

EXIT News

Dr Philip Nitschke is having to schedule more workshops to meet demand since his medical licence was put on hold recently. This results from controversy over the death of Perth man, Nigel Brayley, who had attended a forum earlier in the year. Dr Nitschke says: *My relationship with him was certainly not a doctor-patient relationship. He was a person I had scant dealings with. He had obtained lethal drugs before he even talked to me.*

He describes as “bizarre” the view of the Medical Board which suspended him that he is “in some way practising medicine” and says he has never treated people in the audience as patients. Dr Nitschke is appealing the Board’s findings and is asking supporters to assist with costs of funding the appeal. A legal defence fund has been generously supported and there are now sufficient funds to challenge the decision.

EXIT International welcomes WAVES’ members to join their organisation and points out that only Exit members are allowed to attend the meetings. Carol O’Neil on 0429 039 167 for further details.



WAVES NEWS



WEST AUSTRALIAN VOLUNTARY EUTHANASIA SOCIETY (Inc.)

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September 2014

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

Dying with Dignity

now made a federal issue

In Canberra on Tuesday 24 June this year, Greens Senator Richard Di Natale of Victoria tabled a Draft Bill in the Senate regarding dying with dignity. Twenty five Federal MPs attended the launch. A successful passage is considered unlikely and there are arguments it does not go far enough to assist the very ill. Many members of WAVES responded to our call for submissions.

WAVES’ submission to the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee welcomes the **Exposure Draft of the Medical Services (Dying with Dignity) Bill** as setting standards and rules which would be applied throughout the States and Territories.

The Bill’s sponsors have made it clear that supporters of VE should be encouraged to suggest improvements.

One reservation from WAVES is that a patient requires medical support if they find the offered palliative care unacceptable. As WAVES points out, for some palliative care specialists, no patient’s statement of unacceptability will ever be valid or will always be considered misguided.

WAVES has also suggested that two doctors are sufficient and that psychiatric examination should be required only if one of the doctors recommends it. Also it is seen as unreasonable to (in effect) debar the next of kin to assist with making the request, as these people are often the sufferer’s most reliable confidant.

WAVES member, David Prichard, a former Hospital Laboratory Technician, told the Senate Committee he has seen many cases where palliative drugs lose their effectiveness “to the point where patients beg for release from intolerable pain”.

Vice President of WAVES, Ranjan Ray, expresses personal reservations on the legislation, seeing it as overlooking the person requesting release from intolerable pain and/or anguish in favour of protecting the mythical ‘vulnerable’ person. His view is that VE supporters should ask whether the proposed law is the one that we have been fighting for or if it will “even help a person suffering intolerably, but incapable of being in a position to speak and/or write”.

Dying with Dignity Queensland also wants robust debate on the Bill describing it in its present form as “a bare bones document with insufficient detail” and having “an apparent lack of examination of the research, in particular, a lack of prior input by targeted stakeholder groups”.

It seems many stakeholders agree that this Draft requires more work.

Notice of the ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

**Wednesday, 15 October 2014 at 2 pm
at Citiplace Community Centre**

Walkway between the Art Gallery and Myer Store opposite the escalators at Perth Railway Station

Possible guest speaker: Dr David Mountain, former President AMA, Western Australia Branch.

Afternoon tea provided - **All welcome**



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.)

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Management Committee 2014

President: Murray Hindle

Vice-President: Ranjan Ray

Hon Secretary: vacant

Hon Treasurer: Gaye Harvey

Committee Members: Rodger Andrews, Tina Christensen, David Kelly, Geoffrey Walker, Stephen Walker, Gail Wyatt (Editor)

WAVES NEWS

If undelivered please return to:

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Cloisters Square
PERTH WA 6850

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Changing WAVES' Name

Your Committee is seeking your views about adopting a new name for our organisation. We have set out for your consideration a brief overview of the pros and cons of making such a change.

As you will know we are constantly reviewing our efficacy in the struggle against the opposition to voluntary euthanasia (VE).

Opposition has become entrenched in key groups and this appears to be drawing strength from the word 'euthanasia' being widely misunderstood as 'imposed death'. (This tactic is often used by our opponents who try to draw a parallel between VE and the activities of the Nazis during World War II, no matter how ridiculous this seems to most).

This organisation stands for, but must also be **seen as standing for**, the right to be independent, as far as possible, in the manner of our own deaths.

Accordingly *Dying With Dignity WA (DWDWA)* has been suggested as our new name. Bill O'Brien, as one of the many contributions he made as a committee member, registered this name some time ago in order to preserve it in case of future need. So some of the formalities are in hand in the event that you, the members, are in favour of the change.

CASE FOR CHANGING THE NAME:

1. The term 'Euthanasia' is associated by some with involuntary imposed death even though the word 'Voluntary' precedes it.
2. Change would not lessen community support for the concept or for WAVES.
3. The name Dying With Dignity is shared by other VE organisations in Australia with the exception of South Australia (SAVES), The Northern Territory (NTVES) and Western Australia (WAVES).
4. WAVES' logo (a figure of a bird) which appears on official publications is being considered for change so it is timely also to look at our name.

CASE AGAINST CHANGING THE NAME:

1. We have been known by our current name for the past 30 years and it is recognised and respected by many members.
2. 'Euthanasia', Greek for 'a good death', inherently has no negative connotations.
3. Changing the name would involve us in unnecessary expense.

Changing WAVES' Name

This matter will be discussed and possibly voted on at our AGM on 15 October 2014.

If you wish to vote on a motion to change and will not be at the AGM, please register your preference below, detach and send (PO Box 7243 Cloisters Square PERTH WA 6850).

Please remember to sign it.

/ I AM IN FAVOUR OF CHANGING WAVES' NAME TO DWDWA (if yes, delete/strike out other option)

/ I AM NOT IN FAVOUR OF CHANGING WAVES' NAME TO DWDWA (if yes, delete/strike out other option)

NAME.....SIGNEDDATE.....

Notice Board

Management Committee 2014-15

Although this is not an election year we need to "beef up" our committee in order to keep up with the ongoing activities associated with the changes necessary to legalise voluntary euthanasia in Western Australia

We currently have seven active committee members with two others on sick leave/travel.

We urgently need a Secretary and a Webmaster. Both need access to a computer and email.

The tasks are not onerous and only involve eleven monthly meetings per year each of one and a half to two hours duration.

ARE YOU UP TO THE TASK?

WE WOULD LOVE TO WELCOME YOU TO THE COMMITTEE!

ARE YOU A FINANCIAL MEMBER?

We are about to remove a large number of non-financial members from the WAVES database. Please check the address label on this newsletter and if the date does not end in 15 or higher, your subscription is no longer current. Note that Life members all have the date 1/7/50. If you wish to continue supporting us and receive the newsletter, please renew your subscription as soon as possible. The form with payment details is below.

YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS

Tell us at info@waves.org.au if you have a new email address so we can tell you directly things you need to know.

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

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

Peter's Petition

Peter Short is a terminally ill man from Victoria. His petition seeking support for legislative change currently has reached over 20,000 supporters on petition website, Change.org.

On 17 August he wrote: *My family have agreed to make a feature length documentary from now till my death. It is my insurance to ensure I have done the utmost to help raise the public awareness around Choice at end of life, and by that I simply mean a choice to have medically assisted death for terminally ill people like myself or for the incurable and suffering.*

This documentary will require around 500K of funding and it is not about making profit as these things don't. It will be featured at international and local film festivals and used to the maximum in Australia to effect change if it has not been achieved.

The film maker is currently raising funds and I would ask you to consider any philanthropic group or corporate who would be prepared to assist. I am not asking you to pass the hat around simply consider and put us in contact with those who may be prepared to help this important documentary.

He reports, however, that funds are just "dribbling in".

Providing support for VE legislation recently are identities as disparate as Nova Peris, Senator and former Olympian; Greg Combet, former Minister; Jeff Kennett, former Premier of Victoria; and David Penberthy, Editor-in-chief of News Limited news site and opinion website, The Punch.

Mr Penberthy has admitted: *After having witnessed that harrowing documentary from Britain last year, (a young man suffering from the hideous "boxed-in" syndrome pleading to end his miserable existence), I would now cautiously include myself in the pro-euthanasia camp.*

Vale Bill O'Brien 1925 - 2014

Bill joined WAVES in 2009 and was active on the Management Committee for the past five years. He was also a member of Exit International and assisted Carol O'Neil in the running of Exit's regular workshops in Western Australia.

Bill was a relatively healthy 89 year old who had a most rewarding and fulfilling life. He rose to the rank of Wing Commander and served in the RAAF during both the Second World War and in Vietnam. In civilian life he was an accountant and a Justice of the Peace.

Bill decided that 89 was old enough and had no intention of rotting in a nursing home. In late July with the aid of Nembutal (Sodium Pentobarbital) he took his own life at a time of his own choosing.

His sense of humour, contribution and dogged determination will be missed by all who knew and loved him.

A man of principles and high moral value who was a passionate supporter of our right to an end of life choice.

Thank you Bill !

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.

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.

President's Report

Dear Fellow Members,

The major item of interest in the past six months has been the move by Federal Senator Di Natale and supported by the Federal Member for Perth, Alannah MacTiernan, to present a Federal Dying with Dignity Bill to the Senate.

Our opponents, as you know, may be small in number and not representative of the majority in favour of voluntary euthanasia but have great influence over government policy in general and on our so called representatives in particular.

We currently have around 800 members and I can't emphasise enough the need to respond immediately in the Press and to your local politicians when any issues relating to VE emerge.

It's all about the noise we make. One only has to see the amount of publicity Dr Philip Nitschke gets to see how effective that kind of exposure can be. Whilst some may disagree with Philip's methods, the "noise" he makes gives the push for legalisation a huge boost.

Please use every opportunity to make your views known by letters, phone or email.

There has also been a move to discuss the possibility of a name change from the West Australian Voluntary Euthanasia Society (WAVES) to Dying With Dignity Western Australia (DWDWA). An item to this effect can be found in this issue of WAVES NEWS. I ask all to read this and if possible attend our AGM on the 15th of October so the matter can be discussed.

I close by thanking the Management Committee for their continuing efforts in support of our cause.

Murray Hindle

President



Rapid Response Group

We are considering setting up a group of people who would be willing to respond quickly to notable events relating to Voluntary Euthanasia, by contacting newspapers and/or Members of Parliament with letters in their own words.

Members of such a group would need to have an email address and to check that email often because WAVES would pass on incidents and requests for comment as soon as we become aware of them.

You may also share incidents you come across before we do.

We will not supply form letters for such cases as we believe more heed is taken when the words are obviously those of the individual.

If you are interested in being part of such a group, please email memberships@waves.org.au.

Call for Regional Interest Groups

Interested members outside the metropolitan area are looking at getting together either in person or by email.

Results and suggestions could then be passed on to the Management Committee and would give an up to date picture of what may be needed to move us closer to sensibly safeguarded VE in Western Australia.

If anyone in the country would like to take part, please contact us by letter (PO Box 7243, Cloisters Square, Perth 6850) or email info@waves.org.au.

Please remember that the strength of any organisation relies heavily on the support given to those who lead to have any realistic chance of achieving its goals.

'LIVING WILL' : an Advance Health Directive and WAVES' Living Will together will explain what your end-of-life wishes are and how to proceed. Make sure you lodge a copy of these documents with your doctor and family.

Euthanasia drug importation

Convicted Pensioner to pay \$1400 for importing

In August WA pensioner Rupert Ward received the first fine and conviction ever recorded in Australia for importing euthanasia drug Nembutal from China. The fine imposed is regarded widely as being out of proportion to the offence as the amount of the drug was 5mg. He had been raided at his Albany home earlier in the year, as had several other elderly Australians. Mr Ward, however, had invited the officials into his home and answered their questions.

The magistrate's decision not to record a

criminal record has been strongly supported in a recent poll in which most expressed the view the prosecution should not ever have taken place, and was not in the community's interest.

Even if intended to, it is unlikely this result will deter those who see the necessity to plan ahead for a dignified death. Other legal and very effective solutions, such as nitrogen, remain available.

To assist Rupert who is reliant on his pension., EXIT launched a crowd funding appeal which has now raised the funds needed to cover the fine.

The Long Arm of the Law?

The President of WAVES, Murray Hindle, shares with us the excitement in June this year of returning to Australia at Perth International Airport . A new initiative by the Tourist Bureau - or some other authority perhaps?

Last Sunday my wife and I returned to Perth following a visit to our son and his family in Finland. We passed the Immigration and Quarantine procedures, collected our baggage from the Baggage Claim area and proceeded, expecting a fast passage, through Customs. We were surprised but not concerned when asked to submit our cases and hand baggage for inspection by two most pleasant and efficient Customs Officers. All contents were either moved or removed from our luggage and the linings of all bags and cases were thoroughly searched. In all my experience with passage through Perth Airport, I have never witnessed such an efficient and thorough inspection of a person's baggage. It was no doubt a relief to all concerned that a full body and cavity search of the two ageing and weary travellers was not considered.

At this point we found our path to freedom blocked by two charming young police officers. We were approached and I was politely asked if I had any concerns regarding my state of mind. At this point my response could have been: "With respect, how would the officer feel if he had just spent most of the past 24 hours in the back of an aeroplane, cramped, tired and fed prison food?" As the officers were obviously concerned for my welfare, my response was: "Under the circumstances, I feel remarkably well!". My reply obviously satisfied the boys in blue and we were able to stagger to a taxi and be transported home.

It was not until the Police appeared, did I realise that our detention had a more sinister cause, and, at that point, I felt that it all had to do with the raids on suspected elderly importers of the banned drug Nembutal. (See **Convicted Pensioner** article above).

I had been tracked down across the world and detained for the sole purpose of establishing whether or not I was involved in such activities. The probable reason is that I am not only President of the West Australian Voluntary Euthanasia Society, but also a member of EXIT International.

It is wonderful that our society is served by those who so sympathetically inspected us and our baggage at the airport, but their efforts could be better used in catching and incarcerating real criminals.

The clandestine importation of Nembutal would end if there were suitably safeguarded end of life choice legislation. It really is in the hands of our Legislators, so let's see some action that does not involve the harassing of the elderly.

News Update

At Home

The latest call for dignity with dying has been launched, this time at the national level. In August 2014 The Greens Senator for Victoria, Richard Di Natale, presented a Draft Bill to the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee (the **Exposure Draft of the Medical Services (Dying with Dignity) Bill**).

In 2013 three State Governments considered bills advocating voluntary euthanasia. The 2014 attempt is the eighteenth in Australia.

And Abroad

Britain's supreme court recently ruled that a ban on assisted suicide is incompatible with human rights. On 18 July the UK House of Lords debated an Assisted Dying Bill in a Second Reading Speech.

Holland may soon extend VE rights to the tired and depressed elderly. In **France** the case of the French doctor Nicolas Bonnemaison ended well. The doctor was expected to be jailed for assisting several people to die, but was acquitted after family members supported the doctor's actions as compassionate.

In **Quebec** both sides of the national assembly stood to applaud as a pre-election promise was kept(!) and legislation passed, allowing VE for those in an advanced state of irreversible decline due to an incurable illness. In 2012, 172 foreigners travelled to **Switzerland** to take their lives. That was up from 86 in 2009, with citizens from Germany and Britain making up almost two-thirds of the total foreign assisted suicide cases. Overall the number of foreign assisted suicides in Switzerland has doubled in four years.

Archbishop Tutu now working for dignity for the dying

On the eve of the VE debate in UK House of Lords in July, Desmond Tutu, Archbishop Emeritus of Cape Town and a Nobel peace laureate, spoke out: "I have been fortunate to spend my life working for dignity for the living. Now I wish to apply my mind to the issue of dignity for the dying".

He begins with the admission that he has never been with someone as they died, although he considers it would be a privilege. In some ways, he says, "death is like a birth; it is the transition to a new life".

He goes on to relate how he has communicated his end-of-life wishes to youngest daughter, Mpho: "People should die a decent death. For me that means having had the conversations with those I have crossed in life and being at peace. It means being able to say goodbye to loved ones – if possible, at home".

He then reflects on the prolonging of the life of his friend, Nelson Mandela: "What was done to Madiba (Nelson Mandela) was disgraceful. You could see Madiba was not fully there. My friend was no longer himself. It was an affront to Madiba's dignity".

Talk to others about death and your dying, Tutu says. A survey of doctors in the UK in 2008 revealed that two-thirds said they had difficulty discussing end-of-life care with their patients. "Physicians were once healers of life and easers of death. In the 20th century the training for the latter has been neglected", he says.

"Be clear about end-of-life preferences", is his suggestion. He has come to see the importance of having a living will or advance directive. "I don't want people to do their damndest to keep me alive".

His view is that people are wrong to always consider suicide to be "a premature death accompanied by mental instability". Some say that palliative care is enough but, he points out, that is not always how it is for some sufferers.

He concludes: "I revere the sanctity of life – but not at any cost. Yes, I think a lot of people would be upset if I said I wanted assisted dying. I would say I wouldn't mind actually".