

CONFERENCE

Under what circumstances should Voluntary Assisted Dying be permitted?

Dates: 19 & 20 Feb 2026

Venue: The Pavilion, The Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture

15 Blackall Street (cnr King's Avenue), BARTON ACT 2600

Charles Sturt University will host a conference in Canberra as part of an ARC-funded project on "The Ethics of Voluntary Assisted Dying: Promoting Constructive Debate"

'Voluntary Assisted Dying' (VAD) legislation permits physicians to prescribe lethal substances to eligible patients, enabling those patients to end their lives at a time of their choosing. VAD is available in a growing number of jurisdictions, for example, Belgium, Canada, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, all six Australian States. This conference addresses a core normative question: Under what circumstances should Voluntary Assisted Dying be permitted? Some argue that anyone who autonomously expresses a wish to end their own life ought to be entitled to the assistance of a trained healthcare provider. Others argue that healthcare providers should never be permitted to assist patients who wish to commit suicide. Between these two poles there is much middle ground to be staked out and a robust debate to be had.

Speakers

Madeleine Archer (Australian Centre for Health Law Research, Queensland University of Technology)

Steve Clarke (Charles Sturt University; University of Oxford)

Daniel Fleming (Australian Catholic University; St Vincents Health Australia)

Casey Haining (Australian Centre for Health Law Research, Queensland University of Technology)

Nathan Higgins (Macquarie University)

Tessa Holzman (Charles Sturt University)

Jeanette Kennett (Macquarie University)

David Kissane (Monash University; University of Notre Dame; Monash and Cabrini Health Services)

Justin Oakley (Monash Bioethics Centre, Monash University)

Susan Pennings (Australian Catholic University)

Julian Savulescu (National University of Singapore)

Xavier Symons (Australian Catholic University; Harvard University)

Participation is free but numbers are strictly limited so registration is essential. To register, email Tessa Holzman: tholzman@csu.edu.au

Conference Organisers: Steve Clarke and Tessa Holzman

The conference is supported by Australian Research Council Discovery Grant DP240102614

Conference program

DAY 1

TIME	PAPER	SPEAKER
10.00-10.10	Opening Welcome	
10.10-11.10	What Do People Believe about End-of-Life Decisions?	Jeanette Kennett & Nathan Higgins
11.10-11.30	Morning tea	
11.30-12.30	Public Attitudes to Expanded Assisted Dying: An Ethical Analysis	Julian Savulescu
12.30-13.40	Lunch	
13.40-14.40	Belgian and Australian Eligibility Models: A Comparative Analysis and Implications for Australian Law Reform	Madeleine Archer
14.40-15.40	Voluntary Assisted Dying and Dementia in Australia: Acceptability and Complexities	Casey Haining
15.40-16.00	Afternoon tea	
16.00-17.00	Completed Life: Dying as a Transformative Experience	Steve Clarke & Tessa Holzman

DAY 2

TIME	PAPER	SPEAKER
9.30-10.30	Access to Voluntary Assisted Dying: Is the Professional Role Argument Still Relevant?	Justin Oakley
10.30-10.50	Morning tea	
10.50-11.50	Moral Distress in End-of-Life Care: What Can We Learn from Veterinarians?	Tessa Holzman
11.50-12.50	Impact of Demoralization on Decision-Making in End-of-Life Care	David Kissane
12.50-13.50	Lunch	
13.50-14.50	Autonomy and Justice in VAD Decisions	Daniel Fleming
14.50-15.50	VAD, Autonomy, and Social Injustice	Xavier Symons & Susan Pennings
15.50-16.10	Afternoon tea	
16.10-17.30	Roundtable discussion	Led by Jeanette Kennett, Julian Savulescu, and Xavier Symons

