

For Your Consideration

Let's Get Together: Palliative Care, Advanced Care Planning and Assisted Dying

As assisted dying is permitted under law in an ever growing number of jurisdictions, the key question of how we will connect assisted dying and end of life care will have to be addressed. When assisted dying is to be made available, like other end of life services, to all members of the population, rather than only those who can purchase or organise it for themselves as at present, we will need to engage in a safe and open public, professional, policy and practice debate, far in advance of what we have so far had, that looks at end of life care and assisted dying in relation to each other and which allows us to plan properly for our individual and collective futures.

Palliative Care Australia reports that currently advance care plans and directives are poorly understood by the general public, Australian legislation is disparate, implementation can be ad hoc and piecemeal, and adherence to plans and directives is not guaranteed (PCA Submission to 2020 summit). Advance care plans are not required, or even encouraged in some instances, in PC facilities, and while a patient may limit or stop treatment, there is no context within which s/he can request a hastened death. Yet this is exactly the option that a small percentage of Palliative Care patients need.

According to Dr. Paul Maher, *"The bottom line is that PC patients get ...high quality excellent care, with good palliation.... It is at the same time the truth that 10% of PC patients, however well cared for, simply do not ever have their symptoms well controlled for the duration of the illness"*. Palliative Care workers witness that even with first class care some patients do experience prolonged physical and psychological misery. Another doctor writes, *"As a doctor I used to think palliative care was the answer. Now I realise that keeping people alive can be unspeakably cruel. Unbearable suffering, prolonged by medical care, and inflicted on a dying patient who wishes to die, is unequivocally a bad thing"* (Dr. Raymond Tallis, The Times of London, 27/10/09).

How can the palliative care industry, assisted dying support networks, and the legal advisors associated with advance care planning develop

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and promote a coherent policy for persons reaching the final stages of their lives?

Peter Beresford (Professor of Social Policy, Brunei University) believes legalisation of assisted dying will raise big questions about how to connect up this greater range of choices. How will services for end of life care relate to services for assisting dying? How would we ensure that recruits to possible assisted dying occupations or professions would not be unduly influenced by pro or anti-assisted dying views and attitudes? What kind of education and training is envisaged? What are the implications for existing end of life care professionals?

DWDQ embraces the statement made by the Palliative Care Association at the 2020 Summit: *"Now is the time for us as a society to rethink the paradigm of health and care options for people with complex, chronic, and terminal conditions."* The dialogue should proceed from "if" to "when" assisted dying is legalized (perhaps in 2010 for at least one Australian State--Victoria or South Australia, for example) and thinking together about how we will manage the changes to end of life options. (comments invited, Editor at newsletter@dwdq.org.au)

Mark your Calendar!

Next General Meeting: In the Meeting Room of the BCC Brisbane Square Library, 266 George Street (Cnr Adelaide St.), Brisbane. Guest speaker will be the care co-ordinator from the Motor Neurone Association.
Wednesday 17 February 1.15-3.15pm
Next Workshop: Members only, numbers limited, call John Todd 3876 7654 to register.
Tuesday 09 March 1.45-3.15pm
If you would like a fridge magnet with this year's meeting dates, phone Margaret on 1300-733-818

General News

International Panel Formed

The Royal Society of Canada has appointed a Queen's Philosophy Professor Udo Schuklenk to head a new international panel which will investigate the key aspects of voluntary euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide, and prepare a public report. He is currently Joint Editor in Chief of the international journal Bioethics, and founding editor of Developing World Bioethics. The panel's report is to be released in the (northern) spring of 2011. (Exchange, 29/10/09)

Central Registry

Have you wondered, if that fateful moment happens in an emergency situation, who's going to go through your wallet and find the little card that says you have signed an Advanced Care Directive? And then discover that under certain conditions, you do not want to be resuscitated? Well, in Oregon they no longer need to worry. Oregon has adopted an electronic registry, giving doctors and paramedics quick and accurate information about a patient's health care wishes. More information is available online at <http://www.polst.org>.

Debate Reopens in Denmark

Proponents of assisted suicide are calling for the elimination of laws preventing the terminally ill from receiving assistance to end their lives, after viewing the debilitating nature of the incurable pancreatic cancer one of its citizens had been suffering from since 2000, and his subsequent trip to Dignitas in Switzerland. He compared assisted suicide laws with animal welfare laws. *"If I treated my animals like we treat humans and just let them suffer, I'd be found guilty of animal abuse and neglect."* His story, and the fact that it cost him 80,000 kroner (approx \$16,000) to have it carried out, showed 'how grotesquely things have developed'. (The Copenhagen Post 05/10/09)

New Dignitas Premises Approved

The assisted suicide group, Dignitas, is to be allowed to practice on premises it has bought in the area of Wetzikon, close to Zurich, following a local court ruling. Local opponents had argued there'd be a negative impact on a local nursery school, training college and retirement home located near Dignitas's new building. But the court's decision means the assisted suicide group will now be allowed to go ahead with its plans. They say they will do all they can to limit the impact of their activities. (World Radio Switzerland, 16/12/09)

A Peaceful Pill in 2010?

A single solid pill for a peaceful death has been developed by Exit International. The 10gm pill, made from a stable inert form of the barbiturate

Nembutal, has been developed for long term storage and transport. To use the pill, it is altered into the soluble active drug and reconstituted as a small drink. Exit Director Dr Philip Nitschke said that this development offered the possibility of storage of the best end of life drug for several decades, with reliable reconstitution possible at any time. *"Previously, people could only obtain the drug in liquid form from overseas and this presented difficulties in transportation and storage. The developed 'pill' is much smaller, weighs only 10gm and is easy to safely store and transport."*

"Exit believes that ALL seniors of sound mind should have the option of a peaceful death at the time of THEIR choosing – this Exit Pill will go some way to ensuring this."

An activation kit with the chemicals for reconstitution and a test kit to check the strength of the resulting product are nearing completion and will be made available by Exit International by mail order in 2010.

www.exitinternational.net (Voxy News Engine, 30/10/09)
<http://www.voxy.co.nz/national/euthanasia-039exit-pill039-developed/5/>

Judge Has Sympathy for Assisted Dying

Expressing what he described as a personal view, Lord Phillips, President of the new [English] Supreme Court, said: *"I have enormous sympathy with anyone who finds themselves facing a quite hideous termination of their life as a result of one of these horrible diseases, in deciding they would prefer to end their life more swiftly and avoid that [prolonged] death as well as avoiding the pain and distress that might cause their relatives"*. David Winnick, a Labour backbencher, has said he will attempt to introduce a Private Member's Bill to change the rules. The argument for a change in the law is gaining ground in some parts of the medical profession. The Royal College of Nursing has become the first major medical institution to withdraw its opposition to assisted dying, saying it was now "neutral" on the issue. (The Daily Telegraph, 10/09/09)

Destination Mexico? A Warning

One of our members advises Tijuana, under pressure from the US, no longer has Nembutal available for purchase. Other readers report Mexican Nembutal may have been diluted, and sold at inflated prices. Exit International has cautioned its members against such a trip since last August. Seek advice about reliable destinations before you travel.

Police Raids

Thousands of members of the euthanasia support group Exit International have been warned to move their stashes of "end of life"

General News

drugs after police raids which followed the alleged assisted suicide of a Brisbane man. Police raided the Melbourne offices of Exit International and the home of a Sydney member of the organisation, amid an investigation into the death of Brisbane man Frank Ward, 76, in June. Queensland police confirmed they were investigating the death of Ward, but denied the action was part of a wider crackdown on the pro-euthanasia group. (The Australian, 14/11/09)

Final Exit Network Arrests (USA)

Last April, seven members in Arizona and Georgia were arrested and charged with assisting a suicide and violating Georgia's RICO racketeering laws, and a Georgia court had frozen the network's financial assets. Since then, Derek Humphry's *Final Exit Liberty Fund* and

other private donors have chipped in to pay for bail and legal representation. (Humphry is the author of *Final Exit*, from which the network took its name.) However, the case against the so-called "Georgia Four" seems to have ground to a dead halt. Even though the volunteers were arrested in Georgia eight months ago, none has been indicted, and a judge in Georgia has just ordered the state to return all the funds seized. In Arizona, a trial has been scheduled for February. In neither case did the volunteers physically assist anyone in their Exits since it is fundamentally not the way the group operates. It counsels, advises, informs – all protected under the first amendment – but never assists. (The Riverfront Times, St.Louis 05/11/09) To contribute: www.finalexitlibertyfund.org

Update on Right-to-Die Legislation

There are several ways the law can support exercising choice at the end of life. Some of them seem minor (e.g., living wills) compared to the ultimate goal of legalising voluntary euthanasia, but each is important and worth fighting for along the way. In this regular review of the legal picture around the world, we will attempt to report news of each stage of legislative change as it occurs.

Ireland

The Law Reform Commission has recommended that legislation be introduced allowing adults to refuse (in verbal or written form) treatment, including life-sustaining care, in the event of future incapacity or illness. It says that people should be allowed to make 'advance care directives' refusing resuscitation and other interventions.

<http://www.rte.ie/news/2009/0916/health.html>

Israel

Unwilling to accept over four years of Health Ministry delays, MK (Meretz) Chaim Oron is pushing ahead his private member's bill to permit assisted euthanasia in Eretz Israel. The bill is modelled after a law that was adopted in Oregon, and later accepted in Washington State. The bill calls to permit a terminally ill patient to end his/her own life after medical professionals explain the alternatives to the patient (Yeshiva World News, 02/11/09)

Canada

Parliament will soon vote on a private member's bill to legalize euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide, subject to safeguards, and the Quebec College of Physicians has just endorsed euthanasia in some circumstances. It is calling for Criminal Code amendments to protect doctors who hasten the death of suffering patients when those patients face 'imminent and inevitable death' (Toronto Globe and Mail, 05/11/09)

Korea

Death With Dignity Guidelines

The Korean Medical Association, the Korean Academy of Medical Science and the Korean Hospital Association have jointly announced guidelines that allow patients who are brain dead or in a persistent vegetative state to have their life support system turned off. The Seoul National University Hospital set out guidelines for the stoppage of excessive treatments in May. The hospital is receiving signed "Do Not Resuscitate (DNR)" documents as a start. (By Bae Ji-sook, Staff Reporter, The Korea Times, 13/10/09)

New Hampshire

A bill to legalize assisted suicide in New Hampshire lost key backing from a legislative committee when both supporters and opponents joined forces to reject it due to confusion about who would be covered by the bill and who would gain immunity. Supporters of assisted suicide, said they won't give up. "*We'll be coming back with something more people might be willing to pass.*" (The Union Leader, 08/11/09)

Connecticut

Two Fairfield County doctors are asking the Connecticut courts to clarify a 40-year-old law in a way that would prevent physicians from being prosecuted for prescribing drugs to end a person's life. Attorneys for the doctors are seeking a ruling on the current law that says a person is guilty of second-degree manslaughter if "he intentionally causes or aids another

Update on Right-to-Die Legislation

person, other than force, duress or deception, to commit suicide." They want to ensure that the provision would not apply to licensed physicians who prescribe drugs for mentally competent, terminally ill patients.

"Obviously, the crux of this case is what is suicide and what is aid in dying," said Kathryn Tucker, an attorney for the doctors and legal director for Compassion & Choices. She called the issue "a case of first impression," one that has not been decided by the courts. The lawsuit is guaranteed to prompt controversy both in the courts and in the legislature. (The Hartford Courant, 08/10/09)

Montana Joins Oregon & Washington!

In a detailed review of Montana law on the "Rights of the Terminally Ill," the Court has concluded that the legislature specifically defers to a patient's own decisions and affords patients the right to control their own bodies at the end of life. The decision to self-administer life-ending medication receives the same treatment as a decision to discontinue life sustaining therapies such as mechanical ventilation. This makes Montana the first state where a court has determined that patients may request, and physicians may legally provide, aid in dying.

Australia

Euthanasia isn't legal under Australian law but is supported by most Australians. Still, many state legislators don't agree. Recently a bill to legalise euthanasia was voted down by the Tasmanian Parliament.

But in response to Rossiter's story (see last issue of this newsletter), the Greens' Robin Chapple plans to introduce a voluntary euthanasia bill into WA within weeks, and there are moves afoot to reintroduce a bill in Victoria after the next elections. South Australian independent MP Bob Such has introduced a similar bill into the lower house that's yet to have its second reading, but a bill introduced by his Greens counterpart in the upper house, Mark Parnell, narrowly passed its second reading. However, the Bill may not be read in the Lower House until the after the SA elections next March.

Christopher Pearson comments, "*The [SA] election marks the retirement of some steadfast opponents of euthanasia and their replacement in both chambers by people who've indicated support for the bill. In the life of the next parliament...a new private member's bill will be introduced and is likely to be passed after a conscience vote.*" (The Australian, 07/11/09)

A trial **local meeting** was held at Elizabeth Stokes' home in Bridgeman Downs last November. While not a lot of members turned up, those who did had a most enjoyable time and agreed that we should hold more meetings like this. So another is planned for Friday, 12th March. If you drive and are able to give another member a lift that would be very much appreciated. If you can come please phone Elizabeth on 3353 5379.

New South Wales Living Will

A landmark NSW Supreme Court decision has upheld the right to refuse medical treatment, even if the request was made only in anticipation, and well before treatment was needed. Doctors' groups have welcomed the decision, saying it allows them to respect a patient's wishes without fear of prosecution or litigation by relatives. In fact doctors and paramedics who treat a patient against their expressed refusal could be charged with assault and battery or be sued for providing unwanted treatment. (The Sydney Morning Herald 04/09/09)

Please note:

Most of the news items in this newsletter are gleaned, excerpted, and summarised from the following sources:

- Exit News and Forum:

<http://www.exitinternational.net>

- Euthanasia Research and Guidance Organisation (ERGO): right-to-die@lists.opn.org

- Faye Girsh's World Newsletter:

<http://rdde.eu/wrtd-newsletter-56-summer-2009.pdf>

😊 Exercise is Good for You...

~~Walking 20 minutes can add to your life.~~ This enables you at 85 years old to spend an additional 5 months in a nursing home at \$7000 per month.

My grandpa started walking five miles a day when he was 60. Now he's 97 ...and we haven't a clue where he is.

I have to walk early in the morning, before my brain figures out what I'm doing...

I do have flabby thighs, but fortunately my stomach covers them.

I joined a Health Club last year, spent about 400 bucks. Haven't lost a pound... apparently you have to actually go there.

Every time I start thinking too much about how I look, I just find a Happy Hour and by the time I leave, I look just fine.

Every time I hear the dirty word 'exercise', I wash my mouth out with chocolate.

Asking the People

Australia

A survey of public attitude towards assisted dying choice for the hopelessly ill has once again been conducted by the respected national survey company Newspoll. The last time such a survey was run was in January 2007. Back then, 80% of Australians supported assisted dying for the hopelessly ill, and just 14% opposed it. The latest poll conducted in mid October demonstrates a lift to 85% of Australians in support of choice. Support includes three out of four Catholics, four out of five Anglicans, and nine out of ten of those who have no religion. There is practically no other issue in contemporary society that would receive such overwhelming support across the Australian community.

New Poll Question Foreshadowed

Dr. Michael Irwin (retired GP) (see October Newsletter under "The Front Line") in announcing the forthcoming formation in Sussex, England, of SOARS (Society for Old Age Rational Suicide) reports that early this year, there will be a poll asking the following question – *Should a very elderly, mentally competent individual who is suffering unbearably from various debilitating health problems (although*

none of them is yet terminal) be allowed by law to receive a doctor's assistance to die? A 15,000 word booklet on this subject has just been produced. Contact the Editor who will request a free copy for you.

Poland

The Public Opinion Research Centre (CBOS) has found that 61% of Poles think that people who suffer from an incurable disease should have the right to decide about their own life. (Poland.com, 21/10/09)

Scotland

Two-thirds of Scots believe that the law should be changed to allow assisted suicide, a poll of 1000 people by Cello for The Sunday Times has revealed. Most people said they backed legislation to be lodged by Margo MacDonald, the independent MSP, to give people who are terminally ill the right to end their lives with the help of a doctor. MacDonald, who suffers from Parkinson's disease, said that she hoped the poll's findings would encourage MSPs who she knew were privately sympathetic to "break cover" and back her bill. (*The Sunday Times*, London, 08/11/09)

Research Findings

Dementia – A Terminal Disease

A new study, published online in *The New England Journal of Medicine*, followed 323 patients with advanced dementia in 22 different nursing homes for 18 months. By the end of the study, more than half (54.8 percent) had died, and of the deceased, about 40 percent of patients had been hospitalized, put on a feeding tube or experienced at least one other "*burdensome intervention*" in their last few months of life.

The recognition of dementia as a terminal disease may encourage caretakers to alter end-of-life care to improving comfort, rather than extending life. "*As the end of life approaches, the pattern in which patients with advanced dementia experience distressing symptoms is similar to patients dying of more commonly recognized terminal conditions, such as cancer,*" said Susan Mitchell, Institute for Aging Research, Beth Israel Medical Center in Boston. Common symptoms for patients include pain, agitation and shortness of breath; the most common immediate causes of death are from pneumonia, fever or eating problems.

"Many of the patients in our study underwent interventions of questionable benefit. When [patients'] health-care proxies were aware of the poor prognosis and expected clinical complications in advanced dementia, patients were less likely to undergo these interventions and more likely to receive palliative care in their final days of life." (*Scientific American*, 14/10/09)

End of Life Treatment

A study of doctors in charge of the last hours of almost 3,000 people finds decisions almost always have to be made on whether to give drugs to relieve pain that could shorten life and whether to continue resuscitation and artificial feeding. Around a third of doctors say they have given drugs to terminally ill patients or withdrawn treatment, knowing or intending that it would shorten their life. In 211 cases (7.4%), doctors say they gave drugs or stopped treatment to speed the patient's death. In 825 cases (28.9%), doctors made a decision on treatment that they knew would probably or certainly hasten death. One in 10 patients asked their doctor to help them die faster. (Sarah Boseley, Health Editor, *The Guardian*, 23/20/09)

Books, Films, Etc.

A Tender Thing

Royal Shakespeare Company, Northern Stage

One reviewer comments, "*Having watched elderly family and friends depart this Earth and noted my father's struggle to cope with my mother's advancing dementia, it was only a matter of time before Ben Power's powerful take on Romeo and Juliet reduced me to tears. This much-anticipated world premiere presents the great lovers as a retired couple struggling with comic grace into old age before Juliet is diagnosed with terminal illness... Euthanasia, of course, becomes the couple's preoccupation, with writer Power re-running parts of Shakespeare's text as Romeo attempts to portray the lark as the nightingale to delay Juliet's preparation for suicide at dawn*". (Viv Hardwick, *The Northern Echo*, 07/11/09)

Remember me, Mrs V?, by Tom Valenta

Mother of three and former school teacher, Marie Valenta, was fifty-four when diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease in early 2003. For the first four years after diagnosis, her husband, Tom, became her primary carer. In his book he describes the daily agony of seeing his wife slowly succumb to this cruel, degenerative disease. He also describes the impact on him and his three adult offspring who see their mother transform from a fiercely independent and highly competent woman to a totally dependent, child-like person. Towards the end, Tom gave Marie up to a nursing home which he saw as his final act of capitulation and failure. He tells not only his own very personal story but the deeply moving experiences of thirteen other carers who have travelled similar journeys. Tom Valenta is a member of DWD Victoria. Contact the office for details. 3/9 *6* Salisbury Ave, BLACKBURN, VIC, 3130, or email: dwdv@dwdv.org.au

A Hastened Death by Self-Denial of Food and Drink, by Boudewijn Chabot

Death by the refusal of food and drink can be a peaceful method of dying for those who are suffering intolerably and without relief. Until now, there had been no significant studies of how well this technique works. Dutch psychiatrist and pioneer in the dying with dignity movement, Boudewijn Chabot, corrects that gap with his new book. Chabot uses highly understandable prose to explain some of the more medical aspects of a death by refusal of food and water, and dispels several common myths in the process.

Please Let Me Die

A film from NVVE. 50 minutes

This courageous film deals with the taboo of self-chosen death of people with a chronic

mental disease who find their lives unbearable and utterly pointless, and who prefer death instead. There are interviews with a Dutch legislator, a public prosecutor, a psychiatrist, and a consultant from the NVVE. Made by documentary film maker, Eveline van Dijck, it was inspired by the self-elected death of her mentally ill sister. (World Right-to-Die Newsletter 57: Winter 2010) See human.nl web page.

Last Rights: Facing End of Life Choices

Karen Cantor, 56 min. www.filmmakers.com

This DVD traces the lives of four terminally ill people and the decisions they make with their families about hastening their death. A sensitive, informative overview of why people choose a hastened death and the argument on both sides. (*World Right-to-Die Newsletter* 57: 2010)

☺ (A reader/member contributed this joke.)

Thanks Julia Hewett)

Last night, my husband and I were sitting in the living room and I said to him, "I never want to live in a vegetative state, dependent on some machine and fluids from a bottle." He got up, unplugged the Computer, and threw out my wine.
He's such a bastard.....

NEEDED! A Volunteer to Help with the Website (www.dwdq.org.au) You do not need to be located in Brisbane. We will provide a copy of DreamWeaver CS4, and help with using it. For info contact Webmaster (Bob) [dwdq@optusnet.com.au]

Speakers: Spread the word...Are you a member of, or in touch with a social club? Retirement village? Church group? P&C? We have speakers who will talk about DWDQ, its history, aims and activities. Please phone 1300 733 818 or email dwdq@vesq.org.au to arrange a guest speaker now, or to put on next year's calendar.

Please send:

Comments and contributions to the Newsletter Editor: Mary Mannison, 16 Howard St., PADDINGTON, 4064, or email: mannison@optusnet.com.au

Useful Websites

www.finalexit.org (background)
www.assistedsuicide.org (essays on right to die)
www.finalexitnetwork.org (information)
www.worldrtd.net (world scene)
www.finalexit.org/ergo-store (literature, DVD)

Frontline

Faye Girsh put it this way: "I congratulate the courageous doctors in our movement for challenging unjust law in their countries. I include Dr. Michael Irwin, Dr. Jack Kevorkian, Dr. Larry Egbert, Dr. Alfonso Quintana, Dr. Boudewijn Chabot, Dr. Pieter Admiraal, Dr. Richard Mac Donald, Dr. Rodney Syme, Dr. Philip Nitschke and the many others who have helped propel our movement forward. Of course, it has not just been the courage of doctors which will eventually change these laws but their leadership is particularly brave and inspiring."

Dr Libby Wilson

Dr Libby Wilson, 83, the founder of the right-to-die lobby group Friends At The End (Fate), and a long time campaigner for a change in the law, travelled down from her home in Glasgow to be formally arrested by detectives investigating the death of Cari Loder, an academic who suffered multiple sclerosis. Mrs Loder, who killed herself with helium gas bought over the internet, spoke to Dr Wilson by telephone before her death to ask advice. The former GP was the first person to be arrested on euthanasia charges since the Director of Public Prosecutions published new guidelines on when to charge people suspected of assisting suicides. The doctor, who once wrote a book advising the terminally ill how to end their lives, was questioned on suspicion of aiding, abetting counselling or procuring a suicide. "What a waste of police time and effort to investigate the death of a lady who wanted to die and had good reason to die." (*The Daily Telegraph*, London, 29/09/09)

Dr. Setsuko Suda, and Cohorts

Japan's Supreme Court on Wednesday found a doctor guilty of removing a breathing tube from a 58-year-old male patient whose heart and lungs had stopped functioning. At his family's request, she injected a muscle relaxant to hasten his death. Suda said she did not accept

the guilty verdict. "I don't think it's a crime," she said. Prosecutors are investigating two other doctors for removing respirators from seven patients at a hospital in central Japan. Such acts risk debarment and imprisonment, but hasten the process of legal reform in Japan. (Asia One and AFP 09/12/09)

Dr. Philip Nitschke

There are large numbers of elderly people who have decided they don't want long, lingering, painful deaths, and activists like Dr. Nitschke, founder and President of *Exit International*, continue to provide information that empowers people to carry out their preferred end-of-life choice. He no longer believes voluntary euthanasia should only be available to the terminally ill but that elderly people concerned about getting old and incapacitated should also have a choice, and he travels the world offering informative Talks (to over 50's) and Workshops (to members only) which provide information about self-deliverance. Acting on compassion borne of experience, he shoulders harassment from the authorities and criticism from his peers. His commitment, research, and indefatigable participation in the movement, puts him well and truly in "The Front Line".

Compassion and Care

Wouldn't you help? Thanks to the Front Line, all of whom put themselves at great risk to help others.

Euthanasia offers humane exit

As members of a caring society, we need to accept the need for euthanasia. I have had three relatives die after long, painful illnesses in the last few years. My brother-in-law died of Parkinson's at 59. Just before he lost the ability to speak entirely, he said "everything is a pain or a hassle." However, he had to live on for several years after that, totally unable to do anything for himself. My mother-in-law suffered for many years with advanced osteoporosis and kept saying, "I think God's lost my ticket, when is He coming to get me?" My father-in-law lost his short-term memory and lived on for 10 years not knowing where he was, not remembering when his wife and son had died or even that he had fallen and cracked his pelvis and shouldn't try to stand. If we treated our aging animals like this, the SPCA would be after us. (Sheila Ruffell, Times Colonist, Victoria, B C)

Esophageal Cancer "

The Courtenay man who waged a public fight over right to die legislation during his final days has lost his short battle with esophageal cancer. "Rocket" Hiltz, age 58, passed away on Dec. 3. "It's a joyless, painful existence, this one. It hurts to laugh or cry." A friend said, "It was so unnecessary, he was just so out of it. He couldn't talk. He was just lying there getting smaller and smaller and smaller. If he could have, he would have died weeks ago. I'd never even thought about euthanasia, particularly," the friend said, "Now I believe in it more than ever."

.....
• 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.
.....

In Queensland

Bribie Island

Bribie Island meetings to be held on the first Friday of the quarter at the Anzac Room, RSL Bribie Island – Toorbul St, Bongaree at 10am:
March 5th, June 4th, September 3rd, December 4th.

Brisbane

LOOKING BACK – LOOKING FORWARD

When I attended a meeting of presidents of Australian VE societies in October last year I outlined the dim situation in Queensland. I explained that, in a parliament of 89 members, four are Independents, 51 are Labor and 34 are LNP. All four Independents are opposed to VE as are also a majority within both the Labor and LNP camps. This has prevented the bringing of a VE Bill before the Queensland parliament.

Fortunately, there has been progress in other states. In late 2009 we saw VE Bills (introduced by Greens) debated in the upper houses of both the Tasmanian and SA Parliaments. Regrettably, both bills were defeated. There are, however, two more bills likely to be debated in state parliaments this year. One is in the lower house of the SA Parliament (Independent) and one is in the upper house of the WA Parliament (Green). Both these bills are 'minimalist' in approach: aiming to get something rather than continue with nothing. A person will have to be very close to death to use either of these bills but, once operational, it will weaken the claims of opponents to VE.

Several of our members have died in the last year, some having chosen self-deliverance. Recently, we lost one of our strongest supporters when Nick Bonne succumbed to cancer. Nick has served eagerly on our committee until ill health forced his retirement. Nick has been our unsurpassed 'gadget man', someone able to make anything requiring workshop skills. Thank you Nick.

John Todd, President

Brisbane Branch Last Meeting:

At the last meeting in October we had a lovely and very brave representative from "Cherish Life", formally "Right-To-Life Qld" try to convince us that deliberately ending a life is wrong. Although attendance was much smaller than usual, this was one of the most lively and interactive meetings we have had for some time.

Gold Coast Support Group

Happy New Year everyone, I hope you enjoyed Christmas immensely and are ready to take on a great new year. We won't be having a speaker for our first meeting of the year, because as usual, John Edge has been beavering away at perfecting the Helium method over the Christmas break.

Over the past few years, the Helium Method, has become for many the preferred means of Self

Deliverance. Recently, disturbing claims have surfaced regarding failures in Helium systems fitted with gas flow restrictors. Examination of this system reveals a potential problem, which may well have been the cause. Evidence will be presented about the nature of the problem with a simple cost effective means to overcome it.

SEE YOU ALL THERE

John Edge

NEXT MEETING: Wednesday 17 Feb 10 am – 12noon. Pacific Fair Meeting Room (Above Rockmans) Gordon. Ph: 07 5536 5997

Sunshine Coast President's Report

Newsletters with accompanying letters about DWD were sent to seven local politicians as well as newspaper items of relevance. Guest speaker for November meeting was Anne Bratten-Pow, Bloomhill Cancer Care. The Christmas luncheon was well attended, and, as in previous years, was a most enjoyable get-together.

The guest speaker at the quarterly Bribie Island meeting, Mark from the Queensland Aged and Disability Advocate, provided a very interesting talk on matters pertinent to our members, with a very good interactive question and answer session. The number of members attending was disheartening, and only for the attendance of seven Maroochydore members was the meeting just worthwhile.

June and Alastair represented the Sunshine Coast branch at the SAVES conference and reported back to the members on a very worthwhile gathering. Whilst Beryl and Bron were interviewed by police after the article on the death of Frank Ward, they were not involved and no further action was taken.

Over the years, each September at Cottontree Park, the branch has celebrated the life of Bob Dent, the first man to use the Rights of the Terminally Ill Act (1996) of the NT which was overturned by the Federal government in 1997. This year some members had a quiet lunch with his widow, Judy. The tree which was planted in the Park, in his memory and the base of the plaque is kept in sparkling order by our long standing member, Henry Krome. When cleaning the plaque Henry is gratified by the number of people who stop and talk to him about DWD. Thank you Henry for your good work.

The guest speaker at our January 20 meeting will be Libby Acklana from Friends of the Pacific Islands, a group which works tirelessly for the underprivileged without profit for themselves. Any household items, clothing, material, books etc which you no longer use would make a great donation to their work and we ask if you could bring it along to the meeting.