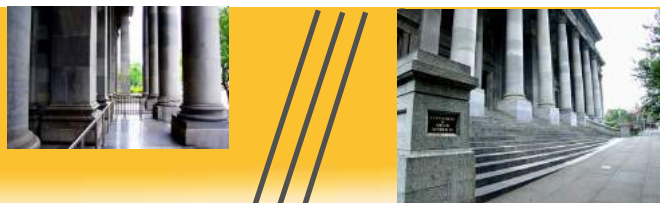


End of Life Choice



Newsletter on current debates

A Prayer for Common Sense

This is Lorraine Gregory's story, a practising Christian who has cancer.

Having been a church-goer all my life, and having seen my mother suffer and die from cancer, I actually prayed that I would die during the ten hour operation to remove my invasive adenoid cystic carcinoma (ACC), rather than face a future with cancer. But

God had other ideas! After the surgery I was unable to speak because of the tracheostomy, and I was fed through a nasal gastric tube for twenty six days, having frequent suctioning to prevent choking. Learning to swallow and even to talk again was truly no walk in the park, but I was eventually discharged from Flinders Medical Centre the very day I turned 70. After three months, I was able to at last lie down to sleep again without fear, rather than sitting up in my chair all night.

Now more than two years on from my operation, I thank God that I am currently enjoying a full and rewarding life again. But I suppose that, as anyone who has had cancer will attest, I live with the daily knowledge that the cancer will most likely return. Meanwhile I have had the opportunity to develop an enhanced perspective on life, appreciating the things of *real* value such as family, friendships, and time.

I was also pleased to find online compassionate groups such as Christians Supporting Choice for VE, with their booklet **I Want the Choice of a Peaceful Death**, together with Paul Badham's book **Is there a Christian Case for Assisted Dying? I was blessed to discover that others shared my belief in our God as a God of love, and that it is not His will for us to suffer needlessly in our final days.**

I am 72. Two and a half years ago I had a persistent sore throat, and upon

investigation with a mirror, I could see an angry red lump on my left tonsil. I had a CAT scan, then a biopsy under general anaesthetic. Then they told me it was ACC.

Out of all types of cancer that occur each year in the US, less than one quarter of one percent of them are ACC. The shock of being diagnosed with cancer was hard enough to deal with, considering the fact that I have never smoked, and only rarely drank any alcohol. But hearing of the rarity of ACC was instantly alarming, together with the fear of finding a specialist familiar with it. Thankfully we discovered a surgeon - Dr Eng H Ooi from the Flinders Medical Centre - who was experienced in dealing with ACC. After an MRI and PET scans, Dr Ooi said that I needed to have the cyst removed immediately, and that it wouldn't be a walk in the park. I also consulted with the plastic surgeon Mr Nick Marshall, who was to take a graft from my wrist to cover the large hole that surgery would leave behind. Both specialists advised me to follow the operation with a course of radiation.



Lorraine Gregory

Lorraine lives in the electorate of Schubert

I refused radiotherapy, choosing quality rather than quantity of life. Being somewhat of a 'medico-tragic' I had Googled osteoradionecrosis, and perhaps had seen just a little too much scary stuff on RPA!

I think we all wonder what the future has in store for us. Thankfully I am unlikely to live out my days in a nursing home, but will I end up in a similar type of institution under palliative care? Will that care provide sufficient pain relief as the end draws near, or will I have to endure unbearable suffering, pleading with my

doctor to end it all, but knowing that he can't?

Will I have to endure the suffering described by 90 year old **Eileen Dawe** last year, from her Aged Care home in the Adelaide hills (*The Damage Done*, pp140-4):

Friday 25th Sept

Over two months of pain relief. Not my choice. Another awakening to a day of medication. The threat of pain hanging over me as I wither away to that shrunken bundle being quietly discussed.

My hearing and eyesight, along with comprehension deteriorate. The perplexed eyes of a stranger return my gaze.

First moments awakening bring sadness and dismay with the realisation that my continued existence seems interminable.

Sunday 29th November

...My treatment consists of semi-starvation since release from hospital 11th September. The question I ask [is] why must it go on for so long? I want to die, I am happy to die. Why drag out a long, long, long suicide.

Some days I eat a little food – usually gives diarrhoea or lots of frothing from the mouth, slight vomiting. Sometimes very weak as I tire [but] sometimes very energetic. I love my little garden of plants that give me enjoyment and beauty like the birds beyond. I do hate the long, long farewell. I just do not have the life that was mine anymore. I am happy to go...

Glad did I live and gladly die.

I pray that common sense will soon prevail, whereby those who are elected to represent us will truly seek to do so.



<http://christiansforve.org.au>

SAVES

South Australian Voluntary Euthanasia Society

saves.asn.au

Compassion for suffering
The freedom to choose
Add your voice to the call



SAVES was established in 1983 to campaign for legal, medically assisted choice in end-of-life arrangements. The aim is to relieve suffering by providing choice for people at the end of their life. SAVES works in the community and with Members of Parliament to achieve law reform.

SAVE-YA Syndicated Australian Voluntary Euthanasia Youth Advocates

Facebook: Support SAVE-YA Law Reform



A national youth lobby group which aims to provide a youth voice in support of legalising voluntary euthanasia in all States and Territories. Members between ages 18 and 35 are encouraged to join, make contact with their local MP and inform them of their support for voluntary euthanasia law reform.

Christians Supporting Choice For Voluntary Euthanasia

christiansforve.org.au

We are Christians who believe that, as a demonstration of love and compassion, those with a terminal or hopeless illness should have the option of a pain-free, peaceful and dignified death with legal voluntary euthanasia. The overwhelming majority of Australian Christians support choice for voluntary euthanasia.



South Australian Nurses Supporting Choices in Dying

Facebook: SA Nurses Supporting Choices in Dying
We are a group of passionate nurses who believe in our patient's right to choose the end of life care they wish. The group provides a forum for the nursing voice and perspective on legalising voluntary euthanasia and other patient choices in end of life care.



MY BODY MY Choice-VE

facebook.com/pages/MY-BODY-MY-Choice-VE

MBMC provides a voice for people with disability in the VE reform debate. MBMC represents the interests of people with disabilities who wish to exercise choice in all aspects of their life, including choice at the end of life, with the view that choice and control are a fundamental human right for everyone.

MBMC argues that people with disabilities know how it feels to lose personal autonomy through their ongoing fight for self-determination, independent living and disability rights.

MBMC believes that people with disabilities, who have struggled to control their own lives and bodies, must be allowed to maintain control and autonomy throughout their life, especially at its end.



Doctors for Voluntary Euthanasia Choice

drs4vechoice.org



We are a national organisation of Australian medical practitioners, both current and retired, who are committed to having a legal choice of providing information and assistance to rational adults, who, for reasons of no realistic chance of cure or relief from intolerable symptoms, would like to gently end their lives. Assistance may be by doctor provision of medication for the patient to consume, or by doctor-administration.

Lawyers for Death with Dignity

saves.asn.au/lawyers

Lawyers for Death with Dignity acknowledges the need for people with profound suffering to have the legal choice for a medically assisted and dignified death. The current law says suicide is not illegal, but assisting suicide is. People in a terminal state may have profound, unbearable suffering and be in the undignified position of being unable to end their life without assistance. Advances in medicine have improved life expectancy, but South Australian law has not changed to reflect the often forgotten deterioration in quality of life a longer life expectancy may bring.



BREAKING NEWS...BREAKING NEWS..BREAKING NEWS..BR

David Penberthy: Slowly, I'm coming to understand those who support euthanasia

ANDREW Denton describes it as one of the most depressing books ever published. It is. It is depressing not so much because it documents unimaginable pain and suffering. It is especially depressing because the worst of that pain and suffering is avoidable, and could be eliminated overnight if our legislators reflected what is clearly the majority will of the people.

The Damage Done is an enormously powerful book in that it gives voice to people who are voiceless; compiling the harrowing final testimony of those who are now gone, killed by incurable diseases and plagued by unmanageable pain.

People such as Elisabeth Inglis, one of the almost 800 Aussies who die each year from motor neurone disease, a hideous, incurable condition which sufferer and AFL great Neale Daniher has labelled "The Beast". MND methodically strips its victims of all their faculties. The ultimate cause of death is asphyxiation.

Elisabeth, who had lost the capacity for speech, scribbled a note from her hospital bed, a photo of which appears in the book. It reads: "It's so much worse than I had imagined."

Three things strike me about such stories. The first is that people such as Elisabeth are wholly in possession of their mental faculties as their bodies turn on them. The second is that they are denied the chance of a dignified final moment with their partner, their kids, and their loved ones, as their disease turns their final weeks and days into an unbearable horror show. The third is that as their conditions worsen, they are all forced to lie there in hospital knowing the worst terror lies on the horizon, like some uniquely cruel pending execution. (Sunday Mail, 25.9.16)

"My views on this are swinging around now. It is a cautious model advocated by credible people. And if you don't support it, logic would suggest you are effectively telling everyone whose last days are documented in this miserable bloody book that they had no choice but to die like that, and no right to choose another way."