



NT Voluntary Euthanasia Society Inc

GPO Box 2 / 34 Darwin NT 0801

Patron: Mr Marshall Perron
President: Mrs Judy Dent

Newsletter

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NEW POLL SHOWS 80% SUPPORT

Dying with Dignity Victoria recently commissioned a national survey on end of life choices. The phone poll was supported financially by all the VE societies.

The Newspoll research, conducted in February, found 80% of respondents nationally thought that doctors should be allowed to provide a lethal dose to a patient experiencing unrelievable suffering and with no hope of recovery. Just 14% were opposed and 6% were undecided.

Support was higher in regional and rural Australia (82%) than in capital cities (78%). Of the capital cities, support was highest in Perth (85%) and lowest in Sydney (73%).

Twenty-two percent of respondents nationally have had a personal experience of a close relative or friend being hopelessly ill and wanting euthanasia.

Seven percent of respondents nationally claim to have a 'living will' (advance directive).

These results have renewed calls for further debate.

Since 1962 when just 47% were in favour, subsequent polls have shown a steady rise in the percentage of Australians who believe that terminally ill people should have the right to seek and obtain assistance to end their life when the final stage of their life becomes too burdensome.

The last poll was conducted in 2002 by Roy Morgan Research, finding that 73% of the population were in favour.

If you would like the complete poll results, email Judy at ntves@bigpond.com.

Peaceful Pill Handbook BANNED

In September 2006, at the World Federation of Right To Die Societies' Conference in Toronto, Dr Philip Nitschke and Dr Fiona Stewart launched their new book, *The Peaceful Pill Handbook*. Many in Australia ordered from Exit International in the USA and received their copies in the post although copies of the book were seized by Customs from people returning from the conference. Dr Nitschke submitted the book to the Australian Office of Film and Literature Classification and it was given a Restricted Category 1 Classification allowing it to be sold in Australia. Several bookstores stocked the book being printed in Adelaide and it was also available by local mail order. However, only three weeks later, the book was banned after applications from the Attorney-General, Philip Ruddock, and the Right to Life Association of New South Wales. It is now illegal to sell, display or import this book into Australia. More than 3000 copies have already been sold from the USA printing. It is still available from *amazon.com* but may be intercepted by Customs. Under a deal with Google Books, a downloadable version - also illegal under Australian law - will be available for about US\$30 (A\$37).

NATIONAL DAY OF SHAME

Exit International and the Voluntary Euthanasia Society of NSW co-hosted "Remembering ROTI National Day of Shame", ably assisted by the hard-working Canberra organising committee headed by David Swanton. The event started on Sunday 25 March 2007, when more than 100 people climbed aboard buses for the Freedom Ride to Canberra. ABC TV accompanied the buses and filmed the activities over the 2 days of the event.

On Monday, resplendent in Exit purple T-shirts and caps emblazoned with the slogans *ROTI National Day of Shame 2007* and *My Life My Choice*, the protestors filled the foyer of Parliament House. Exit Chapter Leaders presented to Senators Bob Brown, Carmen Lawrence and Lyn Allison the Condolence Books containing thousands of messages from ordinary Australians angry that the NT's *Rights of the Terminally Ill Act* had been overturned by a private member's bill 10 years ago.

Selected individuals, including the oldest participant, 96 year old Fred Short from the Gold Coast, were escorted upstairs to a conference room for interviews to be filmed by the ABC. Those remaining in the foyer sang "Advance Euthanasia Fair" penned by John Morris of NSW and modified slightly by the group.

“We’re Aussies but we can’t rejoice
In old age we’re not free
For we’re denied our basic right to
To die with dignity
We plead with politicians,
“From pain give us release,
Please treat us like vets treat sick pets’
Please let us die in peace.
Show us compassion, if you please
And let us die in peace.

We’re plagued by men like Andrews,
Egged on by priests like Pell,
Who tell us how to live and die
And threaten us with Hell.
Our land abounds with bigots,
Let’s fight them with out cease.
If their God’s a god of mercy
Why can’t we die in peace?
If their God is really loving
Just let us die in peace.”

Everyone then gathered on the lawn for an encore performance of the ‘anthem’ to be filmed by the ABC. Next was the Street March through the centre of Canberra with many people carrying placards and everyone chanting “Not the Church, not the State, we will decide our fate.”

Lunch in Glebe Park followed with speeches from several VIPs including Marshall Perron and Angelika Elliott, widow of Dr John Elliott who travelled to Switzerland to die with the assistance of Dignitas.

The next event happened in front of Old Parliament House, near the Tent Embassy. The Aboriginal delegates there gave permission for the group to use their fireplace to burn copies of *The Peaceful Pill Handbook*. In a scene reminiscent of Nazi Germany, 150 books were doused in kerosene and burned – a very sad scene indeed.

Two hundred people attended the National Day of Shame Memorial Dinner Monday evening at the National Museum. Guest Speaker at the dinner was Phillip Adams, renowned Australian broadcaster, author and columnist. In addition to his position as host of the ABC’s highly-influential Late Night Live radio program, he writes a weekly column for *The Australian* newspaper. He is the recipient of two Order of Australia awards, four honorary doctorates and numerous other awards including Humanist of the Year. Dinner was followed by

dancing, also filmed by the ABC. It is expected that the ABC footage will be shown on Four Corners on Monday 7 May 2007.

NT STATEHOOD

The first Charles Darwin Symposium Series of the year will discuss Statehood with experts from the Territory, interstate and overseas.

Securing Territorians' Rights: Statehood and a Bill of Rights?

Thursday 10 May 2007, 8.30am – 5.00pm, Casuarina Campus

Hosted by prominent broadcaster, writer and film-maker Phillip Adams

To register for this free symposium or for more information, go to www.cdu.edu.au/cdss or call 8946 7702.

DIGNITAS BOOKLET

VESQ has produced a helpful booklet, *Australian Guide to Dignitas (with particular reference to Queensland)*. It gives full details of the procedures involved, from how to join Dignitas, all the required documentation, travel and Zurich arrangements, to all the various costs involved. Call or email Judy if you would like a copy.

PRELIMINARY NOTICE

NTVES AGM will be held at Barbara McCarthy's office on Saturday 11 August 2007 at 10.00am. Only financial members can vote, so please renew your membership before the meeting. The Treasurer would be happy to accept your \$15 on the day of the meeting.