



Our Mission: To bring about such changes in Western Australian Statute Law and to medical ethics as will allow a person to receive medically assisted euthanasia under circumstances specified by him or her, when legally competent to do so.

The Conservatives set to ignore VE

in spite of public opinion

We in WAVES have always wondered why repeated opinion poll results do not seem to reflect in the parliamentary and election debates. While support for Voluntary Euthanasia (VE) is consistently between 70% and 80% and above, in the various state parliaments it fails to get the majority support. The Senate election in Western Australia gives cause for members and supporters of WAVES to ponder this question again.

Various reasons for this lack of support have been suggested, including the unwillingness of the leadership of the established parties to encourage a true 'conscience vote' in the Parliament.

The re-run Western Australian Senate election—the first in Australian history—provides an excellent opportunity to look closely at the stands in VE taken by parties and candidates.

This is being written in the lead-up to the election, and so, at the moment, we confine ourselves to some brief comments on the candidates and their preferences. An article reviewing the results of the election is planned for the next edition.

The most positive development is that for the first time the relatively new Voluntary Euthanasia party (VEP) is standing in Western Australia. Its two candidates are led by Philip Nitschke. The campaign launch took place on 24 March 2014. A number of members of WAVES, but unfortunately no media, were among the attendees.

At the launch Philip spoke of the need for VE advocates to have our own party, rather than being seen by some as a 'preference harvesting' machine for other parties. The effectiveness of Philip's profile and media experience in attracting reasonable public attention during the campaign period will be an interesting consideration.

Should the VEP garner significant support, and in particular should it receive a primary vote, that will mark the beginning of an ongoing influential role in the democratic process. In the end, substantial votes, and certainly

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Notice of the GENERAL MEETING

**Wednesday, 21st May 2014 at 2 pm
at Citiplace Community Centre**

on the walkway between the Art Gallery and Myer Store
opposite the escalators at Perth Railway Station.

Our guest speaker : Martin Whitely, Senior
Advocate for the Health Consumers' Council
(HCC) and former Parliamentarian.

... - continued from page 1

preferences, are perhaps the only things that will cause most politicians to sit up and take real notice.

As far as preferences are concerned, it is very heartening to see that the VEP was preferenced first by Russell Woolf and Verity James (the only party or group to do so in this election). While they did not stand for a registered party, they have high name recognition and could perhaps turn out to attract more votes than many of the 'micro parties'. If so, and if Philip's vote happened to be just slightly higher than theirs, he might even be catapulted into contention for a seat by the time you are reading this.

Among the major parties, the Australian Democrats have declared their support for VE, while the Greens, by and large, do support it (and of course Robin Chapple in the State Parliament has been our champion in introducing Bills).

So let us have a look at the preference tickets lodged by the three main parties. Among the major parties, the Labor Party gave the VEP the best preference deal placing VEP candidates at 13 and 14 (6th in preference order). The Greens placed them at 20 and 21 and the Liberals at 48 and 49 (23rd in preference order).

Perhaps this is a good demonstration of the fact that most parties allocate their preferences to advantage themselves (by 'trading' with other parties), and not necessarily in line with their actual stance on VE.

WAVES has always been strictly apolitical and has never had a party political stand. After 30 years of lobbying, it may be time to question that tradition. Perhaps it is only by doing so that we will be able to insist that all parties that choose to ignore the oft-repeated views of 80% of the electorate will face the consequences.

Even if we do not go so far as to take a party political stance, we need at the very least to make our members and the general public aware of the stance on VE taken by the various political parties.

Stephen Walker

When your Advanced Health Care Directive is not enough

Last year Aina Ranke's Advanced Health Care Directive was ignored by treating physicians in a major NSW hospital.

A former teacher, accountant and NSW Greens parliamentary candidate, she was faced with a progressive neuromuscular disease which would eventually have stopped her ending her life herself.

So in 2013 Aina took a dose of Nembutal. But her carer arrived early before the drug had time to work and, despite her wishes being well documented, she was put on life support at Sydney's Mater Hospital. *Dignity With Dying NSW DWDNSW* attempted to have her wishes followed, but the physician in charge maintained that such directives are not legally binding, which is a mistaken view but one often expressed in the medical fraternity.

Fortunately Aina's brain was not deemed functional, or she would have found herself powerless by then to end the increasing pain.

Dr Sarah Edelman, Vice President *DWDNSW* asked: *"I wonder is there really anyone out there who believes it was appropriate to put Aina on life support, with the intention of keeping her alive against her clearly stated wishes?"*

Editor's Comment:

Unfortunately the answer to Dr Edelman's question is : "Yes ". Some people, including those in the caring professions, wrongly believe Advance Health Directives (AHDs) are not legally binding. Even if we have a personal legal document which expresses our last wishes, some in charge of our care are ignoring these directives. The lesson seems to be: ensure your AHD and Enduring Power of Guardianship can be accessed in an emergency so that no-one can legally disregard your last wishes.

AHDs and 'LIVING WILLS'

We are pleased to find that many people are aware they can have an 'Advance Health Directive' (the Health Department's document) and that many have opted to attach WAVES' 'Living Will' and an 'Enduring Power of Guardianship' to the AHD. This will explain to the medical team, when all communication fails, what the patient's end-of-life wishes are and how they should proceed.

President's Report

Dear Fellow Members

In the past six months a number of issues have been considered by your committee which I would like to address.

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS You will find an insertion in this WAVES Newsletter as a reminder that the due date of all subscriptions is the 1st of July each year (life members excepted). . It would be appreciated if members would note their particular form of membership and pay the appropriate amount promptly. We feel this will be more efficient and easier for members rather than having a joining date renewal as in the past.

Anyone joining 'mid stream' will pay only half the subscription until the following July. As you are all aware our subs have been kept purposefully low to reflect the needs of members. Our subscriptions only partly cover the costs of administration and are supplemented by generous donations and bequests from members and supporters. For this we are very grateful.

NEW MEMBERS We continue to gain new members and there will be Application Flyers available at the General Meeting and I urge members to take some to hand to family, friends and neighbours. The more members we have the louder the voice we have with those ultimately charged with the responsibility of doing our bidding.

REGIONAL GROUPS An idea that came forward at a recent committee meeting was that there may be some value in having regional groups that could meet or be in contact with each other to discuss regional issues relating to voluntary euthanasia. Quite often small representative groups can bring pressure to bear locally which we in the city are unable to do. If there is interest in this area your committee would be pleased to hear and assist.

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN VE BILL Our members Linda Savage and Stephen Walker have been in touch with Robin Chapple MLC regarding input for a possible revised VE Bill to be presented to parliament later this year or early next. Ranjan Ray has been in contact with Ian Wood of Christians Supporting VE who is preparing a contact list of all politicians. This will be of great use in targeted advertising if and when the revised Bill is finalised. We will keep members advised on this important issue as we will need to mount a major supporting effort. After all, *legislation is our fundamental goal*.

HEALTH CONSUMERS' COUNCIL The Health Consumers' Council (HCC) is an advocacy group representing the consumer's voice in matters relating to health, policy planning and service delivery. WAVES has been a member of the Health Consumers' Council for some time and I had the opportunity to attend a forum at the HCC on February the 22nd.

I pointed out that end-of-life choice was essential as part of the planning process relating to an increasingly aging population. I emphasised that the folly of extending the life of a person close to death made no sense on both compassionate or economic grounds.

Most of the other attendees had their own particular axe to grind but interestingly I was approached by a representative of the Parkinson's Disease Society, who agreed with our stance. He suggested that most thinking people, including many Catholic friends, also supported our views. Martin Whitely (ex MLC) is now an Advocate at the HCC and he was most supportive of VE when a member of State Parliament. If members are interested in contacting the Health Consumers' Council with any questions, their number is 9221 3422 or email info@hconc.org.au.

As I am unable to attend the General Meeting on May the 21st I am asking Vice President Ranjan Ray to take the Chair in my place.

Murray Hindle
President

Postscript

Your Committee provided a donation of \$5000 towards the Senate campaign of the Voluntary Euthanasia Party. It was felt that we have a responsibility to financially assist any efforts that actively support the legalisation of Voluntary Euthanasia.



What is the Medic's Role

Some senior members of the medical profession convince members and students that they must take a neutral position if they are to be 'healers' and not 'killers'. In doing so they are using a 'hidden curriculum', Professor Malcolm Parker, Qld Professor of Medical Ethics, told a forum at the NSW Parliament on 4 November last year.

The hidden curriculum, he says, is well recognized as a persuasive force for transmitting traditional values that resist challenges. It works by prescribing that doctors must be 'healers' despite any costs to the sufferer.

Others in the medical profession, on the other hand, are actively engaged in a conspiracy of a benevolent kind, according to Melbourne Urologist, Dr Rodney Syme (Radio National 23 November 2013). He says they are hiding the reality of 'physician assisted deaths'.

Dr Syme reports that many doctors are working with the law, with prosecuting authorities, coroners and governments to assist their suffering patients to die.

They are administering terminal sedations which are then reported as natural deaths by coroners.

Terminal sedation (sometimes referred to as 'deep continuous sedation') involves lethal doses of drugs given through a pump to ease the suffering of those very close to death.

On a non-medical note, at the same NSW Parliament forum, Reverend Andrew Sempell, Anglican Rector of St James, explained why he does not believe that euthanasia and religious beliefs are at all incompatible, and in fact that euthanasia, is a limited and final part of the dying process: *"We are right in seeking to relieve pain and suffering as a sign of God's love in the world and because of our respect for the dignity of human life"*.

Australia 21 Report—Parliament's response

Number of Parliamentarians responding to the findings by research company, Australia 21 (www.australia21.org.au) on the need for VE legislation? Answer: nil.

Canny Advertising or Just Coincidence?

It appears the anti VE Tasmanian Human Life Protection Society got a little help from their friends at the local newspaper. In Hobart's Mercury on 3 December 2013, a letter in support of voluntary euthanasia was severely cut and the space reassigned to an advertisement for an anti voluntary euthanasia group, the Tasmanian Human Life Protection Society.

Hodgman stance lashed

FORMER Northern Territory Chief Minister Marshall Perron has written to Tasmanian Opposition leader Will Hodgman, slamming his stance on voluntary euthanasia.

Mr Perron, the former Country Liberals leader who championed voluntary euthanasia in the NT before the laws were overturned by the Commonwealth, said Mr Hodgman lacked political courage. "Will, voluntary euthanasia

will eventually be decriminalised in Australia," Mr Perron's letter said.

"The compassionate case for, and our rapidly ageing population, will demand it. When that happens, you will have the dubious satisfaction of knowing you delayed it."

Mr Hodgman yesterday said all members of the Tasmanian Liberal Party had been given a conscience vote on the voluntary euthanasia Bill.

EUTHANASIA?

People who are vulnerable need support – not euthanasia

Euthanasia can make people feel that their life is not worth living

Enquiries, help & counselling

6224 2632

HUMAN LIFE PROTECTION SOCIETY

GPO BOX 1158, HOBART, TAS 7001

hlps.org.au



News Update

During 2013 no less than three Australian Governments considered bills advocating voluntary euthanasia but in none so far has legislation been successfully introduced. This brings the total to 17 attempts over the years in various Australian states, including the short lived law introduced in the Northern Territory which was overturned by the Federal Government.

Around the Electorates

WA – The Voluntary Euthanasia Party (VEP) fielded two candidates, Dr Philip Nitschke and fellow Exit Member, Jim Duffield, in the Senate election rerun.

WAVES is providing support and advice to member of State Parliament, Robin Chapple, in developing his new Bill which is hoped to be ready for submission to Parliament soon.

ACT - Dr Nitschke was the lead candidate for the VEP which won 3,963 primary votes or 1.61%.

NSW - the VEP finished a commendable 18th of the 44 parties with Ms Shayne Higson winning 14,693 primary votes.

In May the [Rights of the Terminally Ill Bill 2013](#) was defeated in the NSW upper house by a margin of 23-13. It proposed medical assistance to allow the terminally ill to self-administer or if the person was physically incapable, for a doctor to actively administer the drugs for them.

SA - Independent MP Bob Such's Ending Life with Dignity (no.2) Bill 2013 ran out of time in November 2013 when the South Australian Parliament rose for the last time before the March 2014 election. Bob Such has been re-elected so there is hope for a future attempt.

In that election the South Australian Voluntary Euthanasia SAVES fielded two candidates for the Legislative Council: Stephen Kenny, spokesperson for *Lawyers for Death with Dignity*, and Amy Orange, the convenor of the *Syndicated Voluntary Euthanasia Youth Advocates* – 'SAVE-YA', a world first voice for younger people on the issue.

QLD - the first Queenslander to be convicted for assisting his friend's suicide has now been ruled by the Chief Justice to be ineligible to benefit from the friend's estate.

TAS - One vote stood in the way of a recent reform Bill. All 5 Greens and 7 of 10 Labor members supported the bill while all but one of the 11 Liberal /national members opposed it, (despite being allowed a conscience vote and polls revealing around three quarters of Liberal/ National voters support reform (Newspoll, 2012).)

TAS (cont.)

President of Dying with Dignity Tasmania, Margaret Sing, said: *"So close and next time the result may be different! This legislation will not go away because the need will not go away and the support of the vast majority of the population will not go away"*.

Around the World

In Europe, **Belgium** joined the Netherlands, Holland and Switzerland in legalising voluntary euthanasia for the terminally ill, including minors, deemed capable of deciding and who have the approval of their parents. The proposal was given support by 75% of Belgians polled. Many paediatricians there agreed that terminally ill young people can be capable of making such a decision whom they find are often better able to reflect and express themselves on life than healthy adult people.

Holland has already legalised euthanasia for eligible children older than 12 and for new-borns who are seriously ill if the parents consent. The tired and depressed elderly may also soon have the same rights.

In the United States, **Vermont** has been the first state to use the legislative process to introduce assisted-dying legislation. **Washington** and **Oregon** used citizen-initiated referendums to achieve the change, while in **Montana** change to similar laws was achieved via court approval.

In **Quebec**, 'Bill 52' proposed allowing doctor-approved death in cases of advanced incurable illness. But this is now in limbo following the calling of an election, after being given 'in principle' support by the national assembly.

DYING WITH DIGNITY—MY HUSBAND'S CHOICE

I have always believed that people should have the right to end their own lives with dignity when they go to sleep at night hoping that they won't wake up in the morning.

Mike, my husband of 51 years, had been a busy and productive person. He sailed competitively in various classes from his teenage years and built yachts of various sizes as well as a river launch and a rowboat. He worked on our various vehicles as long as he was able. He practically lived in his workshop.

He had suffered from asthma from childhood. Eventually he developed chronic bronchitis and finally COPD, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. One of his doctors estimated he had about 20% lung capacity. The slightest activity left him out of breath.

As he did less he became weaker until he often couldn't stand up out of a chair, and if he fell over I would have to get help to lift him. Being diagnosed with Parkinson's disease made life even more uncomfortable. His doctors told him that there was no cure for COPD and all they could do was help slow his decline.

When he reached the stage that he could do nothing but sit and read or watch TV or do Sudoku puzzles, when I had to help him dress and shower and get into bed, he decided that his life had become a dreary existence with only a future of inevitable decline and he wanted it to end. He feared that I would no longer be able to look after him at home and that he would be hospitalised and no longer have any ability to opt for a peaceful and dignified death at a time of his own choosing.

Mike also made a brief video on our laptop explaining his reasons for wanting to die and making it quite clear that the decision was entirely his and exonerating me. He wanted me to go shopping while he took the drug but I told him that, after 51 years together, I wasn't going to let him die on his own.

On 31st of July he mixed the Nembutal powder into 50 ml of water and drank the mixture. I had poured him a glass of very nice port and he drank that to cover the taste of the drug. While

I sat and held his hand; he gently and peacefully drifted off to sleep. Then his breathing stopped and he died.

I called his doctor who came up and examined him and pronounced him dead.

After I had told him that it was suicide, he called the coroner's office and they sent out two police officers. After watching the video and taking my statement the officers called major crime and two detectives came out to check out the whole scene and decide whether to charge me. Finally they took the body away for a post mortem.

All this fuss shouldn't be necessary. Nembutal is available over the counter in many countries. And people who want to take their own lives (provided they are mentally well) should be able to do it with their families and friends around them.

I haven't been charged with anything yet but it could still happen.

Name withheld on request

January 2014

BEQUESTS AND DONATIONS

WAVES is very grateful for donations and bequests - these gifts help finance costs and enable us to do what is needed to further our voluntary euthanasia aims. You can even elect to remain anonymous, as did a recent generous donor of \$500.

Did you know that you can make a bequest in your will without making a new will by signing a short codicil?

Our website shows how this is done, or we can assist you. Write to WAVES (Inc) at PO Box 7243 Cloisters Square PERTH WA 6850 or send us an email at memberships@waves.org.au.

Notice Board-

Membership Matters

The Website is a useful source of information between newsletters. Check www.waves.org.au for the latest updates locally and internationally.

Your most recent email address is important to us. Let us know at info@waves.org.au if you have a new one. We are then able to assist you directly with things you need to know.

Perth Writers' Festival

The ABC TV1 *Big Ideas* program ran a discussion from the Perth Writers' Festival on "[How do you want to die?](#)" Hosted by Anne Summers (one of our ambassadors), the panel consisted of Jesuit priest and well known opponent of V.E., Frank Brennan, academic and writer, Dennis Altman (another of our ambassadors) and Philip Nitschke along with another V.E. supporter, Canadian writer Lionel Shriver. You can watch the full discussion [here](#).

Open Letter to Australia's Coroners

An item appeared in the March 2014 *OnlineOpinion*, Australia's e-journal of social and political debate, in the form of an [open letter to each state and territory coroner](#). It was posted by Marshall Perron in which he urges Australian coroners to consider establishing guidelines that would reveal the numbers of euthanasia suicides and make recommendations to reduce the adverse effects.

West Australian Voluntary Euthanasia Society (Inc)

PO Box 7243, Cloisters Square, Perth 6850 – Phone 9387 5126

Email: info@waves.org.au

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL FORM

Membership year runs from 1st of July to 30th of June of the following year (life members excepted)

Standard Rates

- ☐ Single \$ 20
- ☐ Double \$ 30
- ☐ Life Single \$ 200
- ☐ Life Double \$ 300
- Donation \$

Pensioner / Student Rates

- ☐ Single \$ 15
- ☐ Double \$ 25
- ☐ Life Single \$ 150
- ☐ Life Double \$ 250

(Rates effective from 1st July 2009)

Payable to WAVES at the above address or at any BankWest branch:

Account **WAVES - BSB no: 306-061, account no: 419 8239.**

Please complete this form and forward it to us, or bring it with you to the meeting.

☐ Mr&Mrs ☐ Mr ☐ Mrs ☐ Ms ☐ Miss ☐ Dr

Please print clearly

Initials Surname

Address

Postcode Phone Year of birth:

Email

EXIT News

Euthanasia campaigner, Dr Philip Nitschke, has had a busy year. In addition to standing for two Federal elections he moved the Exit International HQ to Adelaide. Dr Nitschke's new headquarters has been welcomed by the local community. There is a studio for e-consultations and laboratory facilities for euthanasia drug assay services as well as research into new peaceful death methods. One-on-one visits will continue to be offered for those who are seriously ill.

EXIT International welcomes WAVES' members to join their organisation and points out that only Exit members are allowed to attend the meetings.

Please phone Carol O'Neil on 0429 039 167 for further details.



W.A.V.E.S has no religious, professional or political affiliation. Its membership comprises a wide range of people - some from a variety of professions, including medical and nursing; some from religious denominations and some politicians. Many have publicly expressed their support for the legalisation of voluntary euthanasia, both passive and active.

PARTICIPATE IN OUR CAUSE

You can help us make
Voluntary Euthanasia a legal choice.
Explain it to your friends and family.
Write, phone or visit your State MP.

Make your views known !

WEST AUSTRALIAN VOLUNTARY EUTHANASIA SOCIETY (Inc)

ABN 16 953 675 488

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Management Committee 2012

President: Murray Hindle

Vice-President: Ranjan Ray

Hon Secretary: Tina Christensen

Hon Treasurer: Gaye Harvey

Committee Members

Rodger Andrews, Bill O'Brien, Geoffrey Walker,
Stephen Walker, Gail Wyatt (editor).

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