

Dying with Dignity

New South Wales



NEWS | Spring 2018



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DYING WITH DIGNITY NSW

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President's Message

What an eventful and exciting year this is turning out to be. We are looking forward to the upcoming forum 'The Truth About End of Life Choices' being held on Sunday 11 November in North Sydney. The response has been overwhelming with over 400 tickets sold in a matter of days. The aim of the forum is to dispel some of the myths and misunderstandings around death and dying and it will involve Andrew Denton in conversation with a panel of medical professionals – doctors and nurses – all of whom have been closely involved in caring for patients at the end of life. We will film the event and make it available to view on our website. We are also looking to plan a similar event in 2019.

On August 15 the Australian Senate voted on a bill to restore the rights of the Northern Territory and Australian Capital Territory to debate laws for voluntary assisted dying. The Bill looked set to pass but at the 11th hour a couple of senators changed their votes and the bill was defeated. Despite more than 80% public support, the Right to Life and religious groups used their close connections within the Liberal and Labor parties to influence the outcome by spreading fear and misinformation. It is also clear that certain coalition senators were pressured to 'take one for the team' to ensure that the issue did not proceed to the lower house where it would have inevitably caused further disruption from the religious right wing of the Liberal Party. Ultimately this group was instrumental in the subsequent leadership change which culminated in the Wentworth by-election (see page 10).

Our Vice President, Shayne Higson ran as a candidate in this by-election for the Voluntary Euthanasia Party to draw attention to the need for safe and legal voluntary assisted dying laws and to send a message to both major parties that they can no longer take the electorate for granted. Shayne managed to come in eighth place in a

field of 16 candidates. As we know, Dr Kerryn Phelps is the new member for Wentworth and we can count on her support if the issue comes before Federal Parliament again (see page 6).

In the lead up to the by-election we were able to establish the positions of all sixteen candidates. Most were in support of VAD in specified circumstances, notably the ALP candidate, Tim Murray and the leading Independent, Dr Kerryn Phelps. Significantly, the Liberal candidate, Dave Sharma, was opposed (see page 7). Unfortunately this is consistent with the pattern we have seen over and over again when the issue has arisen in Australia. Liberal Party MPs seem to overwhelmingly exercise their 'conscience' to oppose voluntary assisted dying laws and this seems to be due to the influence of the religious conservatives within their party at the state and federal levels.

Unfortunately, we fear that the Victorian Liberal National Coalition may try to overturn, or water down, the Voluntary Assisted Dying Act, if they win the Victorian State election next month. Opposition leader, Matthew Guy, has refused to rule this out and Dying with Dignity Victoria are increasingly concerned as the religious conservatives in the Victorian Coalition and a formal alliance of Right to Life, the Australian Christian Lobby and HOPE are actively lobbying to repeal this hard fought law.

Western Australia successfully completed a cross-party parliamentary inquiry which has recommended the adoption of voluntary assisted dying laws. Lobbying is underway for the adoption of the process followed in Victoria with the development of a government sponsored bill prepared with advice from an expert panel. The Queensland Government has just announced their own inquiry following pressure on the government at the Queensland Labor Party Conference in September. Despite our concerns about the Victorian election, good progress is being made in the implementation of their assisted dying regime.

Internationally we are encouraged by further progress in New Zealand and several states in America; however, events in California and South Africa demonstrate that the road towards passage of compassionate laws to allow people to choose how they die, has many obstacles.

On a brighter note, the American Academy of Family Physicians which has over 130,000 members announced recently that it no longer opposes assisted dying and will adopt a position of “engaged neutrality”. This signals a marked splinter from the American Medical Association. There are strong parallels with the support given by the Royal Australian College of GPs for the Victorian voluntary assisted dying laws. This was in stark contrast to the strident opposition shown by the Australian Medical Association President at that time, Dr Michael Gannon.

You might have noticed a change in the way we’ve been communicating with you. We have recently begun using a new membership and campaign platform that enables us to better communicate with our supporters and to target certain areas and groups of people. This will prove very useful as we start our next campaign in 2019. We will be able to mobilise supporters in certain electorates to lobby those MPs whose votes we need to win in order to have voluntary assisted dying laws passed in NSW.

Lastly, we have said a sad farewell to our longstanding staff member, Gabrielle Brown, but as one door closes another door opens and we are pleased to welcome Sandi Steep to our team.



Penny Hackett
President, DWD NSW

Gabrielle’s departure

Our wonderful Executive Officer, Gabrielle Brown, whom many of you know well, left Dying With Dignity NSW in August to take up a position at the Women’s Justice Network. Over the past eight years, Gab has made a huge contribution to our organisation.

Gab had a great rapport with members and always remembered everyone’s names and stories. Her excellent skills in writing and editing and her deep grasp of our issue have made our Facebook page, website and newsletter the envy of many. In addition, her accounting skills meant that the Board always had excellent financial reports and forecasts and has helped us to keep Dying With Dignity NSW solvent and functioning smoothly. We are grateful for her energy and passion and we wish her well in her new position.

FROM DR SARAH EDELMAN

“Gabrielle started work at DWD in 2010, originally in the position of administrator / coordinator. Her role quickly grew, largely due to her energy and enthusiasm. Gabrielle took on many responsibilities, including management of memberships, financial accounts, the website, planning events, corresponding with our members and writing substantial portions of our newsletter. Gabrielle also played an important role at board meetings, initiating ideas and helping us to plan key initiatives. She emailed board members almost every day, keeping us informed, and at times prompting us to act.

Gabrielle did a huge amount of work preparing our website for its upgrade to the new modern platform we have today. She had an in-depth knowledge of our issues, and kept the website up to date. She also took over management of our Facebook account, and played a key role in communicating with members and supporters via social media.

Members who have dealt with Gabrielle will know that she was very warm, enthusiastic and passionate about our cause. I very much enjoyed working with Gabrielle, and hope that she is happy and fulfilled in her new job. We were very lucky to have her."

Sarah Edelman

Former president, DWD NSW

We asked Gabrielle to reflect on the changes she has witnessed, and been a part of, over the past eight years with Dying With Dignity NSW. Here are some extracts from this very useful account. You can read the [full piece on the DWD website](#), or if you would like a printed copy, please contact DWD and we can mail one to you.

"Thank you for this opportunity to reflect upon some of the changes that I have experienced during my time as the Executive Officer of Dying with Dignity NSW between late 2010 and mid-2018. The changes are significant and could be put into three categories. Firstly, there has been a significant increase in the level of knowledge and activity undertaken by DWD NSW. Secondly, the introduction of new technology has transformed the way in which we engage with our members and the wider Australian audience. Thirdly, the whole campaign received a 'step change' from the injection of the research and advocacy of high-profile Australian, Andrew Denton...."

"When I started working for DWD NSW, the Board explained that the campaign for VAD laws in NSW was a long-term campaign and that DWD NSW was working on gradually building up our supporter base and our financial resources ready for a future when the time would be right for law reform...."

"Most of the decisions about our activities were made by the Board during their meetings held every six to eight weeks. Over the years, we increasingly used group emails to make decisions and take actions between Board meetings. The level of activity by the NSW Board increased significantly, with Board members volunteering many hours of unpaid work on a regular basis."

"By November 2017, when the Voluntary Assisted Dying (NSW) bill was debated in the NSW Upper House, DWD NSW had become a very modern, active, professional advocacy organisation. Many of us were working 24/7 to help get the bill over the line. This bill came closer to passing than any previous NSW attempt, failing by only a single vote in the Upper House."

"Looking back over the eight years that I worked at DWD NSW, I believe that the most significant development in the Australian VAD campaign was the entry of Andrew Denton. It started with his Di Gribble Argument speech at the Wheeler Centre in Melbourne in late 2015 and the roll-out of his ground-breaking, 'Better Off Dead' podcast series."

"I have faith in the Board of DWD NSW that they will continue to work with key stakeholders and move us towards success in NSW and that we will not have to wait too long before the desperately needed law reform comes to fruition."



Gabrielle Brown (right) with DWD NSW member Liz Inglis at a polling booth in Wentworth

Dr Alida Lancee featured on 60 Minutes



“ All I want to do is provide a compassionate choice for those who need it. ”

Dr Alida Lancee

Brave Perth GP, Dr Alida Lancee, made headlines on Network Nine's 60 Minutes on Sunday 23 September when she named the patient she had previously assisted to die. In 2106, Dr Lancee revealed she had helped a patient to die in 2011 and the police began an investigation. However Lancee had not named the patient and the police investigated the wrong person. Police established that the patient had died of natural causes and cleared Lancee of all charges.

In the *60 Minutes* report Dr Lancee revealed to reporter Tara Brown the name of the actual patient she assisted to die and challenged the authorities to take action. Dr Lancee's aim was to draw attention to need for voluntary assisted dying laws by being open about sometimes helping her patients to die, something which is done by many other doctors.

Mavis Scott, 80, was suffering end stage lung disease when she requested help. Dr Lancee said she had had long talks with Mavis and her daughter and after every medical option had been tried Mavis said "I just want to die. Please help me." Dr Lancee then gave Mavis an injection which hastened her death.

The injection, Dr Lancee claimed, differed from palliative care only in respect to the speed at which suffering is ended.

Mavis Scott isn't the only patient Dr Lancee has assisted in their final moments. She told 60 Minutes she had hastened the deaths of

approximately eight other patients, an admission that may result in multiple police charges. Lancee said this situation exemplifies how ludicrous the law is, declaring that the problem isn't that she has done the wrong thing but that society hasn't caught up with what people need.

Fellow doctors, Dr Frank Kotai and Dr Rodney Syme came forward to back Dr Lancee's methods, also admitting they had assisted patients to die. Dr Kotai admitted to assisting half a dozen terminally ill patients end their life. He also insisted there are many other doctors who have felt the same need and provided the same relief, they just aren't willing to risk saying so on camera. Dr Syme, estimated the number of patients who have sought his help to end their suffering is staggering – "around 300".

All three of these doctors say that when they are faced with a patient's unbearable and hopeless suffering it is impossible not to help.

Interestingly, while the Australian Medical Association continue to oppose voluntary assisted dying laws the president of their Western Australian Branch, Omar Khorshid, acknowledged that doctors did sometimes hasten their patients deaths in certain circumstances

The program is still available to view at: <https://www.9now.com.au/60-minutes/2018/extras/clips/clip-cjmefqr13002o0hrpjsf0ml5m>

NEWS FROM NEW SOUTH WALES

The Wentworth by-election

Our Vice President, Shayne Higson, has a long association with the Voluntary Euthanasia Party (VEP) having run in three previous elections, at a state and federal level, since the VEP was formed in 2013.

Following the removal of the Malcolm Turnbull as Prime Minister and his subsequent resignation, Shayne decided to run for the vacant seat representing the Voluntary Euthanasia Party. Although she was born and raised in Wentworth and lived in the electorate for most of her life, she ran to send a strong message to the major parties. That message was to remove the increasing interference of religious conservatives in Australian politics and to pass assisted dying legislation.

It was always going to be a difficult contest, with the three major parties running as well as three strong independents and ten minor party candidates. However, Shayne is very pleased with the result, finishing eighth out of 16.

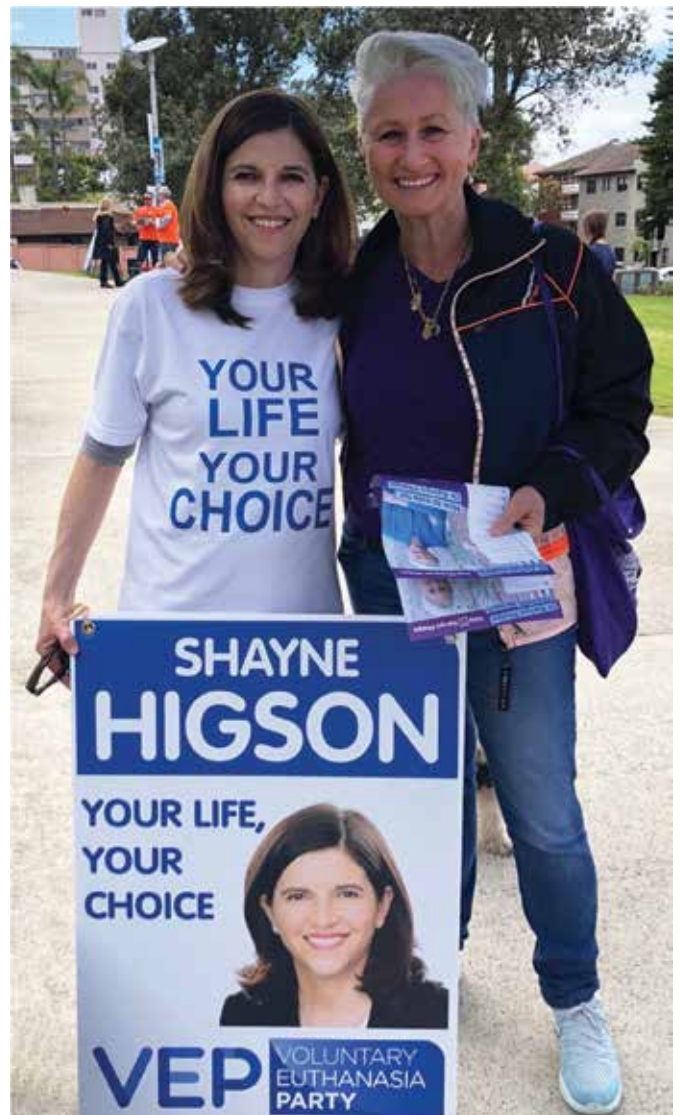
“We all knew I could not win the seat of Wentworth but by running I was able to keep assisted dying law reform on the political agenda,” said Shayne.

“I am pleased that we were able to make each of the candidates address this issue and pledge their support.”

Shayne would like to thank all those who volunteered to help on the pre-polling booths as well as on election day and also those who supported the VEP’s campaign by making donations.

Shayne will now work towards the NSW state election to be held on 23 March 2019, in which she will once again be running as the lead upper candidate for the VEP.

“Next year will be my fifth election campaign and it will be the most important one. The last VAD Bill failed to pass the NSW upper house by just one vote so if I can win the last seat, it could make all the difference.”



Shayne Higson with the new member for Wentworth, Dr Kerry Phelps.

CANDIDATES REVEAL THEIR POSITIONS ON VOLUNTARY ASSISTED DYING LAWS

Dying with Dignity NSW played a role in the Wentworth by-election by asking each candidate to state their position on assisted dying legislation. We asked two questions.

Question 1: Do you, in principle, support the concept of voluntary assisted dying laws? That is, laws that would permit terminally ill people to ask for assistance to die, provided that they have decision-making capacity and are not subject to any coercion?

Question 2: Would you have supported the recent Federal Bill on restoring the rights of the Territories to legislate to allow voluntary assisted dying?

Twelve of the sixteen candidates expressed their support including three of the main candidates, Dr Kerryn Phelps, Labor’s Tim Murray and the Greens, Dominic Wy Kanak. Unfortunately, the Liberal candidate, Dave Sharma does not support assisted dying legislation.

Based on their responses we created this scorecard to give voters in Wentworth an idea of which candidates support assisted dying and those who don’t.



We believe one of the most positive outcomes from Shayne’s campaign in the by-election is the support we now have from former AMA President and the new member for Wentworth, Dr Kerryn Phelps.

In answering ‘yes’ to Question 1, Dr Kerryn Phelps said:

“As a doctor, I believe that no person should be forced to suffer when all reasonable palliative care measures have failed to relieve that suffering. I have discussed this with my colleague Dr Brian Owler, who was the Chair of the Victorian Ministerial Taskforce and a fellow former Australian Medical Association President. He assured me that the Victorian Assisted Dying Legislation was evidence-based, and included 68 safeguards to protect against the laws being abused.

Following wide consultation, the Victorian Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill 2017 contains strict eligibility criteria with a rigorous assessment process including decision-making capacity of the affected person. Ultimately, this is about respect for the dying person’s choice about the timing and manner of their death.”

In answering ‘yes’ to Question 2, she said:

“The Victorian law with its safeguards may act as a blueprint for other states and territories to consider their own legislation. It is time that the rights of Australian territories were restored to allow them to debate and potentially set their own assisted dying laws.”

Which candidates support voluntary assisted dying laws in the Wentworth by-election?	Candidate	Question 1
	HIGSON, Shayne Voluntary Euthanasia Party	✓
	SHARMA, Dave Liberal	✗
	MURRAY, Tim Labor	✓
	PHELPS, Kerryn Independent	✓
	HEATH, Licia Independent	✓
	KANAK, Dominic Wy The Greens	✓
	VITHOULKAS, Angela Independent	✓
	GUNNING, Samuel Joseph Liberal Democrats	✓
	LEONG, Andrea Science Party	✓
	DOYLE, Deb Animal Justice Party	✓
	DUNNE, Kay Sustainable Australia	✓
	FORSYTH, Ben Derryn Hinch's Justice Party	✓
	KELDOULIS, Barry The Arts Party	✓
	ROBINSON, Tony Australian Liberty Alliance	✗
	GEORGANTIS, Steven Australian People's Party	✗
	CALLANAN, Robert Katter's Australian Party	?

NEWS FROM AROUND THE COUNTRY

Progress in Western Australia

Good news from Western Australia. The 12 month, cross-party parliamentary inquiry that was conducted has issued its report and it has recommended that the Parliament legalises voluntary assisted dying. This recommendation is backed by MPs from Labor, the Greens, the Liberals and Nationals and it is likely that a bill will be introduced in 2019. Both Labor and the Liberals have said their MPs would get a conscience vote on the issue. The government will work with a panel of health and legal experts and will jointly draft the legislation.

The Committee has recommended that those who are eligible for voluntary assisted dying must be experiencing grievous and irremediable suffering related to an 'advanced and progressive terminal, chronic or neurodegenerative condition that cannot be alleviated in a manner acceptable to that person.' There is no time requirement mentioned, rather death would need to be 'reasonably foreseeable' and the person seeking assistance would have to have decision-making capacity at the time of making the choice to die. The Committee also recommended that health practitioners who have a conscientious objection to assisted dying not be forced to participate. Committee chair, Amber-Jade Sanderson said how we die has changed over the last 60 years and medicine and the law have not kept pace with this change, nor with changes in community expectations. The Committee believes the community is ready for change.

"The committee concludes that the current lawful options available to people experiencing grievous and irremediable suffering at end of life are inadequate and can be exceptionally difficult for the dying person and for their family and friends," she said.



Victoria

OPPONENTS MAY TRY TO REPEAL THE VOLUNTARY ASSISTED DYING ACT

Right to Life, the Australian Christian Lobby and HOPE have vowed to press for repeal of the Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2017, if the political climate is favourable. This could be the case if the Liberal Nationals coalition gains power after the 24 November state election. In March 2018, four months after voluntary assisted dying (VAD) legislation was passed in Victoria, the Australian Care Alliance was formed in Victoria to specifically oppose voluntary assisted dying.

The press has reported that the Liberal Party in Victoria is progressively being taken over by the hard Christian Right. Mormons now occupy 13% of the 78 executive positions, yet comprise only 0.3% of the population. This Christian Right group is fundamentally opposed to VAD.

In a letter to Dying with Dignity Victoria and other public statements, Matthew Guy, the leader of the Opposition, has stated that the party has “no plans” to attempt to repeal the Act. However, having “no plans” does not mean lack of intention or willingness to do so. Also worryingly, Mr Guy has clearly said on radio, in two separate interviews, he “will not stand in the way of democratic process” if a private member’s bill is put forward to repeal the Act.

But Matthew Guy’s letter also hints at the possibility of stymieing the Act by manipulating the regulations which will govern the practical implementation of voluntary assisted dying:

“I note that the Andrews Labor Government is still yet to introduce a full regulatory regime to oversee the implementation of voluntary assisted dying, which the Liberal Nationals will carefully examine if we are elected to government in November.”

Given the bitterness with which the opponents fought against the passage of the Victorian laws in parliament and the increasing influence of the religious conservatives in the coalition ranks we have no doubt that there will be attempts to repeal or neuter the laws if they win government. This is despite more than 80% public support and calls into question the motivation of MPs who are supposed to be representing the whole community.

Victoria’s Voluntary Assisted Dying Act became law in December 2017. Since then the government has been undertaking a long implementation process with the Act due to come into force in June 2019. It set up a taskforce to coordinate the resources, processes and systems needed to ensure safe and compassionate access to voluntary assisted dying. This includes

developing community information and consumer guidelines, substance and dosage guidelines, the permit process, clinical guidelines, a training program and models of care and protocols.

In September the Victorian Government announced the rules that will govern the operation of the law. It is proposed that the State Government will be able to import substances otherwise banned in Australia such as pentobarbital (Nembutal) and secobarbital. The Victorian Health Minister, Jill Hennessy, has made it clear that, while doctors may make a conscientious objection to participating in assisted dying, they must refer the patient promptly to a doctor who is willing to assist.

While Melbourne’s key Catholic hospitals have already expressed their firm opposition to the practice, most of Victoria’s public hospitals have been working towards facilitating assisted dying.

The Victorian Healthcare Association, representing 98 per cent of Victoria’s health providers, has been tasked with drawing up the ‘model of care’ to be used by all practitioners participating in the assisted dying regime.

Further information is available on the following Victorian Government website:
<https://dhhs.vic.gov.au/news/voluntary-assisted-dying>

A good guide to the Act is on this website:
<https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/publications/research-papers/download/36-research-papers/13834-voluntary-assisted-dying-bill-2017>



Queensland

The campaign for voluntary assisted dying (VAD) is gathering pace in Queensland. After the state branch of the Labor Party passed a motion to introduce VAD legislation, pressure began to be applied to the Premier, Anastasia Palaszczuk. At the same time community activism began to grow, with the push coming from groups in Mackay and Bundaberg. A new branch of DWD Queensland was established in the Wide Bay and Bundaberg / Burnett electorates led by outspoken advocate, Phyllis Wagner, who watched her husband die slowly and painfully from kidney failure.

DWD Queensland organised a Parliamentary Forum in June and the Clem Jones Trust (a body set up with a legacy from the late Lord Mayor of Brisbane, Clem Jones) has put its resources behind the campaign and commissioned research into community attitudes to VAD, which found that 80% of Queenslanders support VAD for those suffering from terminal illnesses.

This mounting pressure finally led to the Premier announcing at the September ALP State Conference that she will order an inquiry into end of life matters, including assisted dying. Commentators expect it will follow a similar course to those in Victoria and Western Australia. In contrast with Labor's approach, the Queensland Liberal National Party voted to oppose VAD at its August annual conference.



Federal Parliament: Restoring Territories Rights Bill

Liberal Democrat Senator, David Leyonhjelm, sponsored a private member's bill which would restore territories' rights to make laws in relation to voluntary euthanasia. That right was taken away in 1997 when the Howard Government overturned the Northern Territory's assisted dying law which operated for about 9 months.

The bill was not an assisted dying bill as such – such bills are state matters - but if passed would have opened the way for the possibility of both the Northern Territory and the Australia Capital Territory to pass assisted dying laws, if they had community support to do so. Some MPs who may have been opposed to voluntary assisted dying but who believed that territories should have the same rights as states to pass such laws indicated they would vote for the bill, and a few days before the vote The Australian reported numbers in the Senate to be evenly balanced. However, when the vote was held the bill was narrowly defeated when a couple of senators switched their position. There is evidence that these two senators were swayed by a last-minute push from doctors sponsored by right to life groups with close connections to the liberal party. This is very disappointing because we know that doctors who are opponents of VAD tend to peddle alleged horror stories from The Netherlands and Belgium and advocates get no opportunity to refute them.

We understand that pressure was applied to certain coalition senators to change their votes to prevent the bill coming before the lower house. This would have put Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull on a collision course with the right wing of his party creating divisions which would have been unhelpful for his leadership and the party generally. As we now know, these divisions ultimately led to a leadership spill and the Wentworth by-election.

WHAT'S HAPPENING OVERSEAS

New Zealand

As we reported in our last issue, David Seymour's End of Life Choice Bill passed its first reading stage in December 2017. This bill gives people with a terminal illness, or a grievous and irremediable medical condition, the option of requesting assisted dying. The Justice Select Committee has received a record 37,000 public submissions and has agreed to hearing from 3,500 of the submitters to the eight-member committee in person. In addition, the Justice Committee is attending meetings all around the country, hosted by local MPs. The Committee is expected to report back in March 2019.

California

As we reported in our last issue, opponents of California's End of Life Options Act succeeded in persuading a County Court Judge to invalidate the law. The California Attorney General and the United States dying with dignity organisation, Compassion and Choices, appealed this in a higher court. In September the Court of Appeals released an interim ruling in favour of the law. However, the Court still has to take oral submissions and may revise its position. Even if the Court of Appeals upholds the law, opponents will probably take it to the Supreme Court and now, following Justice Kavanaugh's confirmation, conservatives are in a majority on the Supreme Court. Watch this space.

Meanwhile it is reported that the law is working well. The California Department of Health reports that in 2017, 577 people were approved for a prescription for a lethal substance and of these 374 took the drug and died. The Report said that most who took the drug were college-educated and in hospice care, which refutes opponents' claims that the law would target the vulnerable or be used instead of palliative care.

Belgium

The Belgian Federal Commission of Control and Evaluation of Euthanasia has released its 2016–2017 Report. It is reported in full on Neil Francis's site [Dying for Choice Belgium 2016-2017 Report](#) released. The details of the report give the lie to the scare-mongering about the Netherlands and Belgium that our opponents engage in. Some salient facts: only 1.3% of voluntary assisted dying cases are by advance directive, cancer is still the main reason that patients choose assisted dying, the number of assisted deaths relating to mental illness went down, there have only been three cases of minors receiving an assisted death and these were all cases of intractable severe illness and the age profile of assisted deaths has increased due to the aging of the population.

South Africa

President of the World Federation of Right to Die Societies and Founder of Dignity South Africa, Professor Sean Davison, has been arrested in Cape Town for murder. The case is related to the suicide of quadriplegic, Dr Anrich Burger, in 2013. Davison has been an outspoken advocate of assisted dying and has been open about his role in Burger's death, which was to sit with him while he ingested a lethal substance.

Readers may remember that in 2010 Sean Davison was arrested in New Zealand for assisting his mother to die. He published a book *The Last Waltz: Love, Death & Betrayal* which described the three months he spent with his mother before she died. A manuscript copy of this book revealing that, at the request of his terminally-ill mother, a medical doctor, he gave her crushed morphine tablets in a glass of water was leaked to the police. As a consequence of this, he was arrested and went on trial for the attempted

murder of his mother. During his high court trial he was offered a lesser charge of assisted suicide, to which he pleaded guilty and served five month's house arrest in Dunedin, New Zealand.

Dr Anrich Burger, a medical doctor, had been seriously injured in an accident in Botswana and as a result had lost all control over his body and all autonomy. He had planned to end his life at Dignitas in Switzerland, but it became clear that that was not a realistic option because of his condition. Davison then agreed to help him die in South Africa. Dr Burger wrote the prescription and took the medicine himself. In spite of this, Davison was charged with murder. It will be interesting to see how this test case plays out.

There have been a number of cases in South Africa in the last few years where people have applied to the courts for the right to die, none of which have so far been successful. But South Africa, which, unlike Australia has a Bill of Rights, has the potential to allow assisted dying under the 'Right to Security and Freedom' (Section 12 of the Constitution). No such right is available under the Australian Constitution.

America

The American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP), the second largest component society of the AMA with more than 131,400 members, have recently adopted a new position of "engaged neutrality" on the issue of medical aid in dying.

"As family physicians, we care for our patients in all stages of their lives, including the end of their lives, so we are sympathetic to the pain and suffering they endure," said Dr Marc Price, an AAFP delegate and president of the New York State Academy of Family Physicians, which formerly opposed medical aid in dying.

REGIONAL AND OTHER GROUPS

Mid North Coast

We were delighted that Penny Hackett, Dying with Dignity NSW's President, was able to attend and be guest speaker at our August meeting. Many thanks to Penny for so freely giving of her time, and participating in radio, newspaper and television interviews. We continue to achieve excellent media coverage pre- and post-meetings.

Penny spoke on 'Achieving Voluntary Assisted Dying in NSW in 2019' and we have high hopes that the Board's endeavours, with the support of members, will finally be successful.

We also launched 'Champions of Change' with the aim of furthering our community and social media reach, and increase death literacy on the Mid North Coast.

The idea is 'champions' will regularly circulate relevant and up-to-date information among friends, contacts, Facebook and Twitter and urge them to:

- write, phone or visit their local MP's to support DWD legislation (the more affirmative contact politicians have, the more notice they'll take);
- write letters to newspapers;
- ring local radio stations; and
- talk and spread the word among their friends and contacts.

Attendees were asked what topics they would like addressed at future meetings. The Leadership team will work on sourcing speakers / presenters on the following:

- ACDs including paramedics & ambulance responses
- Enduring guardianship

- My Health Record
- Organ donation
- Funerals & Cremations, including Council guidelines regarding ashes.

Our next meeting starts at 10am Tuesday, 27 November 2018 at Port Panthers, 1 Bay St, Port Macquarie.

Annie Quadroy, Mid North Coast Convenor
Email: pmq@dwdnsw.org.au Mob 0432 048 414

Central Coast

The first few weeks of this period were extremely busy. We normally organise four quarterly meetings a year. However, we were fortunate enough to secure Senator Richard di Natale, the Australian Greens leader, as our speaker for 31 July. So we arranged a Special Meeting at our usual venue at Erina Fair for this date, only 3 weeks before our August meeting.

31 July: Senator Di Natale briefly outlined the background which had led him into federal politics, then turned to the two Dying With Dignity bills with which the Greens were primarily concerned.

- Liberal Democrats Senator David Leyonhjelm's private members bill to restore the rights of the territories to pass assisted dying laws, which unfortunately failed in August.
- The Green's own federal *Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill*. He explained that Parliament was very divided on this and success would take a good deal of time-consuming negotiation.

Senator Di Natale answered many queries in Q&A sessions before and after the refreshment break and was farewelled with sustained applause from an audience of around 70.

17 August: Richard Mills, former President of DWD NSW, gave a very detailed and interesting talk on 'Looking back over years of campaigning to achieve legalised Voluntary Assisted Dying in NSW.' "We have lost many times and won only once. Should we change a losing game?"

Richard's view was that our aim should be to get to individual MPs and threaten their re-election. "Grab them by the self-interest and their hearts and minds will follow." These words provide a wonderful lead to the subject of our November meeting.

26 September: 15 members attended a very pleasant get-together at Delish, a local Erina restaurant. We plan to arrange more such small, social occasions next year.

23 November: Penny Hackett, President of DWD NSW, will be speaking on '*Towards achieving Voluntary Assisted Dying in NSW in 2019*'.

Unfortunately, the Committee's resources have been very much strained during this period: Annie Sobey's death has left a huge gap, Meg Wallace and her husband have moved south and two others are undergoing spinal/hip surgery.

On the positive side, we have welcomed Max Prince to the Committee, who will be taking over the management of the Information table and we've received offers of help from three members. Two will be attending our next Committee meeting, while the third will be a stalwart ex officio member.

Our thoughts and sympathy go out to committee member, Dorothea Marler, whose husband, Graham, recently died after a long and distressing illness.

Beverley Symons
DWD Central Coast Coordinator

Christians Supporting Choice for VE and VAD

“Choose life!” Anglican Reverend Sallyanne Hart exhorts at the end of her speech to the Goulburn/Canberra Diocese Synod claiming the dangers and perils of Voluntary Assisted Dying to her audience. It may have escaped Sallyanne but by definition a dying, terminally ill person cannot ‘choose’ to live.

Instead she wishes to impose her inhumane views on the vulnerable dying - even those who may be in constant agony as cancer spreads to their bones, or those whose body is putrid as it rots from the inside with bladder cancer - when they are pleading for help from suffering that only death can relieve.

Rev Sallyanne calls assisted dying “an act of chemical assault on the human body”. Highly emotive words - ignoring the fact that almost all medication so assiduously prescribed by our doctors for our ‘health’ are ‘chemicals’ assaulting our bodies, often with serious side effects, and occasionally with fatal side effects.

Rev Sallyanne correctly points out that we all have the ‘right to die’ (slowly) by refusing food and hydration, but then seeks to deny others the ‘right’ to take medication that would quickly bring about the same death as refusing hydration. Where is the Christian compassion in that?

She ignores the fact that terminal sedation, also known as slow euthanasia, is used as a last resort of palliative care, but is unregulated and the frequency of use is unknown.

Rev Sallyanne was speaking about a Synod Discussion Paper “A Peaceful and Gracious Death”, also biased against VAD, and at odds with the four out of five Anglicans in the community who support the issue. I am writing to Anglican Churches in the Diocese to present what I consider to be compassionate Christian support for VAD.

Ian Wood

Christians Supporting Choice for VE Group.

We welcome new member supporters.

Membership is FREE.

Simply go to our website christiansforve.org.au/ or write to Villa 1, 4 Wills Place, Mittagong NSW 2575

Welcome Sandi Steep

With the departure of Gabrielle Brown, we are fortunate to have gained the services of Sandi Steep, who joined us in August to help with office administration and bookkeeping and running our membership and supporter database, among a host of other things.

As well as being highly qualified and experienced for this role, Sandi has a long history in our movement, being on the executive of the NSW and Federal Voluntary Euthanasia Party and also as the Sydney Coordinator of Exit International.



Sandi Steep

End of Life Forum

Dying with Dignity NSW has joined the Voluntary Euthanasia Party NSW, Doctors for Assisted Dying Choice, Go Gentle Australia and Christians Supporting Choice for Voluntary Euthanasia to host an important forum with medical professionals revealing the reality of end of life care in Australia and the choices we face when we die.

Everyone wants a 'good death' but it is clear that too many people die in circumstances which involve great suffering and distress for the patient and their loved ones. Our panellists have experienced these issues 'at the coalface' and know that palliative care cannot relieve all suffering.

We hope that most members were able to secure tickets following an email announcing availability a few weeks ago. However, if you wish to join the waiting list, please contact us at dwd@dwdnsw.org.au or call (02) 9212 4782.

PLEASE JOIN US

If you are not already a financial member of Dying with Dignity NSW, you can join online at dwdnsw.org.au Or call our office on (02) 9212 4782 leaving your full name and postal address, so we can mail you the membership form.

Annual membership is \$50 (\$25 concession) or you could become a Life Member for \$500.

Dying with Dignity 
New South Wales

BECOME A SUPPORTER

If you prefer not to join as a member simply sign up to our emailing list. You can sign up online at dwdnsw.org.au or send us an email at dwd@dwdnsw.org.au

Join Andrew Denton
in conversation with
Dr Rodney Syme
Dr David Leaf
Dr Jill Gordon and
Nurse Coral Levett
as they discuss
end of life choices

Limited numbers so book early
Tickets - \$10

THE TRUTH ABOUT END OF LIFE CHOICES

Sunday 11 Nov
2 - 4 pm
at Norths

12 Abbott St
Cammeray 2062



MAKING A DONATION

We are totally reliant on membership fees, donations and bequests to operate.

Donations can be made via our website –

	For more information
	Visit www.dwdnsw.org.au

Alternatively, you can make a donation via our other payment options.

Please post your completed form to:
DWD NSW
PO BOX 25
BROADWAY NSW 2007

Or scan the completed form and email the copy to us at dwd@dwdnsw.org.au

Payment Details

Please select ONE payment option below:

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 Dying with Dignity NSW
 BSB: 032 249
 Account: 160 719

I enclose a cheque or money order (payable to DWD NSW)

Please charge my Mastercard or Visa Card (as per details below)

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Card holder name: _____

Card number

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Expiry Date

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