

Special Interest Group – Research

Terms of Reference

Approved by: VADANZ Board

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Version: 1.0

1. Background

The VADANZ Research Special Interest Group (Research SIG) is an advisory and member-engagement group of VADANZ. It provides a forum for VADANZ members with an interest in VAD research to exchange knowledge, identify research priorities and opportunities to collaborate with oversight and reporting to the VADANZ Board.

2. Purpose

The purpose of the Research SIG is to provide a forum to advance research about voluntary assisted dying, with a focus on strengthening the evidence base for safe, accessible and person-centred VAD practice, policy and service delivery across Australia and New Zealand.

The Research SIG will bring together members of VADANZ to:

- identify important gaps in VAD evidence;
- determine and regularly review VADANZ's research priorities;
- encourage collaboration between VAD practitioners, researchers and other relevant stakeholders;
- support the translation of research into practice and policy; and
- provide research-related advice to the VADANZ Board.

3. Objectives and activities

The Research SIG may undertake the following activities.

3.1. Research priorities

- Develop a transparent process for identifying VADANZ's research priorities.
- Consult VADANZ members and, where appropriate, other stakeholders about research needs and evidence gaps.
- Recommend a research priorities agenda to the VADANZ Board.
- Review the priorities periodically to reflect changes in practice, legislation, service delivery and the evidence base.



3.2. Research collaboration

- Provide a forum for members to discuss current and proposed VAD research.
- Identify opportunities for multidisciplinary, multi-jurisdictional and trans-Tasman research.
- Connect members with shared research interests.
- Encourage collaboration with universities, health services, professional bodies, consumer organisations and other relevant organisations.
- Establish time-limited working groups for specific projects where required.

3.3. Advice and evidence translation

- Provide advice to the VADANZ Board on emerging research, evidence gaps and research opportunities.
- Support the communication and translation of relevant research for VADANZ members.
- Contribute ideas for research-focused webinars, conference sessions, resources and professional development activities.
- Identify opportunities to improve the quality, consistency and usefulness of VAD data and research.

3.4. Research development

Subject to VADANZ Board approval and available resources, the Research SIG may:

- contribute to the development of research proposals or funding applications;
- advise on VADANZ-commissioned or supported research;
- assist with identifying suitable research partners or investigators; and
- provide feedback on proposed research involving VADANZ members or networks.

4. Scope and limitations

The Research SIG is advisory. It may make recommendations to the VADANZ Board but cannot:

- enter into contracts, funding arrangements or partnerships or commit VADANZ funds or staff resources;
- share confidential, identifiable or sensitive information without appropriate authority;
- make public statements or submissions on behalf of VADANZ without prior approval;
- endorsed a research project unless formal Board approval has been provided.



All research involving human participants must obtain appropriate ethics and governance approvals from a recognised reviewing body. Participation in the Research SIG does not replace those requirements.

5. Membership

Membership of the Research SIG is open to current VADANZ members with an interest in VAD research.

The group should aim to include a mix of:

- VAD practitioners from different professional backgrounds;
- experienced and emerging researchers;
- members working in policy, program delivery, data or service evaluation;
- representatives from Australia and New Zealand;
- members from different jurisdictions and geographic settings; and
- people with relevant consumer, carer or lived-experience perspectives, where appropriate.

External experts may be invited to meetings or activities with the approval of the SIG Chair. External participants are not members of the SIG and do not take part in formal decision-making.

6. Convenor and Deputy Convenor

The Research SIG will have a Chair and, where possible, a Deputy Chair.

The Chair and Deputy Chair must both be current VADANZ members and should have relevant research knowledge or experience.

They will be appointed by the VADANZ Board following an expression-of-interest or nomination process. Appointments will normally be for two years and may be renewed.

The Chair is responsible for:

- convening and chairing meetings;
- developing meeting agendas with members and VADANZ staff;
- supporting inclusive and constructive participation;
- overseeing the group's annual work plan;
- ensuring decisions and actions are recorded;
- communicating recommendations to the VADANZ Board; and
- providing an annual report on the group's activities and outcomes.

The Deputy Chair will support the Chair and act in the role when the Chair is unavailable.

7. Member responsibilities

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Research SIG members are expected to:

- attend and contribute to meetings;
- review relevant papers before meetings;
- contribute their knowledge and experience constructively;
- undertake agreed actions within reasonable timeframes;
- declare actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest;
- maintain confidentiality where required;
- respect differing professional, research and personal perspectives; and
- act consistently with VADANZ's purpose, policies and values.

Membership is voluntary and members will not receive payment for their participation.

8. Meetings

The Research SIG will meet at least three times each year, primarily by videoconference.

Additional meetings may be held when required for specific projects or activities.

Meeting agendas and papers should generally be circulated before each meeting. A brief record of decisions, recommendations and actions will be maintained and provided to VADANZ.

The Chair may invite guests to attend all or part of a meeting where their expertise is relevant.

9. Decision-making

The Research SIG will aim to make decisions by consensus.

Where consensus cannot be reached, the Chair may call a vote. Each VADANZ member of the SIG has one vote. A simple majority of members present will determine the outcome.

A quorum will be the Chair or Deputy Chair and at least three other SIG members.

Minor operational decisions may be made between meetings by email or another agreed communication method.

All substantive recommendations remain subject to consideration and approval by the VADANZ Board.

10. Conflicts of interest



Members must disclose any actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest relating to a matter being considered by the Research SIG.

The Chair will determine how the conflict should be managed. This may include recording the conflict, limiting the member's participation in discussion, or asking the member not to participate in a decision.

Conflicts relating to the Chair will be managed by the Deputy Chair or a VADANZ Board representative.

11. Confidentiality, privacy and intellectual property

Members must protect information identified as confidential and comply with applicable privacy, research governance and ethical requirements.

Research concepts, unpublished findings, draft proposals and other information shared through the SIG must not be used or disclosed without the permission of the person or organisation that provided them.

Ownership, authorship, use of data and intellectual property must be agreed separately for each research project. Participation in the Research SIG does not, by itself, give a member ownership or authorship rights in a project or publication.

Authorship and acknowledgement should reflect each person's actual contribution and follow accepted research publication standards.

12. Reporting and work plan

The Research SIG will prepare a simple annual work plan identifying:

- priority activities;
- intended outputs;
- responsible members or working groups; and
- expected timeframes.

The Chair will provide the VADANZ Board with:

- updates as requested;
- recommendations requiring Board consideration; and
- an annual summary of meetings, activities, outcomes and emerging issues.

An initial priority for the group will be to develop and recommend the VADANZ research priorities.



13. Administrative and financial support

VADANZ will provide limited administrative support within its available staff capacity. This will likely be limited to providing meeting logistics support. Minute taking, records of agreed actions and board recommendations, and any reports to the board will need to be provided by a member of the SIG.

Any activity requiring funding, staff time, external communications, use of the VADANZ name must be approved in advance by the VADANZ Chair or Board.

Unless otherwise approved, members are responsible for their own costs associated with participation.

14. Review and cessation

These Terms of Reference will be reviewed at least every two years, or earlier if required.

Changes must be approved by the VADANZ Board.

The Board may vary, suspend or dissolve the Research SIG where it is no longer meeting its purpose, has insufficient member participation, or is not operating consistently with these Terms of Reference or VADANZ's objectives.