

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

Terminal sedation

"Terminal sedation", more clinically referred to as "palliative sedation", is a legally sanctioned last resort in palliative treatment. It involves inducing and maintaining unconsciousness in a terminally ill patient until the patient dies, and is often accompanied by withholding or withdrawing medical feeding and hydration.

For example, if, in my advanced cancer, I experience intolerable pain, delirium, dyspnea or distress, to alleviate these unmanageable symptoms, I can let my physician sedate me into unconsciousness until I die.

In its landmark 1997 case against physician-assisted suicide, the (US) Supreme Court endorsed terminal sedation. It was noted that patients in intolerable pain and suffering could always resort to 'sedation which can end in a coma'. Though legal, terminal sedation is still controversial. Supporters regard it as an indispensable component in palliative care; critics view it as "slow euthanasia" which on principle they oppose. But more to the point, does it affect the logic in arguments against assisted suicide?" (Edited from "Daunting Questions on Our Fate" by Michael Brannigan, Commentary, Published 09:23 p.m., Thursday, May 31, 2012)

The author of this article who is the Pfaff Endowed Chair in Ethics and Moral Values at the College of Saint Rose, continues and concludes with a discussion of the hairy concepts of cause and intent which can be summarised by considering these two scenarios:

1. **Dying Patient:** I can't stand this pain, please put me to sleep so I don't feel it. (Yes, I know I will stop eating and die)
2. **Dying Patient:** I can't stand this pain, please give me pain killers so I don't feel it. (Yes, I know it will be an overdose and I will die)
Doctor: Yes, I will ease your pain (but I don't intend to cause your death)

Somehow the first case of hastening death is legal and the second is not. But note in the first case, the patient has to be on the brink of death, leaving the patient more of a victim than an active participant in planning when and how to die. (And creating an aura of 'saviour' around the doctor?) Brannigan's point is that legalising the first, logically includes, or at least logically leads to, legalisation of the second.

How long will we put up with the double talk of double effect?

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DWDQ Annual General Meeting

Guest Speaker: Dr Philip Nitschke

When: Wednesday, 8th August, 2012 (1.15 - 3.15pm)

Where: Meeting Room, City Square Library, Cnr Queen/George/Adelaide

Agenda:

- To receive the President's Report;
- To receive the minutes of the previous AGM;
- To receive the Financial Report for the year
- To elect Office Bearers for the ensuing year.

. Further information: Ph Margaret 1300 733 818

(There is an Audio loop in the room for hearing impaired)

Help keep our webpage updated:

Our Webmaster is seeking to form a small group of computer literate members who would access our web pages to make minor updates. The procedure is quite simple and as much assistance as required would be available. Some software, eg MS Office, can also be provided at no cost. If you can help or would like to discuss the matter please phone Bob on 3162 7042

Please note:

Most of the news items in this newsletter are gleaned, excerpted, and summarised from the following sources:
<http://www.exitinternational.net> (ERGO): right-to-die@lists.opn.org and www.rtd.net

Please send:

Comments and contributions to the Newsletter
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or email mannison@optusnet.com.au

GENERAL NEWS

Denmark

After coming out decisively against active suicide twice previously in the past 25 years, parliament's independent panel of ethics experts now appears to be divided on the issue.

Mickey Gjerris, one of the panel members and a professor of bioethics at the University of Copenhagen, argued in favour of the practice. *"We need to help people to live and to die,"* he said. Instead of supporting a legalisation of assisted suicide, however, Gjerris suggested allowing the courts to acquit individuals charged with violating laws in such cases, if they believed they were acting in the deceased's best interests. *"You ought to help, and then stand by what you did. We as a society should be willing try and understand the situation and look at the facts. You shouldn't necessarily punish people for doing it."* Etisk Råd expects its discussion about assisted suicide to continue in the coming months. (*The Copenhagen Post*, 08/06/12, Jyllands-Posten)

New Group in Switzerland

(DWDQ has received the following notice:)
"I am writing as President of the newly founded Lifecircle/Eternal Spirit (www.lifecircle.ch). I would like to inform you that our website is available in English now. People who suffer from an incurable illness can become a member of lifecircle and then apply for an assisted suicide with the foundation. Our organisation will work in a manner similar manner to Dignitas. We offer 'assisted suicides' for foreigners. (I would rather call it 'assisted voluntary death' (AVD). For an application for an AVD you need to become a member of lifecircle. You also need to fill in a living will with lifecircle. Then you must send or mail at least two reports from doctors and a statement written by the person concerned where he/she explains why she/he wishes an AVD (why life is no longer tolerable for the person) and what therapies have been done to make life tolerable. The board of the foundation will then decide whether the AVD is possible or not, respecting the Swiss law.

I have been working as a consultant doctor for Dignitas for many years and I hope to help foreigners at least as well as Dignitas does. Dignitas will go on with their very good work; lifecircle/Eternal Spirit is simply an additional possibility. Kind regards, Erika Preisig, President of Lifecircle/Eternal Spirit.

South Australia

Premier Jay Weatherill has backed a failed bid to introduce new euthanasia laws in South Australia.

They were struck down by conservative Liberals and key members of Labor's Right faction in State Parliament in a 22-20 conscience vote. Five MPs -

including Opposition Leader Isobel Redmond - did not vote. Mr Weatherill, the leader of Labor's minority Left faction, has previously declared his support for the introduction of euthanasia and was joined by senior ministers Pat Conlon and Paul Caica in backing the proposal. Influential members of Labor's Right faction, including Mineral Resources and Energy Minister Tom Koutsantonis, Treasurer Jack Snelling and back-bencher Michael Atkinson voted against. Community Christian groups launched a heavy lobbying campaign to galvanise MPs' opposition to change.

Following yesterday's vote, Dr Such said he intended to "re-jig" the proposal and try again. *"It's a significant step forward to get that close in a vote. Slavery wasn't abolished overnight and women didn't get the vote overnight. Big changes take time, but the Parliament will eventually catch up with the views of the broader community."* (*AdelaideNow*, 14/06/12, Daniel Wills)

England: Censorship Threat

The Democratic Unionist Party's justice spokesman William McCrea called on ministers to examine ways of barring access to suicide sites advising web surfers how to kill themselves. Unveiling his Bill under the Ten Minute Rule, he told the Commons: *"A gatekeeper or guardian should be in place to monitor websites, having the power to forward the information to the appropriate authorities with a view to having those websites closed down."*

He demanded a computer program where a pop-up window appears on screens when people type in certain suicide-related words, with would-be victims instead directed to sites offering help. His Suicide (Prevention) Bill demands ministers *"develop a system of alerts and blocks for internet searches relating to suicide"*, but stands little chance of becoming law without Government backing. (*The Press Association*, 25/04/12)

Ireland

A GROUP which intends to campaign for a change in the law surrounding assisted suicide in Ireland has been established. The goal of the Campaign for the Legalisation of Assisted Suicide is not just to allow Irish people to travel to Switzerland where it is legal, but also to bring about legal assisted suicide in the Republic.

Tom Curran, the co-ordinator of Exit International Ireland, has pledged to assist his wife (who has multiple sclerosis) in ending her own life should she take the decision to do so in future. He said the purpose of the group was to campaign to *"provide safeguards for people like myself, to allow partners or friends, not just to travel, but to assist them in taking their own lives within Ireland. Suicide has been legal in Ireland since 1993 so it's quite legal for a person to take their own life,"* he said. *"People with disabling*

terminal illnesses are deprived of the right to take their own life because their disability prevents them."
(*The Irish Times*, 13/04/12, Pamela Horton)

New Zealand

An Auckland man has been charged with aiding his wife's suicide, even though he wasn't home when she died. Multiple sclerosis sufferer Rosemary Mott died at her Paratai Drive home on December 28. Her husband Evans Mott, 61, a skilled craftsman and boatbuilder who has worked on superyachts around the world, is accused of assisting her suicide.

Exit International says Rosemary Mott, who had chronic multiple sclerosis, contacted their Auckland chapter about a year ago, and accessed *The Peaceful Pill Handbook*. It was banned in New Zealand until 2008 when about 15 pages were partially or completely blacked out. Dr Philip Nitschke, Head of Exit International, says it is tragic the current law means Rosemary had to be alone when she died.

Janet Marsland of the Voluntary Euthanasia Society says the current law has *"no sense of compassion... Rational people, particularly people who were suffering, as Rosemary was, should be allowed choice. And if their choice is to no longer cope with this unbearable suffering then they should be able to exit life at their time and their choosing and the method of their choosing."* She says, *"It's a very strange situation when you're accused of assisting someone commit a legal act. There is nowhere else that we can find in New Zealand law where it is illegal to help someone else commit a legal act."* Assisting suicide has a maximum sentence of 14 years in prison. (*Auckland Now*, 20/04/12)

Tasmania

A discussion paper outlining the pros and cons of different right-to-die laws from overseas is expected to be released soon, which will inform a private members bill to be introduced into state Parliament by Premier Lara Giddings and Tasmanian Greens leader Nick McKim. Ms Giddings said the paper would consider the laws used overseas and suggest an appropriate model for Tasmania. (25/06/12)

Germany

An administrative court in Berlin has given German doctors the power to use their own judgment in cases involving terminally ill patients who want to die. The court lifted a physician's association ban on assisted suicide that included fines of up to \$65,722 on doctors who provided their patients with enough drugs to kill themselves.

Euthanasia is currently illegal in Germany. However, if a doctor is certain a dying patient wishes to end his or her life, a physician can provide that patient with the means to commit suicide. Observers said the court's

action means terminally ill patients will no longer have to travel to countries where assisted suicide is legal. *"This is a step towards stopping 'suicide-tourism' that is happening in Germany right now,"* said Dieter Graefe, a judge who is an expert on assisted suicide. (UPI, 04/04/12)

France

Francois Hollande, who had a proposal to legalize voluntary euthanasia in his campaign platform, won the French Presidential election.

UPDATE ON RIGHT-TO-DIE LEGISLATION

Canada

British Columbia's Supreme Court declared unconstitutional Criminal Code provisions that prohibit doctors from helping their patients commit suicide. In the landmark decision, Madam Justice Lynn Smith said the provisions discriminate against people who are too ill to take their lives.

Judge Smith gave Parliament a year "to take whatever steps it sees fit to draft and consider legislation." (*The Toronto Globe and Mail*, 16/06/12) Read more: <http://www.care2.com/causes/b-c-supreme-court-legalizes-assisted-suicide.html#ixzz1ziZhgJYw>

Ireland

Dr Reilly, Minister for Health, said the Advance Healthcare Decisions Bill *"is about allowing patients make decisions, when they have the mental capacity to do so, about what they want at the end of their day"* in their treatment.

The legislation was introduced by medical doctor and Wexford Fine Gael TD Liam Twomey, who said an advance healthcare decision *"is nothing more than what any of us could make if diagnosed with a significant illness. We would decide what treatments we would like, or would not like, to receive. . . . An advance healthcare decision plan . . . would allow a person to keep control when he or she no longer had the necessary capacity."* Sinn Féin health spokesman Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin said the Bill could give legal effect to end-of-life care preferences, including the refusal of life-sustaining treatment and *"for the appointment of an attorney, who could make certain decisions on a person's behalf"*.

The Bill passed second stage in the Dáil and now goes to the health committee. (*The Irish Times*, 09/06/12, Marie O'Halloran)

Argentina

The Argentinian Senate passed with a massive majority (no votes against, 17 absentees and 55 in favor) a law giving terminally ill or those suffering from irreversible and incurable illness or injury, and their families, the right and power to make their own decisions at the end of life, implying the right to end life support when terminally ill or in permanent vegetative state. (CBS, 01/06/12)

Hawaii

Five Hawaii doctors are offering to write lethal prescriptions for terminally ill patients in a bid to test whether doctor-assisted suicide is allowed under state law. Hawaii Attorney General David M. Louie issued an opinion in December 2011 saying that manslaughter charges could be brought against physicians who write prescriptions with the intention of causing death.

In January, Dr Nathanson co-founded the Physician Advisory Council for Aid in Dying, which now has five doctor members. The council has started a hotline to field queries from patients and doctors about end-of-life care issues and physician-assisted suicide. The idea is that physicians who fear the legal consequences of writing life-ending prescriptions could refer their patients to the council for help. "I'm retired," he said. "I think the worst that would happen is that they'd take my license away. I don't think I'm going to put in any jail time. ... My livelihood doesn't depend on it, so I can be very brave." Dr Nathanson said he is ready to be involved in the case that tests where Hawaii law stands on physician-assisted suicide. "I know people call it assisted suicide, but this is not suicide," said Dr Miller, who retired about two years ago. "These patients are going to die. All they're asking for is, 'Can I have a choice in how to do that — of how to end my life?'" (American Medical News, 17/04/12)

Vermont

The Vermont Senate has defeated an effort to bring up and discuss a bill designed to set up a system allowing physicians to prescribe a lethal dose of medication to terminally ill patients in the last six months of life who repeatedly asked for it. Senators voted 11-18 against a legislative rules suspension that would have allowed the measure to be considered. The bill had been bottled up in the Judiciary Committee, and in an attempt to get the Bill out of committee and up for full debate, the Health and Welfare committee added it to a separate bill regulating tanning beds. Lt. Gov. Phil Scott ruled the two measures not germane to one another, and a majority of senators concurred.

In a press release posted on Patient Choices Vermont's website, Dick Walters, president of the organization stated, "Despite this decision, we

appreciate the attempt by our Senate supporters to bring this bill to the Senate floor for a vote. We celebrate their courage and willingness to discuss an issue that is so important to so many Vermonters. We look forward to the day when all Vermont legislators get a chance to vote on the Death with Dignity bill."
(The News, 16/04/12)

Medical Terms Vocabulary Lesson

Bacteria	Backdoor to cafeteria
Benign	What you be after you be 8
Caesarian Section	A neighbourhood in Rome
Morbid	A higher offer

☺One-liners:

Atheism is a non-prophet organization.
A sign on the lawn at a drug rehab center said: 'Keep off the Grass.'
If you jumped off the bridge in Paris, you'd be in Seine.

About the family interfering with a chosen death:

As a priest and thanatologist who has been working with the right to die for over 30 years, I have found only one solution to the problem: leave them out. If you know of a relative who disagrees with your right to die, just do not tell them about your plans or when terminally ill.

This may not sound very "pastoral" but it's the best I've found. Physicians are so afraid of litigation when confronted with a family member who disagrees with your course of treatment that the doctor then becomes too cautious to act on your behalf. If anyone has a better solution, I'd be glad to hear it.

I also sometimes tell people that if they are hospitalized and not getting what they want that, beyond the several conventional recourses available to them, it can't hurt to mention that your son in law, the malpractice attorney (whether true or not), is starting to get concerned!(John Abraham, M.Div., F.T., Tucson, AZ www.DeathAndDyingHelp.com)

BOOKS FILMS ETC

Articles

"Act before it is too late". Dr Christopher Swan advocates advanced care directives to doctors.
(Australian Doctor, 30/04/12)

Films

It's A Good Day to Die

A California actress who grew up in the Roanoke Valley, Virginia, is hoping to make a feature film there. "It's a Good Day to Die," is a comedy about assisted suicide, and Andrea Shreeman has been meeting with community leaders and potential investors. The

project has already raised seed money on the website Kickstarter.com, and it's won the blessing of Emmy and Academy Award-winning actress Cloris Leachman. "Andrea and Gregor have written this darling, interesting script," Leachman said. "I think you'll enjoy being part of it."

"I would say assisted suicide can be funny, you know, and that we say assisted suicide comedy because it's snappy and because people respond," Shreeman said, "but it's really about dying with dignity. And it's really being willing to look at death and be empowered and not being a victim toward the end." For the film's website, go to <http://thediemovie.wordpress.com/>

Hemlock Society

Parambrata Chattopadhyay plays Ananda who runs a school where teachers offer training on methods and equipment to folks who want to exercise their right to die! The drama that unfolds is a once in-a-lifetime film about life, death and love. (Kolkata, 26/04/12, Washington Bangla Radio) (For further information see their website)

Blogs

"Prefunerals - do you want to die before you die?" Reports a trend in people throwing a celebration of their life before they die, including quotes from Neil Francis and Philip Nitschke. (See blog, "The Nose", 30/04/12)

Books

In Search of a Gentle Death: The Fight for Your Right to Die with Dignity, by Richard Cote, is now available in either the deluxe hardcover (\$29.95) or PDF-on-flash-drive version (\$19.95) from Corinthian Books. Cote describes how the international death-with-dignity movement evolved and why its views are now embraced by 75% of well-educated adults who live in countries not ruled by political, military, or religious dictators.

The book is based on over 100 interviews with physicians, nurses, scholars, death-with-dignity activists, and numerous people who themselves were facing terminally illness or enduring unspeakable, untreatable pain. It also describes the entire rainbow of recently-developed non-medical means by which rational adults can end their own lives, unassisted, painlessly, in a dignified way, and surrounded by their loved ones at a time and place of their own choosing.

Body or Soul: Why we don't talk about death and dying, by Malcolm Parker, Associate Professor & Head of Ethics, Law and Professional Practice, University of Queensland. This is the fifth part of *Talking about Death and Dying*. (Part 1: Deadly censorship games: keeping a tight lid on the euthanasia debate; Part 2: End of the care conveyor belt: death in intensive care units; Part 3: Curing or caring: the importance of being honest; Part 4: Death and despair or peace and contentment: why families need to talk about end-of-life options; Part 6: Planning your endgame: Advance Care Directives; Part 7: A challenge to our leaders – why don't we

legalise euthanasia?; Part 8: A personal account of life with terminal cancer)

Theatre

An Instinct for Kindness, a one-actor play by Chris Lerner, dramatizes the assisted suicide of Allyson whom he accompanied to Dignitas. Read more: www.chrislerner.com and www.aifk.co.uk and http://www.dignitas.ch/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=52&Itemid=86&lang=en

Radio

A 26-minute interview on the Generation Next program with VE supporter, Chrys Stevenson about religious hierarchy opposition to Dying with Dignity. Go to www.iov.org.au/programs/display?programid=39

THE FRONT LINE

For one reason or another, we can't all be making major contributions towards increasing options at the end of life, but we do support those who do!

Philip Nitschke

Voluntary euthanasia campaigner Dr Philip Nitschke believes an Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency investigation into the death of a Victor Harbor woman has been compromised by Right to Life doctors and doctors of that persuasion. The woman, who had motor neuron disease and was fed via a tube, wrote a letter saying she had obtained the illegal death drug Nembutal herself. She resented this act had turned her into a "criminal" and insisted in the letter that in ending her suffering, "I am assisted by no one".

Exit International executive director Dr Fiona Stewart said AHPRA was going through Dr Nitschke's relationship with the patient "with a fine-tooth comb... (and) at a recent euthanasia forum ... this Right To Life GP seemed to be an expert on where the AHPRA process was at, (which) was quite unnerving for Philip". AHPRA has subpoenaed documents from Dr Nitschke, and SA Police have sought detailed information about the events leading up to the Victor Harbor woman's death. "They're trying to separate his visiting (to) her as doctor versus his visiting as a voluntary euthanasia activist."

An AHPRA spokeswoman said Dr Nitschke's fears of a biased investigation were unfounded. (*The Adelaide Advertiser [AdelaideNow]*, 12/06/12, By Tom Bowden)

Remember DWDQ in your will

Perhaps you are not in a position to assist your Society now, but a bequest, large or small, in your will can help us when it can no longer help you. It takes a lot of effort and a lot of money to try to influence the legislative system. Phone us for a bequest form. 1300 733 818

Compassion and care

Wouldn't you help? Those in the Front Line also arise from circumstance.

Paul Anderson wanted to die. He'd been chronically ill for many years and had tried to take his own life three times. The next time, his wife Jill found him in time but decided to respect his wishes. And she was charged with manslaughter. (Please note: A reporter, Hannah Booth, interviewed Jill, and published her story in *The Guardian* on 9 June 2012. Excerpts from it appear below.)

On a hot sticky day in July 2003, Jill Anderson was driving home across the North Yorkshire moors when something told her to put her foot down. Hurrying back, she dumped her shopping bags in the kitchen and ran upstairs, where her husband Paul was sitting on the bed. "What's wrong? Has anything happened?" she said. "I'm sorry," said Paul. "I've taken enough of this time." He slumped on to the bed, falling into a deep sleep. By next morning, he was dead.

Nine years later, Jill is sitting in a cafe in sunny Bristol reliving that day, her marriage to "the love of her life", her arrest on charges of manslaughter – and what it was like being in a relationship with the threat of suicide constantly hanging over it. Jill met Paul in September 1992. She was 37, and had been single for much of her late 20s and early 30s. "I'd been on countless dates, but they were never people I wanted to spend much time with, or felt comfortable with," she says. Paul was different. "I felt secure with him, felt I could say or do anything and he would accept me. I knew very quickly he was the one I'd been waiting for. I didn't think I'd ever meet anyone, and suddenly there he was, and it was lovely. He made life magical."

Three days before the wedding, Paul picked up a flu-like virus. Weeks passed, then months, and he didn't get any better. He started to feel weak, and spent periods in bed. Doctors did tests, but told him there was nothing wrong, and sent him home with some aspirin. Undeterred, the couple spent hours researching Paul's symptoms online, and soon self-diagnosed chronic fatigue syndrome, or myalgic encephalitis, usually known as ME. CFS is persistent exhaustion that doesn't go away with sleep or rest. There is no cure, but treatment can ease the symptoms, the most common of which is muscle pain. Paul was unlucky: he was one of around 25% of sufferers with severe symptoms that were compounded by health problems since he was very young, including arthritis. Jill watched as her husband gradually lost his health. In the early days, he was still well enough to take a gentle stroll in the countryside. "We would do five miles, then it was four, three, two, one, until he could only walk 100 yards before he was too tired to go on," she says. His pain increased, and by the time he died, he was virtually bedridden. The business, reliant on Paul's translating, didn't survive

and they were declared bankrupt. She became his carer. "Looking after Paul, as well as trying to keep the business ticking over before it went under, was a full-time job," she says... (Note from The Editor: This is a long story. Buy the book, or go to the website, or ask me.) (Jill Anderson's memoir, *Unbroken Trust: The Forbidden Goodbye of a Husband's Suicide*, is published by Simon & Schuster, £12.99. To order a copy for £10.39, go to guardian.co.uk/bookshop)

More on the Origin of Sayings...

In the 1500s: Houses had thatched roofs-thick straw-piled high, with no wood underneath. It was the only place for animals to get warm, so all the cats and other small animals (mice, bugs) lived in the roof. When it rained it became slippery and sometimes the animals would slip and fall off the roof. Hence the saying, "It's raining cats and dogs."

There was nothing to stop things from falling into the house. This posed a real problem in the bedroom where bugs and other droppings could mess up your nice clean bed. Hence, a bed with big posts and a sheet hung over the top afforded some protection. That's how canopy beds came into existence.

Sunshine Coast branch report.

- Activities included the April meeting with guest speakers Neil Francis with updates on YLR and Jim McIntosh, a Greens candidate who gave a commitment to introduce a DWD private members bill if elected to the Qld. parliament; in May, Perry and Oster Funerals compared funeral plans and funeral insurance, and in June was a workshop to get members' ideas for strategies to persuade politicians to legislate for DWD law reform. With the losses of Lynne and Denise from the committee, we have co-opted Judi to take a place in the committee. Advance Health Directive workshops have been held and are proving to be worthwhile initiatives and we are preparing a campaign to contact politician.
- Members will soon receive notice of the AGM for DWDQ and voting forms for president and executive in which Sandra Milne and a committee have accepted nomination for positions. The Sunshine Coast branch supports Sandra as the incoming president.
- Please do not confuse the DWDQ election with the Sunshine Coast Branch elections. Our own AGM will be held in September. Alastair will not seek re-election as president of the Sunshine Coast branch after 7 years in the position. Jim McAllister has agreed to accept nomination for the president's position with the full support of the committee and members will receive voting papers in the near future

At the Annual General Meeting in August...

Nominations for Committee Positions, Year 2012-13

Nomination Forms for the forthcoming Committee were sent to members with the last newsletter. Listed below are the only nominations that have been received, so these members will automatically become the new Committee. (The Constitution states that nominations for the positions of President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer close no less than four weeks before the AGM. Extra Committee members – more are welcome - can be nominated and voted for at the AGM.)

Brief profiles:

Sandra Milne (President)

Joined in 1997 and has been on the Committee all that time!!! She has held every position except President.

Anyse Horman (Treasurer)

Has been a member for 4 years, and has held positions of secretary and treasurer.

Gill McCormick (Secretary)

Has been a member for 12 years and has been on the Committee for 3 years, holding the positions of Secretary and Treasurer.

Margaret Anderson (Committee Member)

Has been a member for 7 years and has been on the Committee for approx 5 yrs. Margaret has been responsible for organising the Newsletter mailouts, answering our phone service, setting up meetings and has introduced many people to our society.

Neridah Deamer (Committee Member)

Has been a member for 5 years and has been on the Committee for 1 year.

Cynthia Burnett (Committee Member)

Has recently joined and brings with her a wealth of knowledge and experience in political lobbying amongst other things political and administrative.

Thanks to John Todd (Retiring President): I have worked with John for the past 14 years and I would personally like to thank him for everything he has done as President of the Society. John has a great passion for this cause and will continue in areas other than President. To quote John "14 years is a long time to be President" and I believe his decision not to run will give him a chance to recharge his batteries and pursue areas dear to his heart. *Sandra*

Thanks also from the Editor: I have been amazed at John's dedication and versatility. Not only has he carried out the normal duties of a President, but he

has offered friendship and reassurance to members making momentous decisions in their lives, and applied and shared his technical knowledge and inventiveness at member workshops locally, throughout the state, as well as on international platforms. *Mary*

Brisbane

The Brisbane DWDQ General Meeting on 9th May welcomed two special guest speakers—Neil Francis and Marshall Perron, introduced by Sandra Milne, Chair.

Neil is the Foundation Chairman and CEO of YourLastRight.com (Y.L.R.), the newly formed national alliance of State and Territory Dying with Dignity and Voluntary Euthanasia Societies in Australia. He is also CEO of Dying with Dignity Victoria and has just been elected President of the World Federation of Right to Die Societies at a Conference held in Zurich.

Neil explained how the V.E. and DWD Societies in each State had been working as individual voluntary organizations until YourLastRight.com was founded in 2010 in order to support and co-ordinate all such efforts Australia-wide under one peak body. In Neil's experience the changing of the name in some societies from Voluntary Euthanasia to "Dying with Dignity" has been a positive move and elicits fewer gasps of horror from any who don't already understand our movement.

As a national organisation, Y.L.R.com has been able to gain access directly to leaders of numerous political, medical, and religious societies as well as seniors-related groups. Leaders of Palliative Care are now aware that our aims of a Peaceful Death are very closely linked with their own.

Last but not least Neil stressed the fact that the legal right ALL Australians do have, even NOW, is to refuse hospital treatment if they so wish. To this end DWD Victoria runs workshops at which their members are shown how to complete Advance Health Directives (Living Wills) and organize Power of Attorneys.

Marshall made history when as Chief Minister of Parliament in the Northern Territory he oversaw the bill for the Right of The Terminally-ill Act, and this was passed in 1995 due to his persistent pushing for the cause during his twenty-one years as a politician in the Northern Territory.

Marshall commented on how an organisation wanting VE to be legalised should have ONE target, i.e. Politicians (and those who influence politicians).

He told us how it takes persistence and dedication to wear down the reluctance of many politicians to tackle this controversial issue. However, during the past decade at least twelve bills have been introduced and/or discussed in State parliaments. The South Australian VE Society (SAVES) has promoted three private members Bills to go before Parliament due to their determination to educate each politician on exactly what we stand for.

He mentioned that we in Queensland, right now, have 51 "new faces" in parliament. We should be educating them in letters asking for their support and making them aware that DWDQ does EXIST, as do organizations such as Doctors for VE and Christians for VE. "Tell them!" said Marshall and cited how little most politicians even know of how many prominent Australians such as Malcolm Fraser, Ron Barrassi, Dick Smith and many judges, lawyers, doctors, and palliative care experts who strongly believe we should have a choice in dying. He complimented Neil Francis on the brilliant initiative by DWD Victoria in compiling the Ambassadors List and sharing it with all states through the YLR.com Alliance. *(Submitted by Gillian McCormick)*

Let's Start Shouting!

One of our members, who lives in a part of Brisbane that has a high proportion of retirees, decided to meet up with her local MP to talk about voluntary euthanasia. One of the first things he said to her was "you are the first constituent to bring this issue up with me".

To all members: I urge you to contact your local MP to see where s/he stands on VE, discuss the Society's role and offer answers to misguided shock information they may have heard. If MP's don't see us having a more active role in our cause, why would they put themselves out to help us? We must be more vocal!

If you want to help but are not sure how to go about it, please contact us by phone or email and we will help by preparing a letter for you, or if you live near-by, say in the southeast corner, one of our Committee members would be happy to go meet with you.

Life's questions

If 4 out of 5 people SUFFER from diarrhea...does that mean that one out of five enjoys it?

If it's true that we are here to help others, then what exactly are the others here for?

Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor: I refer to your article about eHealth (April 2012). This is a good idea, although some people may be concerned about confidentiality of their records. Recently I purchased at our local Post Shop an ERcard which is a commercial effort to do the same thing: see www.er-card.com.au. The card is available in two formats: a plastic card or a dog tag (with lightweight chain). Both have USB-style connectors for a computer and contain software designed to facilitate entry of personal and medical details. This information can then be uploaded to the ERcard website, under password protection, but I opted not to do this (a) because they want to charge \$8/month to store your info and (b) because I think it is more convenient and secure to wear the dog tag (or keep the card in your wallet, but that's less obvious) without a password so that any paramedic in an emergency situation can access the info on his computer - assuming so equipped, of course. I asked a student ambo about this, and he says "no problem". It seems to me that this has the advantage that you keep the information under your own control but available under most foreseeable circumstances that it may be needed. Regards, Ted Webber, Sunshine Coast

Dear Editor: I, for one, find it very difficult to attend meetings at the City Square Library as parking is very expensive and it is a painful hike for this geriatric from public transport. Jim Marshall, Redcliffe
From the Editor: What do you think, readers? Would the Toowong Library (where the train stops on the premises and parking is free) be a better venue?

A Few Puns

Shotgun wedding - A case of wife or death.

A man needs a mistress just to break the monogamy.

A hangover is the wrath of grapes.

Dancing cheek-to-cheek is really a form of floor play.

In democracy your vote counts. In feudalism your count votes.

A chicken crossing the road is poultry in motion.

If you don't pay your exorcist, you get repossessed.

You feel stuck with your debt if you can't budge it.

A man's home is his castle, in a manor of speaking.

Dijon vu - the same mustard as before.

Practice safe eating - always use condiments.