

## VALE JOHN EDGE

John Edge, aged 74, chose self-deliverance on 8 December, 2010.

I knew John throughout the last twelve years of his life. We both entered service for the then Voluntary Euthanasia Society of Queensland after witnessing the over-turning of the Northern Territory's Rights of the Terminally Ill Act. John became convener of the Gold Coast Support Group and I became president of the Brisbane Branch.

We worked together on several projects, none quite as valuable as that bearing the name of Nancy Crick. Through John's tireless efforts the world heard of Nancy and her challenge to Premier Peter Beattie to legislate so that she and other sufferers could die peacefully and painlessly with medical assistance.

Section 311 of the Queensland Criminal Code states:  
Any person who---

(a) procures another to kill himself or herself; or  
(b) counsels another to kill himself or herself and thereby induces the other person to do so; or  
(c) aids another in killing himself or herself;  
is guilty of a crime and liable to imprisonment for life.

As at the year 2001 no one had been charged under Section 311 so there had been no clarification of what constituted 'aiding suicide'. Did being present when someone ended his/her life constitute 'aiding suicide'?

Three bowel operations to remove cancer had left Nancy seriously debilitated. Her much shortened bowel was unable to extract enough nutrition from food to sustain health. Numerous adhesions both within and without the bowel caused malfunction and pain and dictated she stay close to a toilet at all times. At 69 years of age, Nancy saw a peaceful, painless death as her best option. However, she wanted to end life in the company of friends and relations she loved. Would these people be at risk of prosecution if they were present? The law must be clarified. It was arranged that 21 persons would be present when Nancy ended her life to force clarification.

There were sizable problems but John found solutions. Nancy had to obtain drugs that would peacefully end her life: not easy, but achievable. The intriguing story is told in John's self-published book: *Telling it Straight*.

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I was one of the friends and supporters present on the night of 22 May, 2002, when Nancy ended her life. John, with the assistance of Nancy and Philip, had organized every detail of a successful, covert operation that brought together all 22 of us at Nancy's home without press or police being alerted! That was impressive.

There was yet more stress for John after Nancy's death. The police conducted an investigation that lasted two years and included raids on the homes of John and Philip. Finally on 18 June 2004, the Queensland Commissioner of Police, announced: "Being present when someone takes their life does not in itself constitute an offence."

This was a most significant achievement and, while Nancy, Philip and others played roles, it was John who made it happen.

Thank you mate for so much effort that has furthered the VE movement in Queensland.

John Todd  
President, Brisbane Branch, DWDQ

*Ed's Note: Add your memories. Please send to the Editor: Mary Mannison, 27 Ford St., BONGAREE, 4507; or email: [mannison@optusnet.com.au](mailto:mannison@optusnet.com.au) (See more farewells on pp7-8.)*

**Next Meeting:** Wednesday, 9 February, 1.15-3.15pm  
Brisbane Square Library  
266 George St.

Hear John Todd review recent DWDQ Activities  
See Video about the Rodriguez case in Canada

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## GENERAL NEWS

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### Australia: New Umbrella Group

YourLastRight.com was officially launched October 6, 2010. It brings together voluntary euthanasia and dying with dignity organisations from all Australian States and Territories, announcing, "We are law reform, education, and self-help organisations. We aim to have the law changed to provide choice and dignity at the end of life." <http://www.yourlastright.com>

### Victoria: PAD Supporter Wins Seat

Physician-assisted dying supporter Greens MLC Colleen Hartland has had her re-election as an Upper House representative for Victoria's Western Metropolitan Region officially confirmed. The provisional results of counting for the Upper House were released on December 14, confirming Colleen had pulled ahead of her nearest rival, the ALP's Bob Smith, by 2035 votes. She is a great supporter of aid-in-dying seen through her recent introduction of a motion to review the Medical Treatment Act and her sponsorship of the Medical Treatment (Physician Assisted Dying) Bill in 2008. (DWDV Newsletter, [http://dwdv.org.au/newsletters/nl\\_152Spring10.pdf](http://dwdv.org.au/newsletters/nl_152Spring10.pdf))

### Sydney

Last October Exit International's billboard appeared in Sydney. It read, "85% of Australians support VOLUNTARY EUTHANASIA Our Government doesn't! Make them Listen. [www.exitinternational.net.au](http://www.exitinternational.net.au) (Read *The Sydney Morning Herald's* article about the billboard at <http://bit.ly/eGQMCP>)

### England: No Charges for Assisted-Suicide

England's new guidelines on when prosecutions for assisted suicide are likely to be brought suggest that prosecutors no longer regard it a crime to help someone to die out of compassion. The Director of Public Prosecutions has declined to bring charges against at least 20 people suspected of helping others commit suicide since the guidelines came into effect. Mr Starmer was giving evidence at an inquiry into assisted dying led by Lord Falconer, former Labour Lord Chancellor. (*The Mail online* in London, 15/12/10)

### Doctor Challenges BMA

A doctor with cancer writes in *The Daily Mail* "...assisted dying is forbidden largely because those making the legal and political decisions tend to have a vested interest professionally against assisted dying or have particular religious views. I (feel) incensed that the British Medical Association, which claims to represent doctors, opposes physician-assisted suicide without having canvassed its members. When I went public with my bad news in the British Medical Journal, hundreds of doctors emailed me to support

the stand I'd taken on assisted dying. *Read his whole article at* <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-1332212/Cancer-killing-I-decide-I-die.html?ito=feeds-newsxml>

### Scotland: Fails to Gain Support

Ms Macdonald, the independent MSP for the Lothians, who suffers from Parkinson's disease, spoke out yesterday after a Scottish Parliament committee recommended that her End of Life Assistance Bill to change the law should be rejected. She had feared the system was rigged against her proposal ever since it was allocated to a special committee set up for the piece of legislation, instead of to the health committee where such a bill would normally go.

The Bill defined end-of-life assistance as "assistance, including the provision or administration of appropriate means, to enable a person to die with dignity and a minimum of distress". But the committee said the terminology was "confusing and arguably misleading", adding that it would have been less ambiguous to use "assisted suicide" and "voluntary euthanasia". (*The Herald*, Scotland, 19/11/10) Details of the Bill: <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/s3/bills/38-EndLifeAssist/index.htm>

### Final Exit Network: Georgia, USA

The attorneys for the four Final Exit Network members asked a judge to dismiss charges because Georgia law doesn't actually ban assisted suicide, but rather restricts the group from advertising its services. The attorneys contend the law violates state and federal free speech laws. "We are being prosecuted for publicly advertising something that's perfectly legal," said law reform one of six defense attorneys at a court hearing on the case. "This couldn't possibly be a crime. In Georgia assisted suicide and suicide is not illegal"

"The allegations against us are pure fantasy," said Goodwin (one of the four arrested), who is now the president of the World Federation of Right to Die Societies. Goodwin and others said they hope the legal fight will help validate the movement's efforts while exposing the constitutional defects in Georgia law. (AP, 10/12/10)

### Korea

Nearly 500 elderly people in Seoul have signed pledges to leave tangible evidence confirming their desire for a natural death if they lapse into a coma. "This was initiated to help reduce the anguish of medical doctors and family members when dealing with terminally ill patients over whether to utilize life-support treatment," said Kim Il-soon, chairman for Korea Golden Age Forum, an association for the elderly that launched the campaign. (*The Korea Times*, 16/12/10)

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## UPDATE ON RIGHT-TO-DIE LEGISLATION

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### Germany

The European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg has begun hearing the case of Ulrich Koch vs. Germany. After falling in front of her house in 2002, Koch's wife was paralysed from the neck down and required artificial ventilation and constant care from nursing staff. Koch said his wife thereafter "suffered from terrible spasms" and even had trouble "sitting in a wheelchair." Because she was paralysed, she appealed for active help to end her life. In November, 2004, she made a request to Germany's Federal Institute for Drugs and Medical Devices to grant her authorization to obtain the medication necessary to commit suicide, but the institute refused, arguing that her wish contravened the German Narcotics Act. The couple appealed the decision, and in the meantime went ahead with their own plans to let the woman die outside of Germany. On February 12, 2005, she committed suicide in Switzerland, assisted by Dignitas.

The European Court of Human Rights must now decide whether the German law banning "active" assisted suicide infringes on a person's right to privacy and a dignified death, as stipulated by Article 8 of the German constitution. If the court rules in the plaintiff's favour, it could have far-reaching consequences for the growing tide of support across Europe for assisted suicides.

### Montana

Montana lawmakers soon will be considering a bill to allow physician-assisted suicide when a terminally ill patient requests it. Rep. Dick Barrett, D-Missoula, is introducing legislation to implement a 2009 Montana Supreme Court decision which allowed this procedure when a terminally ill patient requested it. "We'll be advocating for Montanans to continue to have access to aid in dying and to make those decisions with their doctor without government interference." Meanwhile, Sen. Greg Hinkle, R-Thompson Falls, is requesting a bill to ban physician-assisted suicide in Montana. He calls it "elder abuse." (*The Missoulian*, 07/12/10)

### Canberra

The debate on Bob Brown's Private Member's Bill, known as the 'Restoring Territory Rights (VE Legislation)' was blocked on the last sitting day of 2010 by the Victorian Coalition and Family First Senator Steve Fielding. Senator Brown has vowed to re-instate parliamentary debate in early 2011. (*e-Deliverance*, Dec-Jan, 2010-11)

### South Australia

Another attempt to legalise voluntary euthanasia in South Australia has been rejected by State Parliament's Upper House. There were several hours of debate in the Legislative Council but the private member's bill was lost on the voices after its sponsor, the Greens MP Mark Parnell, conceded it lacked enough support to pass. It was the third voluntary euthanasia bill defeated in the SA Parliament since 2003.

Mr Parnell said he accepted the result, for now. "A number of members have expressed their support for the concept but for a variety of reasons they're not able to support this bill. They understand the suffering in the community that we need to do something about, but they don't think this bill is quite the right model. For those people who have left the door open, I thank you."

A separate bill by the Labor MP Stephanie Key is under consideration by the House of Assembly. (TV News SA, 25/11/10) Video: Parliament rejects euthanasia bill (7pm TV News SA)

### 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@dwdq.org.au](mailto:dwdq@dwdq.org.au) to arrange a guest speaker now, or to put on next year's calendar.

### Anagrams

ASTRONOMER:  
When you rearrange the letters: MOON STARER

☺ Money can't buy happiness -- but somehow it's more comfortable to cry in a Porsche than in a Holden.

☺ No one ever says "It's only a game" when their team is winning

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## RESEARCH FINDINGS

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### Physician Survey (USA)

Tallying up responses from more than 10,000 physicians, Medscape found the most controversial of the 21 questions on its survey was physician-assisted suicide with almost 46% in favour, 41% against, and the rest uncommitted. Comments ranged from "Assisted suicide is murder," to "I'd want it for me when the need arises." Asked "Would you ever recommend or give life-sustaining therapy when you judged that it was futile?" the respondents divided fairly evenly, with almost 24% marking "Yes," 37% marking "No," and 39% indicating "It depends." (Medscape Medical News, 11/11/10)

### Canadian Poll Results

Angus Reid Public Opinion Polls reported on 15 Dec 2010 that the majority of Canadians support legalizing euthanasia, but only a third would consent to a parent ending the life of a child who suffers from a severe form of a condition. Large majorities of Canadians believe legalizing euthanasia would give people who are suffering an opportunity to ease their pain (81%) and establish clearer guidelines for doctors to deal with end-of-life decisions (72%). Considerably fewer respondents side with the notion that legalizing euthanasia would leave vulnerable people without sufficient legal protection (42%) and send the message that the lives of the sick or disabled are less valuable (33%). Two-in-five (41%) believe there should be no punishment for a parent found guilty of assisting a terminally ill son or daughter to die.

One-in-four respondents (26%) believe people who help a person to commit suicide should be prosecuted, while 42%. The public rejects doctor-assisted suicide in cases where a patient has a lifelong, but non-life threatening condition such as being quadriplegic and wishes to end his or her life (55%) and when a patient wishes to die at the same time as their spouse or other loved one (79%).

### Scotland

Almost eight out of 10 Scots support plans to legalise assisted suicide, a survey has revealed. Independent MSP Margo MacDonald was hoping to change the law to make Scotland the first part of the UK where doctors could legally help patients to die. She released the poll findings ahead of a crucial vote in Holyrood on her proposals. (*Ed Note: The Bill failed, but she will try again.*) (Press Association, UK, 23/11/10)

### Switzerland

A recent survey, which interviewed 1,500 people across Switzerland, found that a majority of Swiss people favour allowing assisted suicide, but oppose the use of the service by visiting foreigners. Some 60

per cent of respondents in the poll conducted by the University of Zurich said they would approve of a physician administering a fatal dose to a terminally ill cancer patient, and 70 per cent favoured allowing patients to administer their own overdoses.

Less controversially, more than 80 per cent of respondents said they believed a doctor should be able to stop feeding a person in a coma or turn off a machine that facilitates breathing for someone who has muscular diseases and cannot survive without a ventilator. Only about one-third of people in the survey felt doctors should be allowed to aid people to kill themselves when they were simply tired of life, but had no illness. (Earth Times, 02/09/10)(Geneva)

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## BOOKS FILMS ETC

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### Euthanasia Comedy Wins Award

Belgium's "Kill Me Please", a black comedy about euthanasia shot by French director Olias Barco, won the Golden Marc'Aurelio best film award at the Rome Film Festival. It tells the life of Dr. Kruger who wants to turn suicide into a simple, medically assisted act. His clinic attracts a strange cast including a travelling salesman, a rich Luxembourg heir, and an old Berlin cabaret singer.

### Bollywood Explores Euthanasia

In Guzaarish, Sanjay Leela Bansali handles issues relating to euthanasia. This is a film about a master magician who becomes a paraplegic after one of his own tricks goes wrong. Undaunted, he soldiers on to become a popular DJ - until he decides to fight for his right to die. (*Leicester Mercury*, 18/11/10)

### Sundance Film Festival

Two of the 16 titles selected from 841 submissions for the prestigious U.S. Documentary Competition in January are about euthanasia: "How to Die in Oregon," directed by Peter Richardson, and "We Were Here," directed by David Weissman. (*The Oregonian*, 08/12/10, Shawn Levy)

### After 20 Years in Print...

The paperback format of "Final Exit: The Practicalities of Self-Deliverance and Assisted Suicide for the Dying" by Derek Humphrey is ranked by Amazon as #21,095 out of over 8,000,000 books.

### Message in the Sky

A lighted helicopter message that ran in the evenings over Washington DC and Baltimore the last two weekends of October read "finalexitnetwork.org DEATH WITH DIGNITY". See it for yourself at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oaamo5TWwDA>

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## THE FRONT LINE

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<http://www.mg.co.za/article/2010-12-22-professor-who-helped-mom-die-arrives-back-in-sa>

### Dr. Ann McPherson writes...

As a GP for more than 40 years, I believe that people should not have to suffer against their wishes at the end of life. Alongside access to good quality end-of-life care and the right to refuse treatment, I believe that terminally ill adults should have the choice of an assisted death, subject to safeguards. The cost of not providing this choice is the stream of Britons travelling abroad to die, or desperately seeking, via the internet, often macabre and inhumane ways of ending their lives at home...Rather than using Google as a counselling service, I would much prefer my patients to feel that they could talk to me openly about their desire to hasten their death, and that, while I would explore alternative options with them, to trust me, if competent to make such a decision, to respect their wishes. (Dr Ann McPherson CBE is medical director of the DIPEX Health Experiences Research Group at Oxford University. She has been instrumental in forming a new group of Healthcare Professionals who will challenge bodies such as the British Medical Association which oppose any change in the law that would allow others to help terminally ill people to die.)

### Professor Helped Mom Die

New Zealand authorities started an investigation after publication of material from a leaked early manuscript of Davison's book, *Before We Say Goodbye*, detailing the last few weeks of his mother's life. He was arrested while in New Zealand to visit relatives in Christchurch, and appeared in court for the first time on September 24. Davison (48) is Head of the Department of Biotechnology's forensics laboratory at the University of the Western Cape, South Africa, and has been allowed to return to South Africa while awaiting trial in New Zealand next year.

Addressing a media briefing in Cape Town, Professor Sean Davison announced he would campaign for a change to local law to permit voluntary euthanasia. "What I did to help my mother at the end of her life I did for the love of my mother," he said. "I did not do it to write a book nor to become a martyr for a cause to change the law. I also had no intention of joining the campaign for a law change on euthanasia." However, publication of the book had changed his life, and he now knew that the situation he faced with his mother's death was far more common than people imagined. He also knew that many people experienced undignified deaths that could have been prevented if the law was different. "I now see the importance of having control over one's own death if one is faced with a terminal illness and the need to change the law to make this possible in certain circumstances." (Ben MacLennan, Cape Town, South Africa, 22/12/10. *Mail & Guardian Online*)

### Swiss doctor cleared over assisted suicide

A former Neuchâtel cantonal head doctor has been acquitted in what campaigners are calling an important case over assisted suicide. A regional criminal court in Boudry ruled that the doctor had no choice when she took the final step to end the life of a terminally ill patient. Direct active euthanasia is illegal in Switzerland but assisted suicide and passive euthanasia (mercy killing) is not. In this case, the medic had started a lethal drip for a patient who was suffering from an incurable degenerative condition. As the patient, who had expressed a wish to die, was not able to perform the act herself, the doctor relied on a movement of the patient's foot as a signal. The court ruled that as there was no doubt about the patient's wishes, the doctor in this case had a medical and moral duty to break the law. (Swissinfo.ch, 06/12/10)

#### Poetry Corner:

...The Long Goodbye...

There comes a time when all our living  
Has changed into dreams of the night  
And fading through deteriorating old age  
Just does not seem morally right...

Having lived life to the full  
How do you wish to be remembered, surely not  
As a dribbling gaga old fool?

A morning rise can turn into a daze  
When the mirror does not see your face,  
Memories keep hitting the road  
Shrinking the brain to lighten its load,  
It also switches off sight and sound  
While only a beating heart is still body bound,  
So shy keep to a long life's belief  
Without any cure for a broken body's grief,  
Too many stale worm lives no longer belong  
But should come to accept and be strong  
That there is a time to open that door  
And not wait until you are no more.

By Lenko (62-year-old daughter of  
Toowoomba member, Jack Dittmar)

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## COMPASSION & CARE

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### “Locked-In” Syndrome

Jane Nicklinson, 55, a former nurse, told the Commission on Assisted Dying (in London) that there was "no chance" of her husband Tony changing his wish to die. The 56-year-old suffered a catastrophic stroke in 2005 leaving him paralysed from the neck down and only able to use his head and eyes to communicate. She told the inquiry her husband, once the "life and soul of the party" with a passion for rugby, now cannot move and has to communicate painstakingly via a perspex board and letters, looking, blinking and nodding to spell out words.

In his statement, prepared to be read to the inquiry by his wife, Mr Nicklinson said he decided in 2007 that he did not want to go on living. He called for a new law for "self-determination" with a test for competence for those who need help to die. "We have a law which condemns me and others like me to a life of misery - makes my wife a murderer for simply carrying out my wishes - puts people in jail for up to 14 years for helping someone to commit suicide, makes me wish for a fatal condition, or consider starvation as a way out," he said. "Tell me just what is compassionate about that?" Mr. Nicklinson's case is now the subject of a legal challenge to clarify the law on mercy killing.

### Mercy Killing or Murder?

Roy Laird (88) was charged with murder after shooting his 86-year-old wife, Clara, at her nursing home. The couple's 68-year-old daughter called the single gunshot wound to the head a "mercy killing". His supporters argue that he had dedicated his life to his wife of nearly 70 years who had long been suffering and recently lost the ability to feed herself, walk, or even sit up in a wheelchair. The case is a prime example of how society's values can clash with legal imperatives. "The problem is that what we think of as mercy killing is one of the clearest possible instances of premeditated murder," said Robert Weisberg, a professor of criminal law at Stanford University.

Prosecutors enjoy wide discretion over how to bring suspects like Laird to justice and sometimes decide to charge them with manslaughter or decline to file charges at all, said Yale Kamisar, a professor at the University of San Diego School of Law who has studied euthanasia and assisted suicide since the 1950s. "Our society is really torn because there are arguments on both sides: There is a concern that you have to treat all life equally, and there's also a concern that you have to show compassion." (Los Angeles Times, 24/11/10)

### Death in Isolation

After taking an overdose of pills the 91-year-old novelist, Jane Aiken Hodge, lay in bed, alive but

unconscious, for four days, watched by her daughters, before she finally died. Her daughter described the dilemma faced by the family and the "inhuman" legal position they have endured as they await a decision on whether anyone will be prosecuted. Hodge had left strict instructions with her GP and in a letter that no attempt be made to revive her. She also had a "Do not resuscitate" card, and a "To whom it may concern" letter expressing her clear distress that she had been unable to discuss her plans with her daughters because of the risk of legal action. My mother was protecting us. What a dreadful way to die: not the decision, but the fact that she could not talk to us. She could not say, 'I am thinking about doing this, hold my hand'. In a humane society it should be possible for someone in their right mind who, whether through age or illness, wants to die now rather than later, to be able to discuss this wish and to be helped to fulfil it rather than, like my brave mother, having to do it in isolation and without being sure if it is going to work."

The novelist's death will fuel the debate on calls for a change in the law to allow medically assisted suicides and raise questions about the legal and ethical issues surrounding the help available to those who want to die. (The Times, London, 29/07/10)

### Free Free!

[Advance Health Directive Forms.](#)

Just ask the Treasurer: Gill MacCormick, PO Box 432, Sherwood, Qld, 4075. (stamps would be appreciated)

### 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.

### ☺ My Living Will:

I, Maxine, being of sound mind and body, do not wish to be kept alive indefinitely by artificial means. ... If a reasonable amount of time has passed and I fail to ask for at least one of the following: Glass of Wine, Chocolate, Margarita, Chocolate, Cold Beer, Chocolate, Chicken Fried Steak with Gravy, Chocolate, French Fries, Chocolate, Mexican Food, Chocolate, Ice Cream, Chocolate, Sex, Chocolate, Daiquiri, Chocolate...it should be presumed that I won't ever get better. When such a determination is reached, I hereby instruct my appointed person and attending physicians to pull the plug, reel in the tubes and call it a day (source unknown).

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## IN QUEENSLAND

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### Brisbane Branch

Hear a review of recent activities at the next meeting: Wednesday, 9 February, 1.15-3.15 pm at the Brisbane Square Library. Also stay to see a video from Canada about the Rodriguez case. Afternoon tea provided.

### Sunshine Coast Branch

Monthly meetings continue to be well attended. Members with email are receiving jottings of events and letters to politicians and so on, and are responding with their thoughts on those matters. The Christmas party was, as always, a most enjoyable event, demonstrating the good support our members have for DWDQ.

The Conference of the World Federation of Right to Die Societies was excellent, and a report summarizing the highlights was prepared for our library. Alastair spoke to a meeting, organized by Denis Chiron, of interested people at Albany Creek. A busload of members attended a Brisbane meeting to hear Prof. Jan Bernheim speak. Mark McArdle (Member for Caloundra) and Jan Stuckey (Member for Currumbin) also attended. Some of our committee also attended a Brisbane Branch meeting to listen to Dr Rohan Vora, a palliative care specialist, who gave an excellent and very informative talk on palliative care in Queensland.

Our new publicity officer, Lynn Kidd, is putting up new initiatives and ideas with great energy. Henry Krome has had his broken hip remodelled and is home from hospital. Joan Marshall is recovering well after surgery for a broken femur.

On December 5, June & I attended a Community Cabinet Government Reception at which June spent some time chatting to Anna Bligh about the unenviable situation in which people with incurable pain find themselves. The Premier talked about a particular distressing death she knew of personally and took down contact details to pass on to the Health minister who wasn't present on this occasion.

Next meeting on Wednesday 19th January, will feature a Senior Self Defence session conducted by Martin Day. Please bring a mobile phone, umbrella and car keys to take part- we will learn how to defend ourselves in difficult situations.

### Former Gold Coast Support Group

(A note from Gordon Bell)

Hi everyone, I hope you are all getting back to normal after Mother Nature's onslaught. I have some news even though it is rather sad. Some of you will know, some of you will not, but over the Christmas period we lost two rather special euthanasia supporter's. We

lost Millicent Barry and John Edge. Millicent was a life member of D.W.D.Q. and also the Co-founder along with Joy Overell of the Gold Coast Support Group. Millicent had not enjoyed good health for several years, but still attended meetings and always had plenty of input for our cause. She passed away at the beginning of January 2011. I am sure she will be sadly missed by all. John, as most of you know, was the Co-ordinator of our group for many years, he was a tireless worker for our cause, and did more than most of us ever imagined. John passed away on the 8th Dec. 2010. I now have a tribute from a very good friend of John's, Ted Goodwin, to present to you. I am sure he won't mind, it says more about John than I could ever find the words for:

### Death of John Edge an Australian activist

OUR MOVEMENT LOSES A CHAMPION, by Ted Goodwin (Mr Goodwin is currently president of the World Federation of Right to Die Societies. [www.worldrtd.net](http://www.worldrtd.net))

On December 8, 2010, John Edge ended his life in much the same way as he had lived - with careful planning; thoughtfulness toward those for whom he cared; and exemplifying both dignity and courage.

I first met John in November, 2005, when he was heading Philip Nitschke's "Peanut Project" in the Snowy Mountains of Australia. John had been a long-time campaigner for VE in Queensland and New South Wales. In the ten days that I spent in Australia at that time, John and I became real "mates." I quickly came to understand and respect his unwavering sense of professionalism, determination, and loyalty to those individuals and causes that truly mattered in his life. (No artful politician, or showman, here! Just decency, integrity, intelligence and determination -- to the core!)

Over the past six years, we stayed in touch, by phone and email. (I only regretted that we did not live closer. In the last 18 months, John's physical condition had deteriorated significantly, due to a multiplicity of problems, including advanced emphysema. When my wife and I visited Australia in September and October of this year, we drove to Tweed Heads to visit him and his wife, Meg. After everyone had retired, he told me of his plans to end his life - alone, so that he would offer as little traumatic "aftershock" to Meg and others. It was particularly saddening for me to hug this man "goodbye," as we parted for the last time.

As he had planned, John "exited" alone, using helium. He left a four page eloquent letter, detailing the profound loss of health and impending autonomy, and his personal philosophy about individual control, which motivated his actions. This was, no doubt, the rational act of a rational individual.

There are those special people that we are privileged to know in our lifetime, people that serve as inspiration in our daily lives. The memory of John's courage, dedication and friendship will illuminate my journey into eternal darkness. So long, Mate!

### Join DWDQ

Send \$15 with your name and address to the Treasurer: Gill McCormick, PO Box 432, Sherwood, QLD, 4075  
If you pay your fees by direct debit to our account (CBA, USB: 064-162 A/C: 1002 3680), do include your name or member number with the deposit, so we know who the payment is from. If you have paid to 2011 by direct debit and have received a reminder with this newsletter, please phone Sandra on 3349 6372.

Please send:

Comments and contributions to the Newsletter  
Editor: Mary Mannison, 27 Ford St., Bongaree, 4507, or email [mannison@optusnet.com.au](mailto:mannison@optusnet.com.au)

### Ancient wisdom...

John Edge wrote a three-page suicide note for "relatives, friends, VE colleagues, acquaintances, and the finders of my remains". At the end, he commented, "In bringing this rather lengthy suicide note to an end I'll reach back into the distant past to the eloquent words of Seneca to say it all: Against all the injuries of life I have the refuge of death. If I can choose between a death of torture and one that is simple and easy, why should I not select the latter? As I choose the ship in which I sail and the house which I shall inhabit, so I will choose the death by which I leave life. In no matter more than death should we act according to our desire...Why should I endure the agonies of disease...When I can emancipate myself from all my torments."

### ☺ And they ask—Why Do I Like Retirement?

- Q: How many days in a week?  
A: 6 Saturdays, 1 Sunday
- Q: When is a retiree's bedtime?  
A: Three hours after s/he falls asleep on the couch.
- Q: How many retirees to change a light bulb?  
A: Only one, but it might take all day.
- Q: Why don't retirees mind being called seniors?  
A: The term comes with a 10% discount.

### ☺ Let's Get the Money

If you wanted to get rid of your frail old mom or dad to get the money, you wouldn't do it in a place where s/he had to fool two doctors, one specialist, a PC expert and a psychiatrist into believing s/he was not being coerced (and endure cooling off periods). You would do it in a place where a doctor can hasten the death of a very sick patient without supervision, discussion, or consent. In other words, you would do it today, before the adoption of a DWD law.

### ☺ Your Yearly Dementia Test

It's that time of year to take our annual senior citizen test. Exercise of the brain is as important as exercise of the muscles. As we grow older, it's important to keep mentally alert. If you don't use it, you lose it! Below is a very private way to gauge your loss or non-loss of intelligence. Take the test presented here to determine if you're losing it or not. OK, relax, clear your mind and begin.

1. What do you put in a toaster? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Say "silk" five times. Now spell "silk." What do cows drink? \_\_\_\_\_

Answers:

1. "bread" If you said "toast", give up now and do something else. Try not to hurt yourself. If you said "bread", go to Q2.
  2. Cows drink water. If you said "milk", don't attempt the next question. Your brain is overstressed and may even overheat. Content yourself with reading a more appropriate literature such as Auto World. However, if you said "water", proceed to Q3.
- Ed note: See more questions (and answers) in the April issue.*