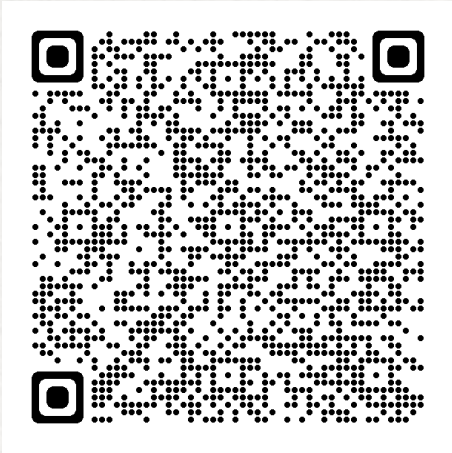
- A first request for voluntary assisted dying must be:
  - a **clear and unambiguous request for assistance to die** through access to voluntary assisted dying
  - **made by the person** and not by another person on their behalf
  - made to a **medical practitioner** (in-person or telehealth).

*"I want to access voluntary assisted dying."*

*"I would like you to help me die. How can I access voluntary assisted dying?"*

*"I want euthanasia. Can you help me?"*

# Responding to first requests: Process for medical practitioners



# End of life Options

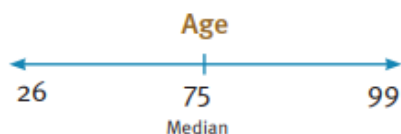
- There are many options for patients at end of life
  - Palliative Care
  - Palliative therapies i.e. chemotherapy, radiotherapy
  - Supportive Care i.e. transfusions, dialysis
  - Voluntary assisted dying
- End of life options are not mutually exclusive
- Patients can, and should, be allowed to access all options they feel would benefit them

# Voluntary assisted dying in Queensland

## 1 January to 31 March 2025 – Quarterly Report

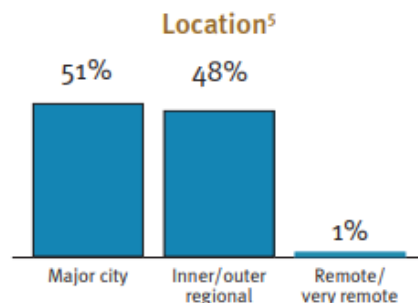


### Demographics of people who received a first assessment for voluntary assisted dying (N=510)



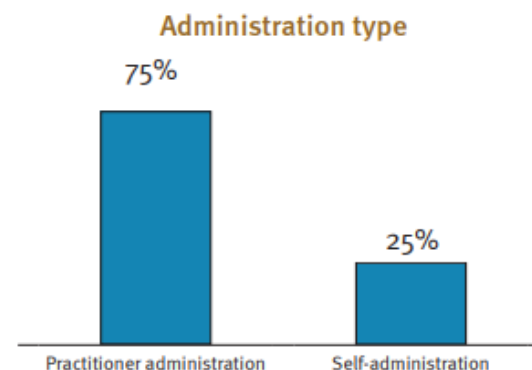
**Gender**  
55% male, 45% female

**Palliative care access<sup>6</sup>**  
75%

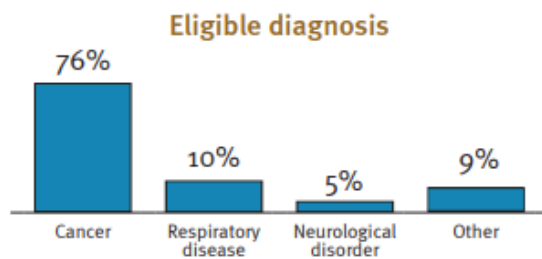


**Assessed as ineligible<sup>7</sup>**  
28

### Death from administration of a voluntary assisted dying substance (N=273)



### People assessed as eligible for voluntary assisted dying (N=446)



**Withdrew from process<sup>8</sup>**  
1

### Authorised practitioners

  
**Authorised practitioners<sup>9</sup>**  
447

Medical practitioners: 217  
Nurse practitioners: 24  
Registered nurses: 206



# HOW TO REFER TO VAD

## DDHHS VAD Service:

Operates Monday – Friday 07:00 -15:30 excluding PH

[DDHHS-VAD@health.qld.gov.au](mailto:DDHHS-VAD@health.qld.gov.au)

VAD CNC: 0499 797 056

Health Pathways, Medical, objects, phone, email, self-referral form patients

OR call or email QVAD support between 8.30am and 4pm

A person can also self refer through QVAD support

[QVADsupport@health.qld.gov.au](mailto:QVADsupport@health.qld.gov.au)

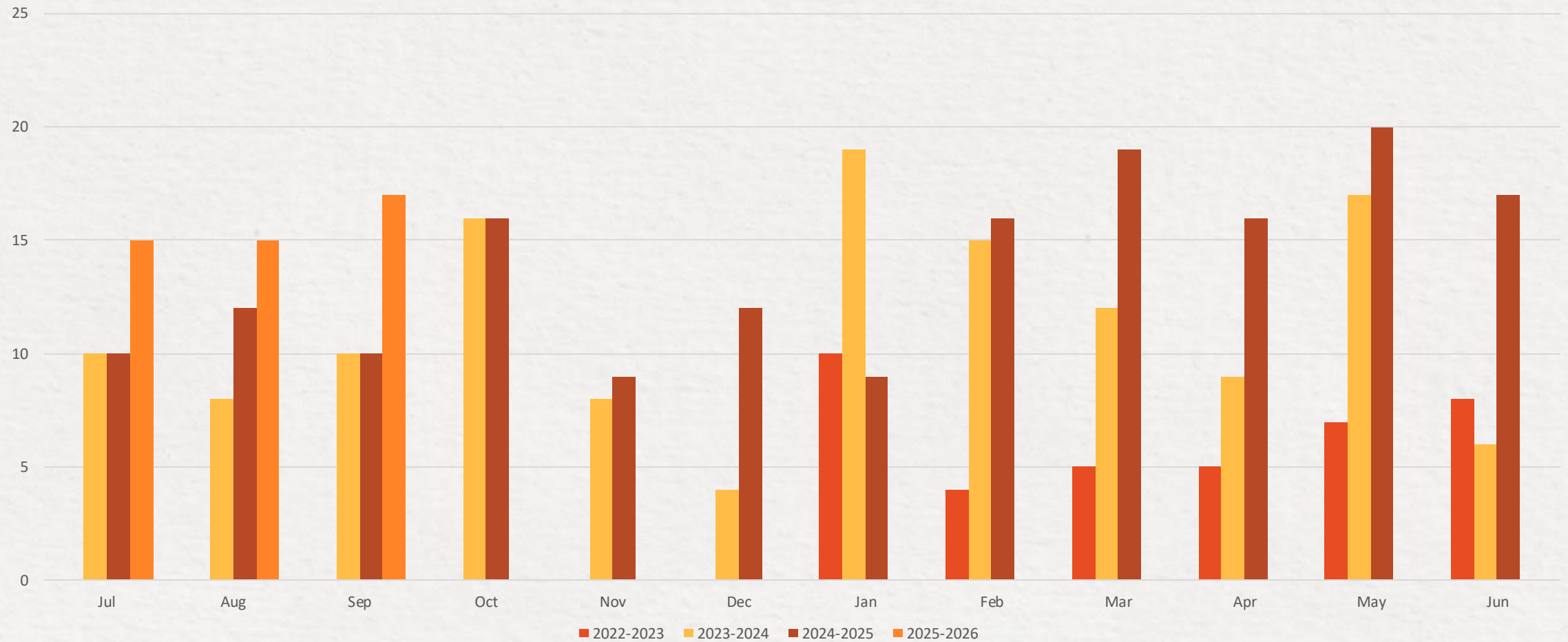
1800 431 371

# Darling Downs Health: Voluntary Assisted Dying Update

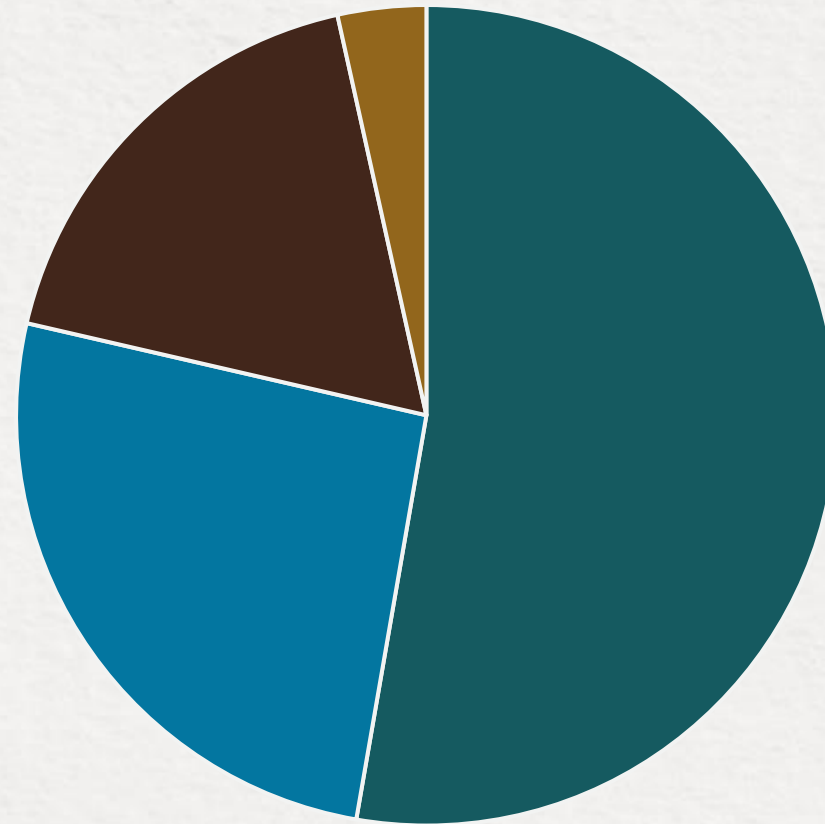
Karen MacKellar  
Voluntary Assisted Dying CNC



# 386 Referrals Jan 2023 – Sep 2025

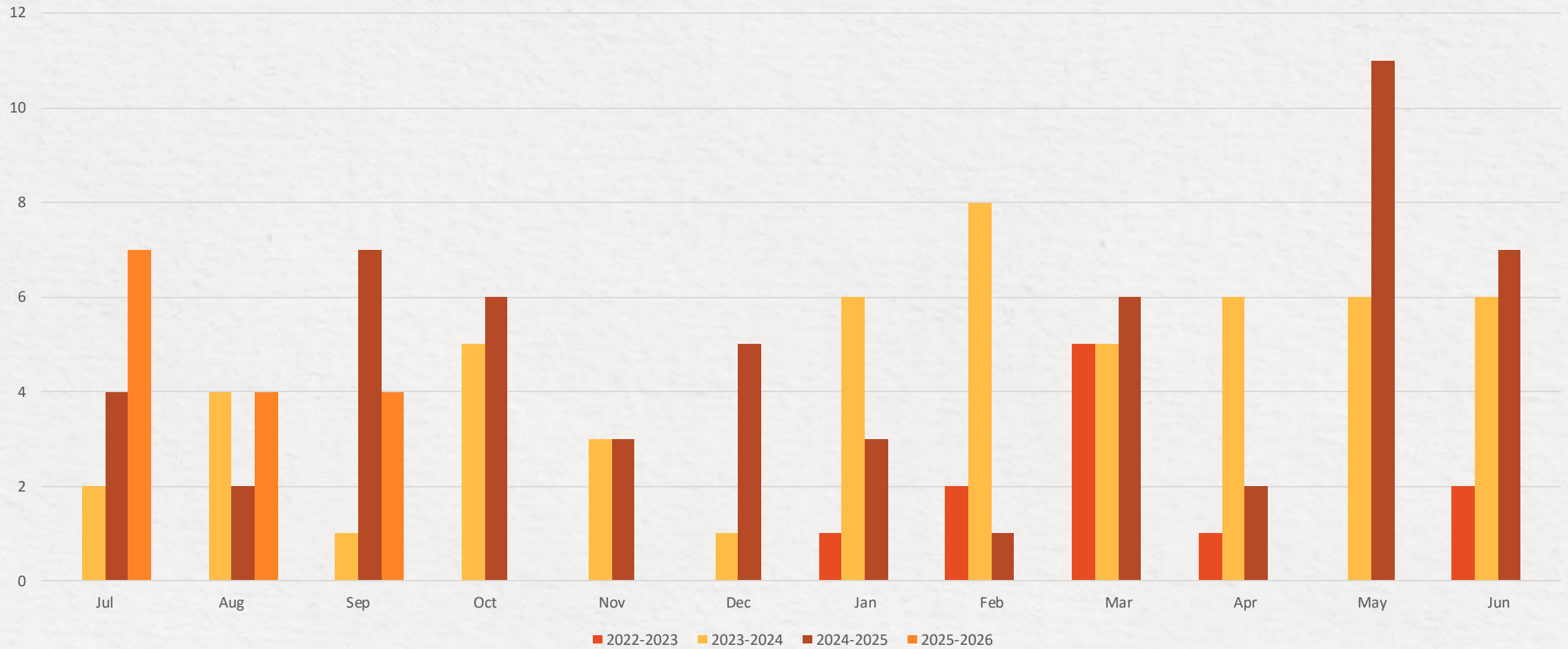


# Spread of referrals across DDH

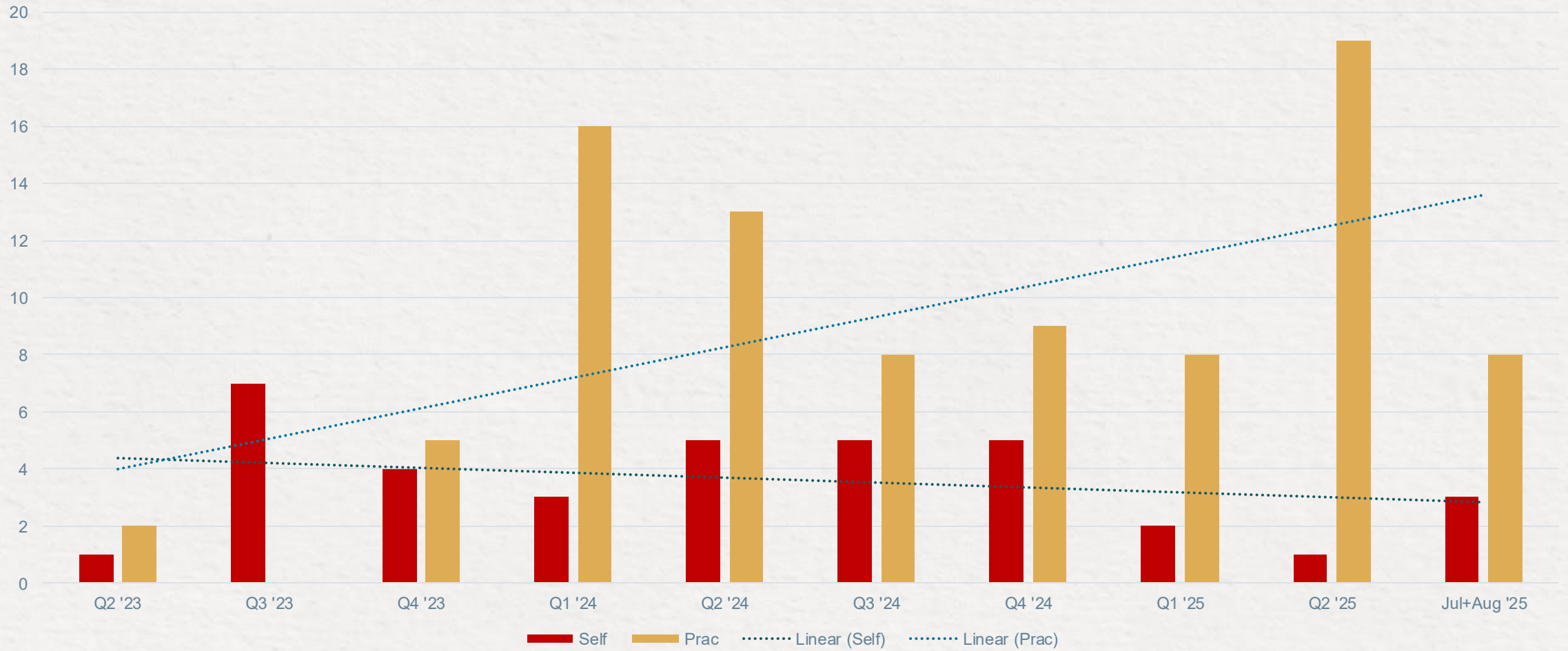


■ Toowoomba 52%    ■ Southern Downs 26%  
■ South Burnett 18%    ■ Western Downs 4%

# 138 VAD Deaths Jan 2023 – Sep 2025



# Route of administration



# DDH VAD Service

- Staffing
  - 1.0FTE CNC
  - 2 x 0.2FTE SMO (Tuesday and Thursday)
- Hours of operation
  - Mon-Fri 07:00-15:30 (excluding PH)
- Email
  - [DDHHS-VAD@health.qld.gov.au](mailto:DDHHS-VAD@health.qld.gov.au)
- Telephone
  - 0499 797 056
- Intranet
  - [Voluntary Assisted Dying \(VAD\) | Darling Downs Health](#)