



# NT Voluntary Euthanasia Society Inc

GPO Box 2734 Darwin NT 0801  
Phone: 8945 1446

Patron: Mr Marshall Perron  
President: Mrs Judy Dent

No.39

*Newsletter*

October 2014

## World Federation of Right to Die Societies Conference

The 20<sup>th</sup> biennial conference of the World Federation of Right to Die Societies was held last month in Chicago, USA. Among the 230 attendees were representatives from 23 countries, including five from Australia. Speakers included Veronique Hivon, who led the push for legal change in Quebec and, by video, Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu, who witnessed the anguish surrounding Nelson Mandela's death. The story of the passage of the Quebec bill, Bill 52, is most interesting. The bill was instigated by the doctors of Quebec and introduced by a member of the Opposition who later became part of the government. Because all the parties represented in the Quebec National Assembly agreed, the Bill continued its progression despite an election being called. The following chronology of Bill 52 was printed in the Montreal Gazette in June.

**2009 Dec. 4:** On a recommendation by Quebec's College of Physicians and a motion by opposition Parti Québécois MNA Véronique Hivon, an all-party committee of the National Assembly is created to look into "dying with dignity" and how it could be put into practice.

**2010** With Liberal MNA Geoff Kelley as chair and Hivon as co-chair, the committee consults with 32 experts, receives more than 300 position papers and requests for hearings, and gets 6,600 answers to an online questionnaire.

**2010-2011 Sept. 7 to March 22:** The committee holds public hearings in eight Quebec cities.

**2011 June 29 to July 5:** A delegation from the committee visits France, Belgium and Holland to see how assisted-dying is done there.

**2012 March 22:** The committee tables its report, Dying with Dignity, which makes twenty-four recommendations. Among them: that Quebec allow medically assisted dying and increase accessibility to palliative care. **June 14:** Quebec's Justice Department convenes a panel of 17 legal experts to study medically assisted dying in light of the committee's 24 recommendations. **Oct. 31:** Premier Pauline Marois affirms the government's desire to draft legislation for medically assisted dying and tasks Hivon with the job.

**2013 Jan. 15:** Led by lawyer Jean-Pierre Ménard, the legal panel tables its report. It agrees that medically assisted dying should be part of end-of-life care and that Quebec

should legislate to make it happen. **June 12:** Now minister for social services, Hivon tables Bill 52, “an act respecting end-of-life care,” for the first time in the National Assembly. **Sept. 17 to Oct. 13:** The National Assembly’s health-and-social-services committee holds public hearings and consultations on Bill 52. **Oct. 29:** The National Assembly approves Bill 52 in principle, by a vote of 84-26.

**2013-2014** **Nov. 22 to Jan. 16:** The health-and-social-services committee conducts a detailed study of each clause of the bill and formulates 57 amendments, including better defining what “medical aid in dying” is and who can qualify.

**2014** **Week of Feb. 17:** The National Assembly begins debate toward a vote to approve Bill 52. **June 5:** Bill 52, An Act Respecting End-of-Life Care, approved in the National Assembly by a vote of 94 to 22.

Australia was well represented at the conference. Jeanne Arthur, President of Dying with Dignity ACT, spoke on Reframing Suicide, An Elective Death and Human Rights. Her speech is on their web page [www.dwdact.org.au](http://www.dwdact.org.au) under Latest News.

Rodney Syme from Dying with Dignity Victoria spoke about challenging the legal system and getting away with it. He also held a special workshop “How you can avoid an undignified death if you have dementia”.

Ian Wood from Christians for VE spoke on Religion – Power Politics and the Peaceful Death.

Also at the conference, the following officers were elected:

**WF Board 2014-2016:**

Ron Plummer - President (UK), Carole Sweeney - Secretary (NZ),  
Jean-Jacques Bise - Treasurer (Switzerland), Jeanne Arthur (Australia)  
Soichi Iwao (Japan), Sean Davison (South Africa), Derryck Smith  
(Canada), Jean-Luc Romero-Michel (France).

Rob Jonquiere - WF Communications Director (Netherlands).

**Award Winners**

Marilyn Seguin Award: Veronique Hivon  
Tenrei Ohta Award: Michael Irwin  
Health Professional Award: Rodney Syme  
WF Lifetime Achievement Award: Derek Humphry

In 2016, the conference will be in the Netherlands and in 2018, in South Africa.

## **The Independent in London reported 6 October 2014**

Arrival of euthanasia advice clinic Exit International in UK condemned as ‘unwelcome and very dangerous’.

The controversial Australian doctor who has opened a euthanasia clinic in the UK advising people on how to end their lives is encouraging people to visit his clinic ‘before they get too sick’.

Dr Philip Nitschke said the arrival of his non-profit organisation *Exit International*, which held its inaugural event in London on Saturday, was to meet demand from its 1,000 British members who have previously attended his workshops and lectures.

However, it has raised concerns from those on both sides of the assisted dying debate, with warnings that it is a ‘potentially very dangerous’ development and could be ‘open to abuse’.

He became the first doctor to administer a legal, voluntary lethal injection in Australia in 1995 but is currently barred from practising medicine in his home country. He said he would work within British legal boundaries.

In an interview with The Independent, Dr Nitschke, 67, said UK membership of his ‘suicide club’ has increased significantly. “Most people join Exit when they realise things may not stay perfect and they may find themselves in trouble in the future,” he said. “It is easier to prepare [for death] now. That is the message *Exit International* has been promoting and why it is so important to have an office in London. We encourage people not to wait around until they are seriously ill before coming to see us.”

Members are charged to access online information on which drugs are appropriate for suicide, for example, and to attend workshops to discuss ways to end their life. “Our office does not hand out barbiturates or other drugs,” said Dr Nitschke, adding that the information would help people take the most suitable course of action. “If someone decides to break the law and import drugs we make it quite clear that they know they have the right thing and to have the substances tested to make sure they are pure. “

The clinic’s arrival comes just two months after Lord Falconer’s *Assisted Dying Bill* passed its second reading in the House of Lords. If the Bill passes a third reading it will be sent to the House of Commons. A recent YouGov poll found that 73 per cent of adults in England and Wales supported its proposals.

Baroness Grey-Thompson, the former Paralympian, said, “The public should be concerned, not least because its previous title included the word ‘euthanasia’.” “This is massively open to abuse and I can’t see how it can be monitored. The clinic is way beyond anything that has even been suggested in the proposed legislation.”

Sarah Wootton, the chief executive of Dignity in Dying, which campaigns for a change in the law on assisted dying for terminally ill adults, said she was concerned at Exit's arrival in the UK. "Only a change in the law can provide a safeguarded framework, to confirm a dying patient's diagnosis, prognosis, competence, and that they are making a clear, settled and informed decision aware of all their care and treatment options," she said. "Assuming *Exit International's* intention is to provide potentially vulnerable people information on how to die then it is both unwelcome and potentially very dangerous."

Dr Nitschke's licence was suspended in July after he was found to pose 'a serious risk' to the public's health and safety, by the Medical Board of Australia after he was accused of counselling a 45-year-old from Perth who was not terminally ill but apparently depressed, to take his own life. [The suspension is being appealed.]

## **NTVES ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

The NTVES AGM was held on 9 August 2014 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 8 August 2015.

Membership renewal forms are included for those members whose renewal has not yet been received. If you believe our records are incorrect, please call Judy on 8945 1446.