



NT Voluntary Euthanasia Society Inc

GPO Box 2734 Darwin NT 0801

Phone: 8945 1446

Patron: Mr Marshall Perron

President: Mrs Judy Dent

Member of World Federation of Right to Die Societies

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Newsletter

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The 22nd Biennial Conference of the World Federation of Right to Die Societies was held in Cape Town, South Africa, on 7th and 8th September 2018, with additional delegates' meetings on the 6th and 9th. Attendance was down somewhat because of safety concerns and the parlous state of the town's water supply.

Reproduced here is an analysis of the conference by Faye Girsh from Final Exit Network and the Hemlock Society of San Diego.

Friday: Starting with a wonderful keynote by Debbie Ziegler (mother of Brittany Maynard) about the power of storytelling and ending around 7 tonight with a new and powerful British documentary, *End Game*, this has been one long but thought-provoking day! There were excellent presentations by people from 12 different countries. And, talk about variety! John Hont gave the account of the decades long struggle that finally yielded an aid in dying law in Victoria (Australia) which admittedly is almost too restrictive to die under. By contrast, maverick Philip Nitschke talked about the death of the Medical Model making the case for only Do It Yourself methods that don't require going through medical channels, or even being sick. And again a sharp contrast with the three enthusiastic women doctors from Canada who waxed enthusiastic about the system in Canada, though one doctor pointed out there were 18 pages of paper work for each patient. Dr. Erika Preisig was another exemplar of a successful Medical Model with her Life Circle operation near Basel, though her talk was about all the critics and law suits that she has had to contend with. Ted Ballou and I described the non-medical model used by Final Exit Network. Jacqueline Herremans also gave an optimistic account of the Belgian law, especially the good cooperation between palliative care and aid in dying.

There were more fascinating and informative talks, so many that actual discussion was limited to what we could talk about at lunch. What amazed me at this meeting was the lively and attractive presence of young people, particularly young women doctors, lawyers and researchers. I found out that mention of names from 15-20 years ago in our movement brought blank stares. It is extremely encouraging that there is so much energy, dedication and intelligence among the new leadership. There is a great future for aid in dying although there is an amazingly entrenched political resistance in civilized places like the UK, France and Australia.

Saturday: A remarkably impressive group of local speakers were heard from today. It is with some envy that I listened to some very sharp lawyers who reviewed legal cases that had gone to the highest courts here and several that are pending. Although the detail, and those British Barrister accents, were a bit confusing, they had made significant concessions in the law so that legalization could occur here at some point. The South African Constitution, post-apartheid, is one of the best in the world with strong human rights protections in many areas. To humanize the discussion a very moving presentation was given by a woman in her 40s who has Stage 4 colon cancer. Not only were the surgeries and chemo hard on her and her husband and two children but she described the expense, uncovered, of her treatments and grimy hospital and clinic conditions. She persistently plows on with her difficult life with the hope that she can at least have a peaceful death. One of her slides read: I want to live. But I am going to die.

A member of the SA Parliament spoke passionately about the urgent need to get assisted dying legislation passed even though it was not favored by the majority. There was mention of the way Nelson Mandela was shamefully propped up in his last days although he was apparently in a vegetative state. There were papers on countering the religious objections and the 'Playing God' argument. Sean Davison, the President of the World Fed and host of the meeting looked at the role of the brain in making life and death decisions.

The last event this afternoon was a debate between 5 professionals. William Landman did a good job of presenting our side but when the usual spurious arguments were offered up by the opponents, including hospice, I figured I'd better rest up for the big party tonite. It will be outside of the hotel so I'll finally see a bit of the town.

Tomorrow there's a winery tour but it is at the same time as NuTech which will be presented by Philip Nitschke on closed circuit streaming. I'll let you know how that goes.

Sunday: On this warmer, sunny morning the delegates met to present awards, to welcome the new Board members, and to discuss the 2020 conference. The Health Professional Award went to Dr. Stephanie Greene who organized the Canadian doctors just two years ago when their law went into effect through CAMAP which provided support and information for the doctors all over that huge country. Without that unifying body doctors encountering problems would have had nowhere to turn and the outcomes would have not been so successful.

The Marilyn Seguin Award was given to an Italian activist, Marco Cappato, who helped people get to Switzerland and admitted to the police other work he did to provide people a peaceful death. His organization is Legalize Euthanasia and civil disobedience is his main weapon.

The Japanese and Canadian members of our five person board, after distinguished service, were replaced by Asuncion Alvarez, Psychology Professor and RTD researcher in Mexico City, and by Dr. Masahira Nomoto from Tokyo.

The venue for the 2020 conference is not firm but Dignitas Germany made an offer to host it in Berlin. Mexico City looks promising for 2022!

Sunday afternoon had the 3 hour meeting of NuTech, arranged by Philip Nitschke. It was worthwhile to hear about progress made on salts, on the debreather, on the Sarco, on the CO generator, and even an electric fibrillator. All of these are works in progress; none have had any or very little clinical data to prove their effectiveness. But it's exciting to see how many people around the world are working on these ideas.

Final Exit Network helped to finance this meeting and Exit International has raised funds to continue some of these projects. It was another great World Fed meeting with exchanges of ideas and friendships and a chance to explore this interesting city.

Note: Two weeks after the conference, Sean Davison was arrested and charged with murder over the death in 2013 of quadriplegic Anrich Burger. He is now out on bail. His arrest prompted Desmond Tutu to restate his support for legalising Voluntary Assisted Dying in South Africa.

What is happening in Victoria? (Information from DWDV webpage)

Right to Life, the Australian Christian Lobby and HOPE have vowed to press for repeal of the Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2017, if the political climate is favourable. This could be the case if the Liberal Nationals coalition gains power after the 24 November state election. In March 2018, four months after voluntary assisted dying legislation was passed in Victoria, the Australian Care Alliance was formed in Victoria to specifically oppose voluntary assisted dying.

The press has reported that the Liberal Party in Victoria is progressively being taken over by the hard Christian Right. Mormons now occupy 13% of the 78 executive positions, yet comprise only 0.3% of the population. This Christian Right group is fundamentally opposed to VAD.

DWDV has a letter from Matthew Guy, the leader of the Opposition, stating that the party has "no plans" to attempt to repeal the Act. But of course having "no plans" does not mean that there is no intention, given the right circumstances. Also worryingly, Mr Guy has clearly said on radio in two separate interviews, he "will not stand in the way of democratic process", when asked whether he would support a private member's bill to repeal the act. That is, he will not obstruct a private member's bill to repeal the Act. But Matthew Guy's letter is also worrying in another way. It hints at the possibility of stymieing the Voluntary

Assisted Dying Act by manipulating the regulations which will govern the practical implementation of voluntary assisted dying:

“I note that the Andrews Labor Government is still yet to introduce a full regulatory regime to oversee the implementation of voluntary assisted dying, which the Liberal Nationals will carefully examine if we are elected to government in November.”

Looking at the website *Victoria's Repealed Acts*, it seems repeals of acts usually occur when a new law is enacted that supersedes the old one dealing with much the same issue. Typically, laws are in place for well over 20 years before being superseded by a more modern, more appropriate or more comprehensive one. It would be an extraordinary move to repeal a very recent act such as the Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2017 on the basis of alternative ideology which would set a most undesirable precedent.

NTVES AGM

The NTVES AGM was held on Saturday 11th August 2018 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 in August 2019 (exact date to be confirmed)