



NT Voluntary Euthanasia Society Inc

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Newsletter

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SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Following the defeat of her voluntary euthanasia bill last year, MP Stephanie Key decided to try a different approach. Her new bill currently being debated is not voluntary euthanasia legislation as it exists in some parts of the world. It is an amendment to the Criminal Code to give a compassionate doctor, who accedes to a terminally ill patient's request for a lethal dose, a legal defence should a charge of assisting a suicide be brought against the doctor. The bill appeared to have a reasonable chance of passing until Dr Philip Nitschke decided to publicly look for somewhere in Adelaide to establish a euthanasia clinic. He said his clinic would be necessary as allowing a terminally ill patient a peaceful death is not simply a matter of the GP writing a prescription for barbiturates for the patient. But that is how the Oregon USA Death with Dignity Act works and has been working for more than a decade. Progress of the Key bill now appears to have stalled. The bill has support in the community; may that support be reflected in the parliament.

Christian Today printed the following article 31 Mar 11

Christian group supports euthanasia
By: Clayton Hinds

Euthanasia is again in the headlines following the South Australian Parliament's provisional support to provide medical doctors with a legal defence against the assisted suicide of terminally ill patients.

Traditionally, Christians, churches and Christian lobby groups, such as the Australian Christian Lobby, have vehemently opposed any form of euthanasia; that is until now.

Christians for Voluntary Euthanasia was created by a retired Baptist Reverend in 2009 and has played a significant role in garnering the support of South Australian Members of Parliament for the current euthanasia bill.

Reverend Trevor Bensch, a former Minister at North Adelaide Baptist Church and now a hospital chaplain for the Baptist Church, has been noted by the Australian Greens Party as one of the influencing factors in the bill receiving as much support as it has.

Reverend Bensch says the primary purpose of the organisation is to make it known that many committed Christians support choice for voluntary euthanasia, holding it to be consistent with Jesus' message of love and compassion.

It is intended that all statements be moderate, respectful and based on facts, he said. We are an ecumenical group, with Catholic, Anglican, Uniting, Lutheran, Baptist, Unitarian, Church of Christ and Jehovah's Witness denominations already represented.

Christians for Voluntary Euthanasia is unapologetic for their desire to influence the thoughts of other Christians citing a desire to educate and inform others of the fact that Christians can support euthanasia.

Christians supporting choice for Voluntary Euthanasia also endeavours to educate the public through the media that there is strong public support amongst the more enlightened and thinking Christians for our legal right to make end of life decisions, countering the misinformation put forward by religious opposition to every person's right to a dignified and pain-free death, said Reverend Bensch.

It is doubtful the organisation will receive much, if any, support from churches, and from the wider Christian community; however, it is clear the organisation is heavily influencing debate on the subject.

The current bill before the South Australian Parliament has been referred to a parliamentary committee for final examination before going to a final vote expected in the coming months.

CANADA

Vancouver, B.C. April 8, 2011

Farewell Foundation files Supreme Court constitutional challenge to prohibition against assisted suicide.

On April 8, 2011, the founding directors of the Farewell Foundation for the Right to Die filed a Supreme Court lawsuit challenging the constitutional validity of the criminal prohibition against assisted suicide.

The constitutional challenge is to s.241(b) of the Criminal Code, which enacts the offence of aiding and abetting suicide, punishable by up to 14 years incarceration.

Farewell Foundation argues that the prohibition against assisted suicide is constitutionally invalid pursuant to s.7 of the Charter because it infringes individual liberty and security of the person by incarcerating those who render compassionate assistance, by prolonging unspeakable agony, and by depriving individuals of the right to choose the time, place and manner of their own deaths.

Farewell Foundation argues that s.241(b) infringes equality rights guaranteed under s.15 of the Charter by preventing disabled individuals who cannot physically carry out their own free will to end their lives. The severely disabled suffer the most from the prohibition against assisted suicide.

Farewell Foundation proposes to assist its members to end their lives humanely, similar to a model that exists for Swiss right-to-die organizations. The largest such group in Switzerland is Exit, with 70,000 members. In 2010 Exit helped 257 members to die. One Swiss group, Dignitas, accept foreigners.

Some of our members have terminal cancer, late-stage AIDS, and quadriplegia, said Russel Ogden, a director of Farewell Foundation. They seek assistance to end their lives humanely at home, without undertaking a tortuous journey to die in Switzerland. This lawsuit aims to allow the members of Farewell Foundation to assist each other, lawfully, with their end of life choices.

The case will next be in court on April 20, 2011 to determine the best process for moving the case forward. Launched on February 20, 2011, the Farewell Foundation already has over 60 members.

For more information, please visit www.farewellfoundation.ca

SCOTLAND

The Press Association in the UK reported 7 April 11

Assisted suicide law 'has support'

Veteran politician Margo MacDonald has vowed to continue her bid to legalise assisted suicide if she is re-elected to the Scottish Parliament.

The independent candidate for the Lothians region insisted she has public support on her side and would pursue attempts to re-ignite the issue at Holyrood.

MSPs voted down the controversial End of Life Assistance Bill, put forward by Ms MacDonald, by 85 votes to 16 in a free vote in December.

But Ms MacDonald, a former Scottish National Party MP who has Parkinson's disease, has now pledged to continue the fight.

She told BBC Radio Scotland: "It's one of the things that I have said to people in this campaign that, if elected, I will pursue it because I think I'll be able to demonstrate public support.

"I was sure I had public support last time but my colleagues, MSPs in all parties, were not sure of that, or else they were afraid to go into an election with what they thought was such a controversial vote behind them.

"This time if I'm elected, I'll prove two things. Firstly, there is public support for the idea, even to be properly investigated, and secondly, that you can hold a controversial opinion and still be elected."

The proposed legislation set out that anyone aged over 16 can request help to die. The person would have to be diagnosed as terminally ill and find life intolerable.

The Bill was considered by a specially convened Holyrood committee which did not support its general principles. Ms MacDonald said the issue was one of several she would like to focus on in the next parliament, including advancing the pensioners' cause and scrutinising public-private partnership (PPP) agreements.

COLOMBIA

PRESS RELEASE 6 April 2011

Last Wish Granted, the Colombian organization that has been quietly referring their members in Colombia to physicians for end of life consultations, has accepted their first international member for a medical referral.

Last Wish Granted follows the guidelines put in place by the Constitutional Court of Colombia's C-239-97 decision which disallows criminal penalties to physicians who have medically assisted a patient to die if the terminal patient has expressed his unequivocal wish to die.

Asked about the legality of accepting foreign nationals into their membership ranks, Carlos Martel, Director of Last Wish Granted, says, "For years, Colombia has been a destination of choice for patients who take advantage of its excellent practitioners and superior medical infrastructure. No one has to be a Colombian national to take advantage of those services and they don't have to be for these either,

specially since the Constitutional Court did not address the nationality of the terminal patient in their landmark 1997 decision. It is simply not an issue. "

In order to be referred to a physician for a consultation, you are required to be a member of Last Wish Granted, send a complete medical history about your actual medical condition, and, be accepted by the physician for a consultation.

For further inquiries, write to: ContactLWG@yahoo.com
---Carlos Martel, Director, Last Wish Granted

ENGLAND

The London Evening Standard reported 4 April 2011

Arrest me, says doctor in suicide trip

Sophie Goodchild and Rob Parsons

A former GP who travelled to a Swiss suicide clinic with a pensioner who ended her life there has called for his own arrest. Michael Irwin said today that he was prepared to face prosecution over the death of Nan Maitland last month, and hoped that this might help to change the law on euthanasia.

Ms Maitland, an 84-year-old former occupational therapist from Chelsea, had arthritis and said her life "consisted of more pain than pleasure". She was a founder of the Society for Old Age Rational Suicide.

In an interview with the Standard, Dr Irwin, 79, from Guildford, said: "I would welcome being investigated and would be prepared to go to court. It's cases like this which highlight the fact the law needs changing. My understanding is that I could be arrested because this person (Ms Maitland) was not terminally ill."

Dr Irwin, one of two right-to-die campaigners who were with Ms Maitland, described her death as "dignified and decent and what she wanted". He said: "We had dinner the previous night at this wonderful five-star hotel, we had a three-hour dinner with a nice Chablis and we discussed everything about our families and right-to-die meetings we had been to. We all went in a chauffeur-driven limousine the next day to a medical appointment. Just 15 minutes before she was going to swallow this lethal mixture she noticed that the edge was rough on one nail. She asked for a nail file to make it smoother. She was unconscious in five minutes and died in 20. I had her favourite chocolates to give to her because the mixture is bitter, but she said it wasn't that bad so she didn't need it. She just swallowed it and closed her eyes."

FIRST NOTICE NTVES AGM

The AGM is to be held on Saturday 6 August 2011 at Malarndirri Mc Carthy's office, Casuarina Village, at 10 am. Please mark the date in your diary.