

# Dying with Dignity

Tasmania (Inc)

## AUGUST 2013 - IN THIS ISSUE

### In brief:

- **AGM AND GUEST SPEAKER:** We would be very pleased to see you and your friends at the AGM and public address on Friday 23 August, from 1 – 3 pm. The AGM will be followed by a public address by Marshall Perron, former Chief Minister of the Northern Territory, and the person responsible for the short-lived *Rights of the Terminally Ill Act*. Venue and other details are included below.
- **VOLUNTARY ASSISTED DYING LEGISLATION:** We can be very confident that the new voluntary assisted dying Bill will be ready for debate in the Tasmanian Parliament before the end of the year. Drafting of the proposed legislation has commenced. We are also continuing with our well-organised campaign for the legislation.
- **PRESIDENT'S REPORT:** There is a brief report on our activities in the last few months, with some news from overseas.

---

- **AGM AND GUEST SPEAKER**

The AGM will be held on Friday 23 August, commencing at 1 pm, followed by a public address by Marshall Perron. The venue is the Nell Pascoe Room, Criterion Centre. This is next to Mathers House, formerly called the 50 and Better Centre, between Criterion St and Bathurst St, Hobart. (The room is the former Catholic Women's League room which has been refurbished and is now run by the Hobart City Council.)

There is some parking, including disabled parking, off Bathurst St, just past the State Library. There is also good parking opposite in the Melville St car park, with the first 1 ½ hours free.

We look forward to seeing as many of you as possible and hope you will invite others to come along. We will also advertise the

event in a number of ways. If you can put up a flyer with details of the event, please contact us.

The AGM will be relatively brief to make maximum time available for Marshall to speak on the topic, "Lessons from the Territory", and for questions and discussion. This will be followed by tea, coffee and scones. Only financial members may vote or speak at the AGM but Marshall's presentation will be open to the public.

Marshall was the person responsible for the first voluntary euthanasia legislation in the world in the Northern Territory, the *Rights of the Terminally Ill Act 1995*. It operated from 1 July 1996 until it was overturned in March 1997 by the Kevin Andrews Federal legislation that removed the power of the Territories (NT, ACT and Norfolk Island) to pass any law permitting euthanasia.

Marshall's speech will include valuable information for us in the campaign for the Tasmanian voluntary assisted dying legislation. He has remained very actively involved in efforts to get legislation in Australia and to get Territory rights restored to debate and pass such legislation. We are very grateful for his advice, support and assistance in our work for legislation in Tasmania. While he is in Tasmania, Marshall will meet with as many MPs as possible.

- **AGM**

**Purpose and Agenda**

In accordance with the Constitution, the purpose of the AGM is to consider particular general business. The Agenda for the 2013 AGM is as follows:

- 1) Apologies
- 2) Confirmation of minutes of the last AGM, 20 July 2012
- 4) Annual reports
- 5) Election of committee members and Office Bearers
- 6) Appointment of Auditor.

**Please consider nominating for the Committee (See form at end of newsletter)**

Please note that ALL committee positions become vacant. We would greatly welcome your involvement if you would like to take a more active part in DwDTas activities.

**Nominations close on 12 August.** If you'd like more information, to talk about what's involved or ensure your nomination is proposed and seconded by other members, please ring us.

- **VOLUNTARY ASSISTED DYING LEGISLATION**

We are very pleased to report that the drafting of the new Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill has commenced and we can

therefore be confident that it will be introduced and debated in the Tasmanian Parliament before the end of the year. The Premier, Lara Giddings, and Leader of the Greens, Nick McKim, who will introduce the legislation as a Private Member's Bill have maintained their commitment to the Bill.

We continue to be optimistic about the Bill being passed. The responses to the consultation process that we have seen are based on very poor data and ill-informed and unreasonable speculation that provide an inadequate and distorted picture of the need and support for the legislation, the situation overseas where similar legislation has been in place for many years (and subject to intense scrutiny) and, not least, the detailed requirements and safeguards in the proposed legislation.

There are two new strategies that have emerged in recent months in the campaign against the legislation. The major one is a concerted but unsuccessful effort to discredit major, detailed, reputable and reliable reports that have consistently supported voluntary assisted dying law reform and that have found that such legislation is needed, safe and responsible. The other strategy is one we have become very familiar with – an attempt to delay the vote by yet another review.

Our campaign is based on promoting a well-informed and rational debate that also takes account of important principles and values. Our first Information Paper provided detailed evidence that the vast majority of the community support a legal option for doctor-provided voluntary assisted dying similar to what has been proposed in Tasmania, and in fact the same as that supported by DwDTas. It also showed that this support is across the community – men and women, across all

age groups, across political voting intentions and across religious affiliation. This included, in the 2012 Newspoll survey, support by 88% of those who identified as Anglicans, 77% of those who identified as Catholics and 82% of those who said they were usually Liberal voters. The second Information Paper, Fears and Fear-mongering, will be issued soon. It demonstrates that the fears about the risks of the legislation are unwarranted and they are being promoted using a number of typical fear-mongering techniques.

We continue to work with marketing experts and by the AGM we will be able to report on some other exciting initiatives in our campaign for the legislation, made possible by our generous donors.

- **PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

Our main activities continue to be focussed on the campaign for legislation. However, Bill Godfrey has also continued his very valuable work to promote the importance of end-of-life and advance care planning and to provide presentations to groups, eg Kingborough Rotary Club.

I made a presentation to a group of about 80 people at Hobart U3A on 25 August about the proposed legislation. There appeared to be very strong support for the legislation in principle, including for the option to access voluntary assisted dying through an advance care directive.

I believe that all of us who saw the very moving play, *And No More Shall We Part*, will have come away with strengthened support for the proposed legislation. The ABC 7.30 Report on Friday 3 August included a segment on the play.

Items recently added to the website and Facebook page with links to more details include:

- The Quebec Government has introduced legislation for debate in the Parliament to provide for a voluntary assisted dying option based on the recommendations of a Parliamentary Committee. If passed it will be the first Canadian province with such legislation.
- ABC Local Radio in Tasmania recently featured a series of very valuable and moving interviews on facing death. Joel Rheinberger was responsible for the interviews and conducted them with great sensitivity.
- Princess Anne, the Princess Royal, in her role as patron of the Townwomen's Guild, a group representing 34,000 women praised them for debating euthanasia at its annual conference. The newspaper article reported that "delegates overwhelmingly supported the motion to lobby the Government to permit assisted deaths".
- Tracey Spicer – journalist, presenter, broadcaster and Ambassador for dying with dignity law reform – has written of the terrible choice she was confronted with to relieve her mother's end-of-life suffering. Her story and the vast majority of the 299 comments on it show how much we need voluntary assisted dying legislation to provide a choice.
- Recently in the UK, 12 past Presidents of medical Royal Colleges expressed the view in a letter to *The Times* that there is a strong case for the legalisation of assisted dying for terminally ill mentally competent adults.

**COMMITTEE FOR 2012 - 2013**

Margaret Sing (President)  
Helen Brookfield (Treasurer)  
Mike Harris  
Hilde Nilsson  
Noel Woodrow  
Dr Helen Cutts

Bill Godfrey (Vice President)  
Keith Anderson (Secretary)  
Trish Kershaw  
Barbara Porter  
Allan Cameron AM

**Patron:** Professor Colin Wendell-Smith AO

**Next meeting:** 14 August – 2pm, Glenorchy Library

---

**Please detach** - - - - -

**Dying with Dignity Tasmania Inc - Proposal Form for Positions 2013 – 2014**

**Name of nominated member:** .....

**Signed:** .....**Signature of nominee**

**For the position of:** .....  
**(President/Vice President/Secretary/Treasurer/General Committee)**

**Name of Proposer member:** .....

**Signed:** .....

**Name of Seconder member:** .....

**Signed:** .....

**Date:** ...../...../ 2013

**Please mail this form to: DwDTas, PO Box 1022, Sandy Bay Tasmania 7006, by 10 August 2013.**