



# NT Voluntary Euthanasia Society Inc

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Patron: Mr Marshall Perron  
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No.35

*Newsletter*

October 2012

## NEW DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Frances Coombe, President of SAVES, informed members of YourLastRight.com of an exciting new development – the formation of a youth advocacy group for VE, named South Australian Voluntary Euthanasia Youth Advocates (SAVE-YA). Amy Orange is the convenor, approaching her new role most capably and with vigour!

Amy has set up a Facebook group called Support South Australian Voluntary Euthanasia Youth Advocates (SAVE-YA) & would appreciate it you could share the link <http://www.facebook.com/#!/groups/261738790597072/> with your contacts or through your social media pages. Anyone interested in joining is invited to do so.

Amy welcomes any advice or ideas that you may have. Her email address is [saveyouthadvocates@hotmail.com](mailto:saveyouthadvocates@hotmail.com)

Please do your utmost to support her endeavour – the first such group in Australia & possibly the world!

ABC TV 7:30 Report had a story on the new group; it can be seen online at

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2012-09-21/youth-support-euthanasia/4275020>

## NTVES ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The NTVES AGM was held on 11 August 2012 and the following office bearers were elected unopposed:

<i>President</i>	J Dent
<i>Vice-President</i>	R Harrison
<i>Secretary</i>	E A Mason
<i>Treasurer</i>	S McKerrow
<i>Public Officer</i>	S McKerrow

The next AGM will be on 10 August 2013.

## FROM THE UK

In the current edition of the British Medical Journal, comes this from Colin Brewer, our long time supporter, often-times adviser, and friend. (The 'updated advice' he refers to is of course *Five Last Acts II*, though you do not have to be an Exit member to obtain it, as it's on Amazon). Dr Brewer also worked with us on determining optimum bag sizes to be used with the bags-plus-drugs method (before the days of helium), and, as you can see, is not only a keen contributor to the self-deliverance movement but a continuing thorn in the side of the more conservative lobby of the British Medical Association!

(Chris Docker, EXIT, Scotland).

### VIEWS & REVIEWS. Nothing's Sacred

Assisted dying: all good doctors do it anyway

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Colin Brewer, research director of the Stapleford Centre, London SW1W 9NP

The founders of the Voluntary Euthanasia Society in 1935, the world's first, included some eminent doctors, but not Lord Dawson, the royal physician, who thought legalisation unnecessary because, "all good doctors do it anyway." The following year, he euthanased George V in Queen Mary's presence. In 1939, Sigmund Freud requested and received physician assisted suicide. At my first committee meeting of the society in 1979, I suggested that because legalisation might not happen for many years (and how right I was) we should consider telling our members what many doctors both know and value: how to die peacefully if, despite good palliative care, the distress and indignity of incurable illness become intolerable. The society agreed. By 1979 most people died not at home but in hospital, where, as doctors sometimes discovered, religious nurses might inform on them to the police.

I drafted most of the proposed booklet (the first of its kind), but some members objected or feared prosecution, which caused delays. Scotland never criminalised suicide and has no specific law (as exists south of the border) against assisting it, so impatient Scottish members declared independence and published a booklet in 1980. Our own Guide to Self-Deliverance followed in 1981. Generally quite well received, including by medical journals, the first edition quickly sold out. However, the government threatened to block a reprint and sought a declaratory judgment against it. The judge (commenting favourably on its style) declined; but to avoid expensive litigation, and because the almost identical Scottish guide was not threatened, we decided against reprinting.

When palliation fails, patients should not have to travel to Switzerland, as the health ministers Anna Soubry and Norman Lamb recently remarked. The British Social Attitudes survey finds that four fifths of Britons consistently favour Dutch style legislation, but even after the particularly distressing case of Tony Nicklinson, who had locked in syndrome and recently unsuccessfully fought for the right to die, unrepresentative religious minorities, sometimes concealing their motivation, will resist reform. In several countries, those who, after careful consideration, want to leave life with dignity and in their own time can have expert assistance, as they get when entering life. Until the UK joins these countries, and when even unassisted suicide seems better than intractable and intolerable misery, updated do it yourself advice remains available (after three months of membership) to anyone who joins the Scottish

society. “The thought of suicide,” quipped Nietzsche, “is a great consolation: by means of it one gets successfully through many a bad night.” Many people just need that possibility. Only a few, but especially doctors, would actually use their enhanced thanatological knowledge. In other contexts, we call this patient empowerment and choice. Admittedly, doctors are more likely to obtain discreet professional assistance if necessary, but thanks to Scotland (and the internet) doctors and patients now have more equality in dying; and there is absolutely nothing the God squad can do about it.

[Competing interests: I used to be a committee member of the Voluntary Euthanasia Society. It is now called Dignity in Dying, and it campaigns for legalised physician assisted suicide but not for the kind of patient empowerment I describe here.]

### **35 LETTERS A DOCUMENTARY ABOUT WRITING, LOVE & SAYING GOOD-BYE**

On 19 August 2008, Melbourne writer/poet Angelique Flowers died of colon cancer. She was 31 years old. She died a most miserable death. In the arms of her brother Damien, she choked on her own faecal matter because of a complete bowel obstruction. Her doctors predicted it would happen and said that there was nothing modern medicine could do to prevent it.

Angelique joined Exit shortly after she was diagnosed with Stage 4 colon cancer. She and Dr Philip Nitschke prepared a video for Youtube in which she pleaded with then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd to change the law and make euthanasia legal again. Her plea fell on deaf ears – Kevin Rudd failed to reply.

Four years after her passing. Award-winning filmmaker Janine Hosking has started a new documentary project entitled ‘35 Letters: A Documentary about Writing, Love & Saying Good-bye.’ The film centres on a bundle of letters which Angelique mailed as a birthday present to her sister Michelle who lives in Canada. She wrote: “I cannot grant you 35 wishes but I can give you 35 letters, a letter for every year.”

Janine Hosking needs an additional \$84,500 to complete her film. The Documentary Australia Foundation allows members of the public to make *tax-free* donations to film projects.

#### **TO MAKE A DONATION**

Go to <http://www.documentaryaustralia.com.au/films/details/1595/35-letters>

Click Make a Grant

Follow the prompts to set up an Account

Click New Grant Application form

Select film 35 Letters

Select funding pledge amount

Click submit

Wait for email from DAF for payment

If you wish to donate by cheque (also tax deductible), please send to  
iKandy Films, PO Box 111, Enmore NSW 2045

If you wish to speak to Janine Hosking personally about the project, call 0411 275 112 or email [janinehosking@bigpond.com](mailto:janinehosking@bigpond.com)

Go to <http://www.exitinternational.net/page/Deliverance> to read the full story of 35 Letters

## **Poll in Massachusetts**

If Massachusetts voters had their say today, they'd approve of the Death with Dignity initiative. A new independent Public Policy Poll showed 58% of Bay Staters would vote yes for Death with Dignity. The poll question had the same wording as what will appear on the November ballot:

Question 2 would allow a physician licensed in Massachusetts to prescribe medication, at the request of a terminally ill patient meeting certain conditions, to end that person's life. If the election were today, would you vote yes or no on Question 2?

Yes	58%
No	24%
Undecided	18%

This is an excellent sign; however, the race is far from over. With 76 days left until the election, opponents who object to Death with Dignity based on their own moral beliefs will waste no time in firing up their lie machine in an effort to mislead voters.

*(Taken from Dying with Dignity Queensland's Newsletter September 2012)*

## **BITS AND PIECES**

If you haven't looked at [www.yourlastright.com](http://www.yourlastright.com) lately, please do so. CEO Neil Francis has added a new feature, his blog, well worth reading.

NTVES has a collection of VE related books, both fiction and non-fiction. If you would like to borrow any books, please give Judy a call on 8945 1446.

Receiving a renewal form with your newsletter indicates that your membership is overdue for renewal.

Northern Territory Voluntary Euthanasia Society is a member of YourLastRight.com  
and  
a member of the World Federation of Right to Die Societies.

