

act branch news

No harm to others: *my life, my dying*

Dying with Dignity news from the ACT Branch

Vol. 4, No. 3, November 2009

Annual General Meeting for 2009

Thursday, **19 November**, at 2 pm.
The Irish Club,
6 Parkinson Street, Weston.

As last year, this will be a meeting for members' participation and discussion, so bring your news, your questions, your suggestions. There will be coffee and tea after the meeting, to continue informal discussion. This meeting will provide an opportunity for discussion of details of the 2010 program.

Election of Committee for 2009-2010

(Self-nomination is welcome. Please consider joining the Committee and taking a more active part in our ACT activities, especially efforts to obtain legislative reform for voluntary euthanasia. There is increasing widespread activity in this direction: be part of it!)

Committee:

Jeanne Arthur, Secretary, arthur@dwdnsw.org.au
John Brook, Thelma Hunter, Darrel Killen, Clive Monty,
Barbara Mummery (Treasurer)
Beryl Rawson, Chair and Newsletter editor
rawson@dwdnsw.org.au

DATES FOR YOUR DIARIES!

Proposed dates for 2010 General Meetings are: *April 15, July 15, and November 18*
(to be confirmed in March 2010 newsletter)

There is the possibility of an extra meeting, as a public Forum, the date depending on the availability of speakers and meeting room.

Previous General Meetings 2009

In March Kris Klugman, President of Civil Liberties Australia, used her title 'Yes We Can ... Decide for Ourselves' to present many ideas for promoting our cause, and provided valuable statistics for surveys of public opinion about VE.

In May Brian McLeod, Deputy Public Advocate of the ACT, gave an informative talk on 'Autonomy of choice in health and associated matters'. He encouraged us all to arrange Enduring Power of Attorney documents. The booklet on 'The Power to Choose' is available at the office of the ACT Public Advocate, 12 Moore Street, Canberra City, or from their web site.

In August Brian Furnass stepped in as speaker at short notice and gave a wide-ranging and entertaining talk on various aspects of Death and Decisions.

World Hospice Day and Forum

Members of our Branch were amongst the large audience who attended the Forum at the National Museum of Australia on 7 October, sponsored by various palliative care organisations and Calvary Health Care, on 'Death and Dying in Multicultural Australia'.

When physician-assisted-death and voluntary euthanasia were raised in discussion, all members of the panel expressed opposition. The two main reasons given help us to identify the issues which we need to address:

- the danger of abuse
- the obligation put on others to 'inject the needle'.

National Conference, Adelaide

On October 23-25 a national conference was held of Australian Voluntary Euthanasia Societies. Our Secretary, Jeanne Arthur, and Committee member Clive Monty represented the ACT branch. Jeanne made a presentation on the particular hurdles faced by Territory governments.

A note from Jeanne:

'The AVES Conference in Adelaide was a great success. It was well organized and harmonious. All the speakers were well prepared and articulate in outlining their difficulties as well as the message that VE is moving forward. There were plenty of reflective speeches as well as useful sessions about ways to promote the cause in the media.

In the first session politicians such as the Hon Bob Such from South Australia presented talks on their bills which they are presenting to Parliament shortly. We can only hope that they will be successful and, as was pointed out, where a bill is passed in one state it will be an encouragement for other states to pass a bill. [Ed.: the bill passed through the Upper House on 28 October by one vote.]

One method of promoting VE would be the development of a national VE website. Another proposal was that we hold an annual conference. That would bring the groups together and promote cooperation. One significant suggestion was the idea of building coalitions with other groups that have a related interest in VE such as Seniors and Civil Liberties Australia. Additionally a motion was passed that in principle we 'form a coalition between all states and territories'.

Opposition to VE was identified as lying with Church and doctor hierarchies rather than individual religious people and doctors.

Trustees of the Clem Jones Foundation spoke to us about the Foundation and the Clem Jones Will. They suggested the idea that the states might submit proposals for projects to the foundation.' Both Jeanne and Clive will report further and answer questions at our AGM.

Christians Supporting Choice for Voluntary Euthanasia

This organisation, based in SA, is having some impact on politicians and public opinion. Further information on web site www.saves.asn.au/resources/archive/Christians/index.php. It welcomes membership from all those who share their aim of improving legislation for VE, irrespective of religious choice. A membership form is appended to this newsletter. Their public profile is a valuable counterweight to the opposition which often comes from organised religion.

Suicide Inquiry

Submissions have been called for an Inquiry into Suicide in Australia being conducted by the Senate Community Affairs Committee of the Australian Parliament. The terms of reference do not embrace our interests, but Darrel Killen has drafted a submission on our behalf. Individual submissions may be made, but the deadline is 2 November.

Name change

You will have noticed the new name on our newsletter and on the NSW web site, following the large vote in favour of 'Dying with Dignity' in August.

New membership forms and information sheets will bear the new name: get in some copies, to distribute to your friends and prospective members.

Any member who would like to suggest items for the ACT Newsletter is invited to contact the Editor or other members of the Committee (contact details above).