



NT Voluntary Euthanasia Society Inc

GPO Box 2734 Darwin NT 0801

Patron: Mr Marshall Perron
President: Mrs Judy Dent

Newsletter

February 2004

The NTVES AGM was held on 9 August 2003 at 40 Wangalara Street, Tiwi and the following office bearers were elected unopposed:

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|-----------------------|--------------|------------------|-------------------------------|
| <i>President</i> | J Dent | <i>Committee</i> | S Carter, J Davis, J Hageman, |
| <i>Vice-President</i> | V Czernezkyj | | M McDonnell –Davis, |
| <i>Secretary</i> | Y Mc Neil | | K Quinn, S Simpson |
| <i>Treasurer</i> | S McKerrow | | |
| <i>Public Officer</i> | S McKerrow | | |

Many thanks to outgoing Secretary Marilyn McDonnell-Davis for her years of service. Thanks also to Marshall Perron for his outstanding job as Newsletter Editor for the past five years. We wish Marshall and Cherry safe and happy journeying wherever their wanderlust takes them. If anyone would like to take over the Newsletter mantle, please contact Judy on phone/fax 89451446 or email ntves@bigpond.com

Our Society did have a webpage at one time. If there is anyone with the expertise who would be willing to set up a webpage again, please contact Judy.

AROUND AUSTRALIA

VICTORIA

VES of Victoria, after discussion with a lot of politicians in the Victorian Parliament have become convinced there is a far greater likelihood of achieving legislation for Physician assisted suicide for terminal illness (as is available in Oregon, USA) than for VE by lethal injection for hopeless illness. Moreover, it became evident in those discussions, and from publicity about youth suicide, that the use of the term 'physician assisted suicide' is counterproductive. They have adopted the phrase 'medically assisted dying' as an alternative to PAS, the emphasis being on self-administered medication to allow hastening of death.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

South Australian Voluntary Euthanasia Society has reached another milestone in its history of advocacy for law reform to allow choice in dying for the hopelessly and terminally ill. The Society's first meeting was held 20 years ago on 25 November 1983 with the first edition of the VE Bulletin following in January 1984. Advocating for the 'right to choose' in law remains their focus as SAVES moves into its third decade.

From The Advertiser, Adelaide, 21 Jan 2004

A Bill for voluntary euthanasia was passed by the Young Leaders Parliament yesterday. Commenting on the 30-12 vote after a debate, South Australian Democrats leader, Sandra Kanck, who has her own 'Dignity in Dying Bill', said in actual parliament a majority of one was enough to get her bill through. "I congratulate Young Leaders who spoke in favour of voluntary euthanasia".

QUEENSLAND

Nancy's '21' are still waiting for the Queensland Department of Public Prosecutions to decide if any charges will be laid against them for staying with Nancy Crick when she died on 22 May 2002.

VESQ recently sent out 908 survey forms to determine if they should continue to support the development of a 'Peaceful Pill'. 445 members replied and 438 marked 'yes', indicating strong support for such a pill.

Brisbane's recently retired Lord Mayor, Jim Soorley is VESQ's new patron. In accepting the position he said,

"In many ways, I have had a life so different from others, and I have been lucky to experience life in the raw. As a student I worked in some of the worst institutions for the infirm and elderly in Sydney. In the third world I have seen the effects of poverty on ordinary people. As a priest I was privileged to be at the hospital bed of the dying. All of these experiences have challenged me to look at societal beliefs and values around the last stages of human life. I cannot understand how our society insists on being humane to dogs, cats and horses but insists that our life needs to be treated differently. The norm within human society is that we are special and that our life must be preserved at all cost and this in fact diminishes us at our most vulnerable time. If we really do respect human life we will do all in our power to support people at the end of their life to make rational and caring decisions about how and when they die. It is for these reasons that I support the Voluntary Euthanasia Society."

PRESS RELEASE FROM QUEENSLAND GREENS, 28 January 2004

A bill to legalise voluntary euthanasia will be introduced into Queensland Parliament if Greens candidate Bill Livermore wins the northern Gold Coast seat of Albert. Mr Livermore has witnessed what he calls many 'inhumane and lingering' deaths within hospital walls. "People must have the right to choose to die with dignity," said Mr Livermore.

If elected to represent the seat of Albert, Mr Livermore will introduce a Private Member's Bill to Queensland Parliament that would legalise voluntary euthanasia. "At the very least," he said, "the state's residents were entitled to a referendum on the issue. I've witnessed some of my best friends die in dreadful circumstances, and many of the medications provided either left them sweaty zombies or suffering crippling pain. Quite often there is no middle ground."

"Polls nationwide have consistently shown that 70 percent of Australians support voluntary euthanasia. It was briefly legalised in the Northern Territory but this was destroyed by Federal Liberal Parliamentarian Kevin Andrews. He did so without the support of the Australian community. So much for politicians reflecting community views," said Mr Livermore.

NEW SOUTH WALES

An attempt to secure a referendum on Voluntary Euthanasia in NSW has failed. The referendum call was part of a private member's bill put forward by Green MLC Ian Cohen which was overwhelmingly rejected by the Upper House.

NATIONALLY

The newly elected leader of the Federal Labour Party, Mark Latham, is on record as a supporter of VE. During the second reading of the Euthanasia Laws Bill (commonly referred to as the Kevin Andrews Bill) in November 1996, he said "History tells us of the folly of governments whenever they have sought to impose the morality of one part of society on a majority of other citizens. This points to the central dilemma of the euthanasia debate. It should not be about forcing terminally ill people to judge life itself through the prism of someone else's moral code. The only way religious questions have been successfully dealt with in public policy is by fostering choice.....Terminally ill citizens deserve nothing less than liberty in determining the manner by which their lives might end."

According to Philip Nitschke, in *Deliverance*, Latham's elevation may help advance the VE cause in the near future. Should he become Prime Minister at the next Federal election, VE supporters will be looking to Mr Latham to live up to his pronouncements.

Unfortunately, the Weekend Australian published shortly after *Deliverance* (17 January 2004) reports that Mr Latham has "changed his mind" about a number of issues now that he is in the position of ALP leader. Re euthanasia, he now says "I've got to say I've been rethinking it.....I'd want to have a long think about it if the matter came before parliament again".

FEDERAL ELECTION NEWS

Exit Australia has signalled that it will run a national campaign against conservative Liberal MP, Kevin Andrews, at the next Federal election. Mr Andrews, who was responsible for overturning the NT's historic euthanasia legislation, was recently promoted to Cabinet as Minister for Workplace Relations. His promotion is being seen by VE supporters as a further reward from the Prime Minister for his efforts in destroying legalised VE in Australia. While some VE societies have suggested Mr Andrews' past should be forgotten, *Exit* believes the Victorian MP is a continuing threat as he continues to push his own conservative agenda in defiance of majority Australia opinion.

Source: *Deliverance*

AROUND THE WORLD

NEW ZEALAND

The Lesley Martin website has been moved off-shore after Ms Martin and *Exit* in New Zealand were advised that the diary component of the website could be viewed as a contempt of court if hosted from New Zealand. Ms Martin is due for trial in early 2004. The website is available at www.lesleymartin.net If anyone would like to send a letter of support, the mailing address is C/o EXIT NZ, PO Box 7160, WANGANUI, NEW ZEALAND.

CANADA

The trial of Evelyn Martens, the membership director for the Right to Die Network of Canada, who was arrested in June 2002 on charges of counselling suicide and assisting a suicide, is expected to begin on 8 March 2004. Evelyn has been 'free' on bail with severe restrictions. She must obey an 11pm to 6am curfew, possess no materials such as plastic bags or tubing, permit weekly searches of her home, not possess a computer and not access e-mail or the Internet Police searched her house the day after she was arrested, seizing her computer and her stock of *Last Rights Publications* literature and materials.

Latimer 10 Years On

A decade after killing his disabled daughter, Tracy, and igniting a national debate on euthanasia, Robert Latimer offers no regrets, no excuses and no apologies. "It was the right thing to do," Latimer said in a rare interview from his cell. He spent two hours reiterating what he has said from the outset of this intensely emotional case: He ended Tracy's life a month short of her 13th birthday to stop the excruciating pain that ruled it. It's a belief that has prevailed despite his having been found guilty of second-degree murder at two trials and despite the upholding of the verdict at the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal, a final loss at the Supreme Court of Canada and now three years in the federal prison system. And it's a belief that allows him what he calls a "feeling of contentment" even as he denounces the courts, politicians and those he insists are among the minority of Canadians who feel his conviction and 10 year minimum sentence are just. "I have a positive frame of mind in knowing that what I did was right," Latimer said. "That's certainly not something that all their rulings would ever darken."

WORLD CONFERENCE

NTVES is a member of the World Federation of Right to Die Societies. Their 15th World Conference is to be held in Tokyo 30 September to 3 October 2004. A one-day trip is planned to Nikko Shrine, a Registered World Heritage site for 4 October .

REMINDER: NTVES membership year is July to June.

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| NT Voluntary Euthanasia Society | MEMBERSHIP / RENEWAL APPLICATION |
| I, | |
| of | |
| Telephone Home | Bus |
| hereby make application to become a member / renew my membership of the NT Voluntary Euthanasia Society. As a member I agree to abide by the rules and support the objectives of the Society. <u>My cheque / money order for \$15 is enclosed</u> | |
| Signed | |
| Make cheque payable to: NT Voluntary Euthanasia Society, and mail with completed form, to NTVES, P.O.Box 2734 Darwin NT 0801 | |
| Office use only: Approved / Not Approved | Receipt Number <input type="text"/> |