

ASSISTED DYING IN NEW ZEALAND HOW WE WILL PROVIDE OUR SERVICES ALONGSIDE THE END OF LIFE CHOICE ACT

1 November 2021

Life is a journey. And from first to last, all decisions along that journey are an individual's to make. For Hospice Waikato patients, this includes the choice to live as fully and comfortably as possible with our support, or to bring life to a close alongside an approved assisted dying service provider.

New Zealand gives you that choice

From 7 November 2021, the End of Life Choice Act becomes legislation, meaning people diagnosed with a terminal illness can ask for approved medical assistance to end their lives. We realise this raises questions as to how Hospice Waikato will work alongside the act.

Fundamentally, Hospice Waikato exists to help patients live the remainder of their lives to the best of their ability. "Fully and comfortably" is our life-affirming purpose. With that in mind, here's how we will support a patient if they decide to look into assisted dying.

The most important thing to clarify is that our service delivery will not change. We will continue to provide the best possible care for our patients and their families/whānau, irrespective of the patient's decision regarding assisted dying.

Approved providers only

Assisted dying intervention in New Zealand can only be carried out by providers approved by the New Zealand Ministry of Health. Hospice Waikato has chosen not to become an approved provider as we believe assisted dying lies outside the purposes of palliative care.

Because we have chosen not to be an approved provider, interventions are not carried out in our in-patient unit. Additionally, Hospice Waikato staff cannot administer nor participate in assisted dying intervention.

We're here to connect

Hospice Waikato can connect patients with a provider to have an informed conversation. Patients can then get the information they need to fully understand the service and decide if it's right for them. They can also be assessed for eligibility.

For patients in our in-patient unit, approved providers can visit them for these discussions. Patients will have all the comfort and privacy they need for these important conversations.

Hospice Waikato care throughout

Those who choose to discuss assisted dying with an approved provider, or chooses the intervention, will remain a hospice patient. This gives them the freedom to change their minds up until the last moment. In the event that a change does occur, Hospice Waikato will be there to continue delivering palliative care.

We will help move patients

Patients in our in-patient unit can choose assisted dying intervention at their preferred location, such as their home. Hospice Waikato will help arrange for the patient to move safely and in comfort, and they remain a Hospice Waikato patient throughout the transition. Once the patient is settled, our team members will leave the premises, and the approved assisted dying service provider will take responsibility for patient care.

Support for family and whānau

At Hospice Waikato, part of our service to patients is bereavement support for their family and whānau. If a patient chooses assisted dying intervention, our support remains. Whether a patient has included their family/whānau in the assisted dying decision or not, family members can continue accessing Hospice Waikato's bereavement support.

The End of Life Services Act - the facts

Hospice Waikato cannot and does not assess a patient's eligibility to access assisted dying services. The legislation, however, does outline that individuals must:

- be 18 years or over
- be a New Zealand citizen or permanent resident
- have an illness that's likely to end life within six months
- be in an advanced state of irreversible decline in physical health
- have unbearable suffering that can't be relieved in a way the person finds tolerable
- be able to make an informed decision about assisted dying. That means they understand information about assisted dying, can remember it, weigh it up, and communicate it.

Additionally, the Act states that a person who chooses to receive assisted dying intervention does not have to discuss their decision with their friends and family.

To start a conversation

To start a conversation with a provider, phone the Support and Consultation for End of Life in New Zealand (SCENZ) service on 0800 223 852.