

Dying *with* Dignity



Tasmania (Inc)

JUNE 2015

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND GUEST SPEAKER
7 AUGUST 2015 at 1.30 pm**

We would be very pleased to see you at our AGM on Friday 7 August, commencing at 1.30 pm at the Nell Pascoe Room, Mathers Centre. See more details below.

This will be followed at approximately 2.00 pm by a public address and discussion on the important issue of end-of-life and palliative care services. The speaker will be Rosemary Sandford and her address is titled "Is Anybody Listening? Investment in Care of the Dying is an Investment in the Living and the Future". As part of her presentation she will propose an action plan for end-of-life care in 21st century Tasmania. In the following discussion, we want to hear your views and want to hear from members who cannot attend the meeting.

We look forward to seeing as many of you as possible and hope you will invite others to come along. As always, while only members can vote and participate in the AGM, we welcome others to hear the very interesting guest speaker. There will also be afternoon tea following the public address and discussion.

MEMBERSHIPS: Our financial year ended on 31 May. Your membership is due only if you have received a renewal form with your hard copy or email. We would greatly appreciate your renewal as we continue to work for law reform and better end-of-life choices, information and services. Memberships renewed now will be at the current low rate of \$15 for an individual and \$20 for family membership. There will be a recommendation to the AGM that the rate be increased to \$20 for individuals and \$30 for family membership.

DONATIONS: We would very much appreciate any donation you can make. There will be a new Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill later this year and we have very limited resources at present for a public campaign. We are very grateful for the donations we have received, including a recent one for \$1000, but every little bit helps.

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

- **AGM AND ADDRESS AND DISCUSSION**
- **PRESIDENT'S REPORT - FEBRUARY - JUNE 2015** - including news of briefing for Liberal MPs
- **NEWS FROM AROUND AUSTRALIA** - including news of Victorian inquiry
- **NEWS FROM OVERSEAS** - including more Bills and positive developments
- **COMMITTEE FOR 2014 - 2015 and Nomination Form for 2015 - 16**

YOUR RIGHT TO CHOOSE

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AGM and ADDRESS AND DISCUSSION

AGM - Purpose and Agenda

In accordance with the Constitution, the purpose of the AGM is to consider particular general business. The Agenda for the 2015 AGM is as follows:

1. Apologies
2. Confirmation of minutes of the last AGM, 22 July 2014
3. Annual reports
4. Election of committee members and Office Bearers
5. Appointment of Auditor
6. **Special Resolution:** That the annual subscriptions be increased to \$20 for individuals and \$30 for families.

The venue is the same as the last two years, 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. 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.

Special resolution to increase annual subscriptions

The resolution at the AGM is for a modest increase in annual subscriptions for DwDTas membership. The annual subscriptions have been at the same low level for many years. However, we have had and are now facing significant increases in website costs, postal charges, phonebook entries and our active campaigns.

Please consider nominating for the Committee (See form at end of newsletter). Nominations close on 27 July. 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.

We would greatly welcome your involvement if you would like to take a more active part in DwDTas activities. We would also like to hear from you if you are interested in being part of the Committee but could not attend meetings during the day or during the week.

PUBLIC ADDRESS AND DISCUSSION - "Is Anybody Listening? Investment in Care of the Dying is an Investment in the Living and the Future"

What is happening in Tasmania around end-of-life and palliative care services, what are the positives and the challenges, why is an urgent and planned response needed, what should we plan for and how can there be much better consumer input into services?

Rosemary Sandford's presentation will address all these issues and she will propose an action plan for end-of-life care in 21st century Tasmania.

Before the meeting and in the discussion, we also want to hear what has been your experience and what services you would like to see. **Members who can't attend - please ring us or send us a note on your views.**

This information will help us develop a plan for action on this issue. DwDTas has consistently and repeatedly expressed support for palliative care and demonstrated there is no conflict between palliative care and voluntary assisted dying law reform. While it is a cruel pretence of those opposing assisted dying laws that palliative care can relieve all suffering, improved palliative care services are still needed and there needs to be much better consumer input into what services are needed.

GUEST SPEAKER - Rosemary Sandford

Rosemary Sandford (Ph D) is the immediate Past President of the Tasmanian Association for Hospice and Palliative Care and is a hospice volunteer. She is a University associate at the University of Tasmania. She has also had wide professional and policy experience as a social worker, policy and political adviser in diverse areas. She also brings to this issue relevant personal experiences and a strong commitment to community development and consumer choice, not just as a human right recognised by the World Health Organisation, but as essential if we are to have good policy and services for end-of-life.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT - FEBRUARY - JUNE

Help! I'm opening with a plea for assistance with the maintenance of our website. The load has been carried for many years by Mike Harris and we need to relieve that load. Mike is able to train and assist anyone with a modicum of knowledge and skills.

The optimism from the beginning of the year has continued. This has been boosted by local developments as well as the huge amount of activity elsewhere for the changes we support to enable all of us to have the choices to die with dignity according to our own values, beliefs and what is important to us.

We are very pleased about the announcement by Lara Giddings and Nick McKim in March that they will introduce a Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill again in the Tasmanian Parliament before the end of 2015. We hope to meet with them soon to discuss some minor amendments to the 2013 Bill and our plans for action supporting the Bill. We went so close last time and there are some new MPs whose views are not known.

The debate this time will also be taking place in a different climate where the tide has turned internationally, there's been an increase in laws, court decisions and doctors' views in support of VAD, a major increase in Bills and even more evidence that the legislation is needed, supported and safe.

A major and pleasing development has been an invitation to brief Liberal MPs, particularly new MPs, on the case for voluntary assisted dying legislation. This was done on 18 June by me, Dr Helen Cutts and Dr Heather Dunn. As members know, Helen and Heather are caring, compassionate and experienced doctors with ethical, articulate and passionate support for assisted dying legislation.

Five MPs attended the briefing including new members who were not part of the 2013 debate - Roger Jaensch and Joan Rylah (Braddon), Sarah Courtney (Bass), Mark Shelton (Lyons) and for a brief time, Paul Harriss (Franklin). They listened carefully, asked questions and raised concerns, and indicated they would consider the issue further and seek more information. We were able to provide them with a range of information with a focus on the need for and safety of VAD legislation:

- The substantial evidence from experts (including AMA and palliative care experts) and individuals that some people have intolerable and unrelievable suffering as a result of their incurable and irreversible medical conditions and run out of options to relieve that suffering;
- The need to obtain and rely on reputable, good quality evidence of the safety of overseas legislation, and to check all lobby group claims;
- We can reasonably assume that many doctors (possibly a majority) support

VAD legislation, many find it consistent with their ethical and professional responsibilities and we can rely on their professional skills and ethics when dealing with requests for assisted dying.

We will follow-up with additional details for those who attended and follow-up with those unable to attend and with Labor MPs.

We continue our efforts to encourage and support people to do advance care and end-of-life planning, driven by the hard work of Bill Godfrey. Bill has just updated his detailed guide, incorporating his separate sheet on 'Internet Assets' and including the amended forms for Enduring Guardianship and the Advance Care Directive form from the Department of Health and Human Services. We will put the amended guide on the website or you can ring us for a copy. We need to charge \$10 for printing and postage for the guide provides very valuable information. We also intend to write to all State MPs to encourage them to look after their own interests and families, and to also show leadership on this issue.

So as usual there's a very busy time ahead for the DwDTas Committee with your support.

NEWS FROM AROUND AUSTRALIA

MEDIA: Every week there are numerous items in the media throughout the country related to voluntary assisted dying. The issue is well and truly alive even if we get none of that coverage in Tasmania. If you're interested, Dying with Dignity Victoria regularly summarises this news and you can access other news at <http://www.dwdv.org.au>. DwDNSW also provides up to date news on its website.

NATIONAL: The national alliance of DwD organisations, Your Last Right, has developed a shared position on what we want in VAD legislation and this is being used for discussions with Senator Di Natale and colleagues about the proposed Bill in the Federal Parliament. We are not hopeful about the Bill having sufficient support and there is uncertainty about whether the Federal Parliament has the Constitutional power for such legislation. On the other hand, there is no doubt about the States having the power to pass such legislation.

VICTORIA: A Parliamentary Committee inquiry has been set up in Victoria to examine "end of life choices". The more sceptical of us would see the inquiry as a cynical exercise taking the heat out of the very successful public campaign for voluntary assisted dying legislation and another hijack of the wishes of the vast majority of the community.

There has been a strong and successful campaign in Victoria for voluntary assisted legislation involving Peter Short, Rodney Syme's continuing courageous campaigning, the strong support by the Age newspaper with supportive editorials and a lot of coverage, expression of continuing strong community support, and the election to the Upper House of MPs such as Sex Party crossbencher Fiona Patten expressing strong support for VAD legislation.

The Labor Government has retained more control by sending the issue off for 12 months to an Upper House Committee, not to an independent professional body like the Victorian Law Reform Commission as lobbied for by DwDV. The Premier of Victoria, Daniel Andrews, has made typically poorly informed, 'mealy-mouthed' comments as reported in the Age on 21 June - "we need to be very careful to get the balance right" and "my objection is not

a faith-based objection, it's not a matter of me imposing my personal values on the Victorian community – I'm loath to do that on any issue. But there are some safeguard issues, and there some balance issues I'm troubled by." He went on with fear-mongering innuendo linking assisted dying with the challenge of "finite resources" and "a growing need to free up hospital beds". (<http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/andre-ws-to-reform-medical-treatment-laws-but-wont-back-voluntary-euthanasia-20150620-ghsya4.html>.)

Submissions to the Committee must be made by 31 July. DwDTas will make a detailed submission and we encourage others to also make their views known. More details are available at <http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/lisic/article/2608> or ring us for information.

SA: Our SAVES colleagues have been very active with a VE Forum week in the first week of June with many activities involving Marshall Perron and Dr Rob Jonquiere, a Dutch doctor who provides assisted dying and is also Communications Director for the World Federation of Right to Die Organisations. Another Bill will be moved in the next few months co-sponsored by a cross-Party group.

NEWS FROM OVERSEAS

There continue to be mixed developments in assisted dying law reform overseas.

CANADA: As reported in a Stop Press in our February newsletter, the Canadian Supreme Court has brought down a landmark decision that prohibition on physician assisted death unjustifiably infringes on the right to life, liberty and security of the person, as provided for in the Canadian Charter of Rights, "in a manner which is not

in accordance with the principles of fundamental justice". The Court suspended the decision for 12 months for the government to introduce legislation. We have no further news on moves by the Government. However, there are Private Member's Bills in the two houses of the national Parliament.

US: Pressure and action for assisted dying legislation or legal decisions continues in over 20 US States.

Recent news is mixed including:

- **California:** The *End of Life Option Bill* has recently passed the Senate by a vote of 24 - 13 and will now go the Assembly. Religious opponents are already lobbying the Governor to veto the Bill if passed.
- **Maine:** In Maine, the Bill for An Act Regarding Patient-directed Care at the End of Life passed the Assembly but failed by the narrowest margin in the Senate - 18 -17.

UK: The Assisted Dying Bill moved by Lord Falconer which was being debated in the House of Lords lapsed with the General Election. It progressed further in the Parliamentary process than any other Bill but then bogged down in multiple amendments and ran out of time before the election. Lord Falconer has said he would enter the ballot for private members bills - which is the bizarre lottery determining which Bills are debated.

Scotland: In May, the Assisted Suicide Scotland Bill was defeated by a considerable margin.

COMMITTEE FOR 2014 - 2015

Margaret Sing (President)
Helen Brookfield (Treasurer)
Maureen Aiken
Trish Kershaw
Barbara Porter
Dr Helen Cutts (co-opted)

Bill Godfrey (Vice President)
Keith Anderson (Secretary)
Mike Harris
Hilde Nilsson
Noel Woodrow

Patron: Professor Colin Wendell-Smith AO

Committee meetings: CHANGE OF VENUE - We now hold our meetings in Kingston, at the Old School Building in Hutchins St (where U3A sessions are held). While they are usually scheduled for the second Wednesday in the month at 2 pm, there are occasional changes depending on the availability of members. We would love to see you at meetings but check through the DwDTas number first.

Please detach - - - - -

Dying with Dignity Tasmania Inc - Proposal Form for Positions 2015 – 2016

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:/...../ 2015

Please mail this form to: DwDTas, PO Box 1022, Sandy Bay Tasmania 7006, by 27 July 2015.