

Dying *with* Dignity Tasmania (Inc)

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your right to choose
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Victorian Physician assisted Dying Bill rejected

The Victorian Parliament has rejected a bill that would have permitted euthanasia for terminally ill patients. The bill introduced by Greens MP Colleen Hartland was voted down 25 to 13 in a conscience vote in the Upper House.

The Physician Assisted Dying Bill would have allowed terminally ill patients to end their lives with the help of a doctor.

The rejected bill has been sent to an Upper House committee for further consideration.

Ms Hartland says the bill's rejection is a missed opportunity.

"Look, I'm very disappointed, but the people I'm actually more disappointed for are the ones who have rung my office and have urged me on in this and the people in absolutely shocking circumstances, they're the ones I really feel for," she said.

ABC News – 10th September 08

A Bill that would allow doctors to prescribe lethal drinks for terminally ill Victorians was crushed in Parliament

Upper House MPs voted 25 to 13 against the Medical Treatment (Physician Assisted Dying) Bill after Greens MP Colleen Hartland introduced it to the House on June 11.

Two members were absent from the vote.

All parties allowed members a conscience vote on the issue.

Of the four Brumby Government ministers in the Upper House, only Environment Minister Gavin Jennings cast his vote in favour of the legislation.

In total, five Labor, four Liberal, one National MP and all three Upper House Greens MPs voted for the Bill.

Ms Hartland lashed out at the Brumby Government for having blocked the option to reform the Bill through a motion Philip Davis put to the House that it be referred to the legislative committee.

"What I am utterly disappointed by is the Government refusing a conscience vote on referring the matter to the legislative committee," Ms Hartland said.

"MPs complained they did not have enough time for policy and consultation work with the community, yet the Government stopped that happening.

"I am grateful to the 13 MPs who had the courage to vote in favour of the Bill."

The Bill proposed doctors would have been able to prescribe a barbiturate so patients suffering from terminal illness could take their own lives.

According to the Bill, a patient would have needed to find a doctor willing to support them, and a second doctor to sign off on the decision before a prescription for the lethal potion was given.

During debate on the euthanasia legislation, Liberal MP Bernie Finn voiced his concern hospitals would be forever changed if it had passed.

"Hospitals should always be seen as places we go to cure our ills. They should never be seen as places to which we go to be killed," Mr Finn said.

Herald Sun - Nick Higginbottom September 11, 2008

Angelica Flowers – a message to Kevin Rudd

13 Sept 2008

In August 2008, 31 year old cancer sufferer Angelique Flowers recorded her appeal to the Prime Minister of Australia for voluntary euthanasia legislation. See the video clip on: www.youtube.com/v/jdxd_EFDd4s In it she says,

"I don't believe in stoicism. I freely admit to not being a brave soul who grins and bears the pain and soldiers on," she says in the video, filmed during one of her last day trips from her hospice bed.

"I deeply admire people who rise above the adversity and their suffering. But I haven't grown from my illness or become a better person from its torments. All I want after 16 years of painful Crohn's disease and now cancer is to die a pain-free peaceful death.

"Because euthanasia was banned in Australia I am denied this right ...

"We finally have in Kevin Rudd a prime minister who is a person as well as a politician. A man who had the conscience to say sorry to our indigenous people, the integrity to ratify the Kyoto Protocol.

"I beg the Labor Government to continue beating with the heart it has shown and to ensure euthanasia is made legal once again.

"The law wouldn't let a dog suffer the agony I'm going through before an inevitable death. It would be put down. Yet under the law, my life is worth less than a dog's."

Angelique contacted Exit and used YouTube to seek and obtain Nembutal. She was comforted when she finally had the drug and died on Aug 19th of her cancer.



No one is immune from the horrific lottery of dying from a terminal illness

The circumstances surrounding the tragic death of Angelique Flowers highlights the abysmal state of socially responsible politics in Australia. The Netherlands, Belgium, Switzerland and the state of Oregon have successfully implemented voluntary euthanasia or physician assisted suicide laws.

The reason Australia doesn't follow suit is not because of any inherent dangers in properly controlled systems of legal voluntary euthanasia but because of the unrepresentative interference by religion in parliamentary process.

Many politicians, hiding behind a conscience vote continue to reject the informed wishes of the majority, out of a perceived fear of divine or party admonition. Others have succumbed to the contrived assertion of a slippery-slope scenario, a product of an intensely orchestrated mischievous propaganda campaign.

No one is immune from the horrific lottery of dying from a terminal illness in unremitting pain. Is our governance of such a pathetic nature that it will take the threat of electoral defeat to prod parliamentarians into passing humane laws where the choice of deliverance is available to those in desperate need?

David Nicholls (President Atheist Foundation of Australia Inc)

'Who Cares?' National Conversation about the ethics of caring from 6 September to 31 October on www.ethics.org.au

This is a global first research project initiated by Carers NSW, carried out by St James Ethics Centre, and supported by Macquarie Group Foundation. Called 'Who Cares' The Ethics of Caring in a Good Society: national conversation, national action

The research explores what ethical challenges we might, as a society, face to meet the changes in the needs of both the cared for and those who do the caring. The conversation has already engaged a diversity of Australians in 50 focus groups across the country addressing the questions 'What is a good society?' 'What is caring?' 'Who is responsible for caring?' 'What does caring look like in a good society?.'

Data from those groups has informed the online survey prepared by St James Ethics Centre researchers and open to all Australians from 6 September to 31 October. We want everyone to have their say, whatever their age, occupation, religious or political beliefs or wherever they live. We want to hear from people who have never been carers, have never thought about family carers, as well as those who are carers and those who just might be carers some day. And that could be any one of us!

The final report from the national conversation will be used to inform policy makers, legislators and corporates about the challenges ahead as more Australians need care and the pool of available family carers shrinks. It is an opportunity for all Australians to have a say in what they think is fair and just for people needing care and those who care for them.

Please encourage your friends and colleagues to participate. We need a critical mass of people responding to ensure this research reflects what Australians think and what governments, corporates and communities will need to do to respond in the future.

Thanks everyone!

Laraine Toms Churchill Fellow 2000

Euthanasia Bill in the Senate

Greens Senator Bob Brown introduces a new euthanasia Bill aimed at repealing the Commonwealth Euthanasia Laws Act 1997 and thus allowing the Northern Territory and the ACT to make legislation allowing voluntary euthanasia.

Dr Brown's original Bill was introduced in February. A Senate committee reported on this Bill in June with Labor senators saying they would support it with some amendments.

Euthanasia Debate in South Australia

Greens MP Mark Parnell intends to introduce a new euthanasia bill in the next parliament.

Voice for the Silent Majority

From the 2007 Newspoll we learn that 86% of Tasmanians believe that physicians should be able to provide lethal drugs to hopelessly ill patients experiencing unrelievable suffering. For those who like acronyms this is PAD (Physician Assisted Dying) and with such a large proportion in support, how can it be that this body of opinion is so consistently overridden by our elected representatives)?

Many people find it difficult to discuss anything to do with death and dying, particularly if it relates to their own mortality or that of close family or friends. Easier not to raise the subject and risk causing discomfort though most of us, particularly those of advancing years, have no illusions and accept that death is an integral part of life. Unfortunately, keeping such personal views private does nothing to advance debate and keeps us isolated from other like minded individuals; so much so, that it's not uncommon for Dwd or Exit members to be unaware of others who live close by or even in the same street.

It seems unlikely that supporters of VE will ever be as vocal as those that oppose it, but 'hiding the light under a bushel' clearly gets us nowhere. Over the next few months, DwdTas have a number of projects planned to

help raise the profile of end of life issues in the community though ,as an individual, I was recently surprised on several occasions to find how readily some people were to show their interest once given a trigger. In this case it was an old plastic Voluntary Euthanasia Society notice that I'd been carrying around in the car boot. Spotting it while helping me load some timber was enough for a fellow in the hardware store to think I might be a receptive ear and tell me that he'd always been a supporter of the idea. Similarly, while filling petrol, a woman at the garage told me briefly about her father's wish for VE legislation that never came. In both cases, I left them with a DwDTas leaflet, but in neither did I broach the subject.

The old plastic notice is now gone but, encouraged by the interest it brought, I've replaced it with a simple DwDTas sticker. I've never been one for car stickers, but while our politicians continue to override the interests of the majority, it is surely time to put up a hand and be counted.



If you'd like a similar sticker, it can be downloaded and printed from:

www.dwdtas.org.au/downloads/bumper_sticker.jpg

Please contact me if you have difficulties with this (Ph: 62950384 or mike@pangolin.co.nz) and I'll put one in the post. Any improved or alternative designs would also be appreciated.

DwD Library

Over the years we have collected quite a number of books and publications on VE and end of life issues. For the most part they remained in storage but to make better use of the resource we've decided to publish a list of titles and make them more easily available to members. Here is the current list

I Bequeath the Python	Arch-Rowe, E	Exit International, Darwin 2007
Final Exit (3rd ed.)	Humphry, D	Dell Publishing, NY, 2002
The Good Euthanasia Handbook	Humphry, D	Norris Lane Press, USA, 2004
Angels of Death, Exploring the Euthanasia Underground	Magnusson, RS	Melbourne University Press, 2004
Let Me Decide	Molloy, W et al	Penguin Books, 1992
Voluntary Euthanasia and the Common Law	Otowski, M	O.U.P., 1997
A Good Death	Rodney Syme	Melbourne University Press, 2008

Beatrice Bentley has kindly agreed to act as librarian and invites contributions to the collection. To borrow a book contact Beatrice at: 72 Cremorne Ave, Cremorne TAS 7024 or phone:62488366. You'll need to provide postage and agree to return books within 4 weeks.

Book Reviews

A Good Death

Rodney Syme Melbourne University Press \$45.00

"*A Good Death* is Rodney Syme's compassionate and candid account of the many terminally ill people who he has assisted to end their lives. Over the past thirty years Rodney Syme, at first clandestinely and now publicly, has challenged the law on voluntary euthanasia, risking prosecution in doing so. He again risks prosecution for writing this book. *A Good Death* is a moving journey with those who came to him for help. It is also a doctor's personal story about the moral dilemmas and ethical choices he faces working with the grey areas of the law."

(Rodney's book is available to members at \$32.95 inc postage.
Send your order to Mike Harris, PO Box 51, Cygnet, Tasmania 7112)

Funeral Rites: What the Australian 'death care' industry doesn't want you to know

Robert Larkins Viking www.penguin.com.au \$32.95

Covering many aspects of funerals in Australia, this book ranges from the commencement of cremations here (no prizes for guessing which church opposed this), through coffins, caskets (do you know the difference?) embalming, viewing the body, even diagrams for making the coffin yourself and much more. Details of bush burials, bequeathing your body to universities for science, burial on private land and the legal side of death certificates is all covered in this book. No State has any laws against you transporting the body and making your own arrangements.

Sheila Howe

Sheila's last hurrah!

This time we say farewell to Sheila Howe who had edited the newsletter for about ten years. Sheila says that she has gradually been easing herself away from the active side of Dying with Dignity for a while, because it is time for younger members to be more active in the organisation which she is delighted to see is now happening. She says at 83 she is slow and feisty and we are probably well rid of her. She's enjoyed her time with DwD immensely and she will be there with background knowledge if this is necessary, and maybe she will still have something to contribute occasionally.

Sheila's will be greatly missed and although she has given us more than ample warning, the job of newsletter editor is still vacant. As you can see from this edition, great computer skills are not required, though use of email would certainly make the job simpler. Please get in touch with mike@pangolin.co.nz if you'd like to give it a try.

DwD Barbecue – a date for your diary

Sunday 15th February is the date for our next barbecue which will again be at the Waterworks reserve in Hobart. Look out for more details in the next newsletter.

*We respect the wishes of those who want to live for as long as possible.
We work for those who want the right to be allowed to die at a time of their choosing, when they are hopelessly ill and may be in pain.
We live in a democracy*

