

Parents of voluntary euthanasia campaigner Kylie Monaghan vow to turn her legalisation dream into reality

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IN the end, Kylie Monaghan could fight no more. The torchbearer for legalising euthanasia in South Australia had battled cancer for six-and-a-half years when, on October 8, she succumbed – just four days before her third wedding anniversary.

“Towards the end she was just giving short breaths and we were all around the bed,” Kylie’s mother, Shirley Church, 55, said.

“I just said ‘You just go’ and she put her head on the side and she passed.

“That Saturday morning was the worst day of my life.”

Kylie, 35, spent the last four months of her life as the face of the Be the Bill campaign in support of the Voluntary Euthanasia Bill, which will be debated in Parliament this week.

The campaign is aimed at urging South Australian politicians to look beyond the impersonal nature of the Bill and remind them that their vote affects real people.

It was an option that was too late for Kylie but would have allowed her to die with dignity. Her mother and stepfather, Greg Smith, have made it their mission to carry the baton in an attempt to turn their daughter’s voluntary euthanasia wish into reality.

“Kylie was terminally ill and the Bill wouldn’t have passed in her lifetime, but for her legacy and to give other people an option ... it gives them a bit of dignity to die,” Mr Smith, 57, said.

“No one wants to be left having mishaps and letting other people come in and look after them. It is very degrading and some people don’t like people seeing them like that.

“You can’t just come in off the street and say ‘I want to die’. You have got to be terminally ill for voluntary euthanasia. I believe she may have used it because she was in a lot of pain.”

“Smiley Kylie”, as she was fondly known, was born and raised in Port Pirie.

She loved shopping, taking her dogs for a walk and dressing them up at Christmas.

She was well liked in the Mid North town, where she rose through the ranks at KFC before working at various retail shops and the local newspaper.



Kylie's stepfather Greg Smith and mother Shirley Church have vowed to continue their daughter's push for voluntary euthanasia. Picture: Mark Brake

It was while reading in bed one night that she felt a lump in her breast and told husband-to-be Darryl Monaghan about the discovery before going for tests.

She was diagnosed with breast cancer on April 1, 2010 – a day Mr Smith described as “devastating” and one that changed his family's life forever.

“It spread and got worse in her breast and so she had to have it off, and then later on she went back for some more check-ups and she decided to have the other one off,” he said.

“They told us they had got it all after six months, but then she had to go back for some more check-ups and they said the blood had escaped and they said ‘You have got liver cancer now’.

“Her knees started playing up and so she went back and had another scan and they said ‘Now you've got bone cancer’.”

It was in the final year of her illness that Kylie really struggled – not that she ever complained. “She was tired. Her oncologist told her she couldn't drive and she couldn't be bothered getting out of bed,” Mrs Church said.

Mr Smith added: “She lost all self-esteem and didn't want to go shopping any more. Things that she liked to do – go for coffee, go for lunch.

“In the last six months of her life she just couldn't travel anywhere.”

Kylie was so ill that she could only manage to stay for half an hour at the April wedding of her brother, Brodie, before she had to go back to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital – the place where she had received her diagnosis six years earlier.



Kylie was born on July 12, 1981. This photo was taken when she was two months old.

In the final few days, her health deteriorated to the point where she was no longer able to look after herself.

She was admitted to Port Pirie Hospital on September 30, when doctors told Darryl that his wife of almost three years had only a few days to live.

“She just got sicker and tired,” Mrs Church said.

“She couldn’t go to the toilet; I had to put her in a wheelchair to take her to the toilet.

“I helped her clean her teeth because she didn’t even have the energy to do that.

“As I’m doing all this for her she keeps apologising to me, and I said ‘stop apologising, you don’t need to apologise’. But she said ‘Mum, it’s not right for you to do this for me’.” Kylie’s liver had swollen so much from the cancer it caused her lung to partially collapse.

“She just got weaker and weaker and for three days she didn’t eat,” Mrs Church said.

“I was helping her clean her teeth and I noticed tinges of blue in the corner of her mouth and her fingertips and, to me, that was caused by a lack of oxygen.”

On the morning of her death, Kylie was so exhausted that she couldn’t even open her eyes.

She eventually passed away, surrounded by her family, at 1.06pm on October 8.

“It still is (heartbreaking). I will live that moment every day,” Mr Smith said.

“We have lived our life and done what we wanted to do, but she never got to do what she wanted to.”



Kylie married Darryl Monaghan on October 12, 2013.

Husband Darryl said he loved Kylie “very much”, and thanked everyone who had supported her throughout her cancer battle and push to legalise voluntary euthanasia.

Kylie was promoting housing for patients travelling to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital from the country, when in June she was contacted by television personality Andrew Denton, founder of Go Gentle Australia, a lobby group supporting voluntary euthanasia.

The pair talked about Kylie’s predicament and, soon after, she became the face of the Be the Bill campaign, which is also supported by the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation.

“I believe in it, she believed in it and, even though it is an unspoken thing, a lot of people believe in it, too,” Mr Smith said.

“But it’s only just recently that it’s come to light that a lot of people are starting to speak about it.

“I think a lot of it is to do with Kylie.

“Her passion was the Bill – so that’s why she helped launch it and, hopefully, she has persuaded a lot of politicians to get behind it.”

Cancer has been cruel to the Smith and Church families.

Mr Smith has lost two brothers – Lindsay, 62, and Anthony, 51 – to prostate and throat cancer, and his mother, Flo, to bowel cancer.

Kylie’s biological father, Terry Wall, died from liver cancer and her paternal grandmother, Shirley Wall, lost her battle with breast cancer.



Kylie, right, with friend Meagan Freer.

Mr Smith praised local MP Geoff Brock, who he said had spoken to people with concerns about voluntary euthanasia. “I hope all politicians come to realise that at some stage they must know of somebody who has been terminally ill and in suffering,” he said.

“It is just a no-brainer. No one wants to see people suffer.”

Mrs Church said: “It’s not killing. It’s letting the person go in their own way if they want to go.

“It’s hard to see people suffering. If they have got the choice, let them have the choice. Just do the right thing, please.”

■ The Kylie Monaghan Tribute Fundraiser will be held at the Federal Hotel, Port Pirie, on November 26, from 5pm. Profits will go to the Port Pirie Hospital chemotherapy ward, Queen Elizabeth Hospital Research Centre, and Breast Cancer SA.

<http://www.adelaidenow.com.au/news/south-australia/parents-of-voluntary-euthanasia-campaigner-kylie-monaghan-vow-to-turn-her-legislation-dream-into-reality/news-story/6ae5f15c9ad008e0b55ed3728986504a>