

e-Deliverance

Practical Options - Real Choices

December

Exit International

2005

Exit In Exile

On 6 January 2006, Exit International will be forced into political exile. In direct response to the new Suicide Related Materials Offences Law, Exit's website will be relocated to New Zealand and Exit Director Dr Philip Nitschke will start a professional life of commuting between New Zealand and Australia in an effort to maintain Exit International as Australia's preeminent end of life choices organization.

Dr Nitschke WILL NOT, however, be taking up residency in New Zealand.

In New Zealand, the Exit International website will be hosted by the Voluntary Euthanasia Society of New Zealand. It is with gratitude that Exit has accepted the New

Zealand Society's offer of office space and resources for the future. Exit looks forward to a productive and prosperous working partnership with VE New Zealand.

What does the new law mean for Exit members? In short the Suicide Related Materials Offences Act makes it a crime to use a "carriage service" to discuss end of life issues. Carriage services covered by this new law are the telephone, fax, email and the Internet. The new law DOES NOT cover face to face meetings (work-

shops) or the mail service (Australia Post) or books - at least not at this stage. Members may still write letters to Exit and attend Exit workshops, clinics etc.



The Peanut Project Launches

On the last weekend in October this year, the Exit International Peaceful Pill weekend took place on a remote property in rural New South Wales. More than a year in the planning, the Peanut Project - as the peaceful pill manufacturing program has become known - represents Exit's most ambitious project to date and we are delighted to say that this first stage was a resounding success.

What happened? On the chosen weekend, a group of 20 elderly or ill Exit members, along with three observers from the United States, traveled to a farm in the country and set about making their own peaceful pills. Among



the stages of production achieved on this weekend were: firing the quicklime, reflux - drying the alcohol, distillation, preparing the sodium and making the catalyst, synthesis and crystallisation and filtration (cont p.6).

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Exit in Exile - Continued

Phone Calls - Advice obtained by Exit suggests that these new laws are largely about one person, Philip Nitschke, and one organisation, Exit.. The new law is unlikely to be targeted at the members of Exit, although members will certainly be caught up in the government's surveillance of the organisation..

In this government's ongoing attempt to entrap Dr Philip Nitschke, members need to be aware that it is likely that Exit's office phones will be tapped. This means that member conversations may well be listened into. These infringements on Exit members' personal privacy are significant under this new law and should be taken seriously.

Faxes - Exit members should expect that their faxes to the Exit office will be under surveillance by authorities. We DO NOT recommend members sending faxes of a private nature – eg clinic applications or medical records. Acceptances of attendance at Exit workshops MAY still be sent by fax but please be aware the sending fax number could be recorded by the authorities.

Emails - Unless you use the encryption software PGP, Exit members should expect that emails to Exit will be under surveillance. Exit will continue to use email to communicate with our members. If you do not or are unable to load PGP (see www.pgp.com) we recommend that the subject material of emails be kept as general as possible. No one knows how this law will be implemented, and therefore the extent or nature of what can and cannot be discussed using email.

Workshops / Clinics - Exit clinics and workshops will continue as normal into 2006. (See the 2006 timetable printed in this newsletter for dates and cities.)

Peanut Project - Exit expects that the Peanut Project will be unaffected by the new laws. Member use of the telephone to communicate about this project will continue in possible direct contravention of the new law.

Newsletters - The Exit newsletter – *Deliverance* - will continue to be mailed to all members monthly. The email version of the newsletter (a version that is provided to members who have Internet access), however, will be heavily censored. This means that references to practical information will be removed to avoid any obvious breach of the new law.

Internet - As discussed on page one of this newsletter, the Exit website will soon be hosted in New Zealand and will be the responsibility of the VE Society of New Zealand. Exit's hands-off approach to our website and the information and services described is designed to protect us from this insidious new law.

Exit members will still be able to visit the Exit website. Exit members should, however, be aware that there will be sections of the website (eg. forums, information about workshops) that may be illegal for Australian citizens to access. The Forum section has been temporarily removed from the site as our website designers work on the new international version of the site. This will become active again from Jan 7.

Exit members who live outside of Australia will break NO law accessing any part of the Exit website. From January 2006, a series of warnings will appear on the Exit website. These will alert Exit members in Australia that the information they are about to view may constitute a crime in Australia.

Books - The legislation does not effect the printed word. The new Exit DIT Handbook (*Killing me Softly - The Handbook*) is ready for publication and will provide in an accessible form much of the information our members so desperately need. Details on the availability of this publication will be made through future editions of the Deliverance Newsletter.



The new DIY Handbook available early 2006

In Summary - The Suicide Related Materials Offences Law represents an extreme attack on free speech and civil liberties in Australia. The fact that this law was passed with the support of the government *and* the ALP makes Exit despair about the future of basic human rights in this country.

The recent brouhaha by the Labor Party about "Sedition" in the new anti-terrorism laws raises key questions about the quality of public policy making in Australia at the current time. It is important for Exit members to be aware that only the Australian Democrats and the Greens voted against the Suicide Related Materials Offences Law.

For the best part of a decade, Exit International has worked long and hard to achieve a leading position in the VE movement, both in Australia, and internationally. This is not a position that we will readily relinquish. Our work is, quite simply, too important to cease. We ask that Exit members stay with us during this difficult time and join us in maintaining and promoting the belief that choice at the end of life is the fundamental human right of us all.

Exit International Conference 2005

The third biennial conference of Exit International went off without a hitch at the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre on 5-6 November. Attended by over 250 delegates, there were many highlights, not least our keynote speakers Evelyn Martens from Right to Die Canada and Ludwig Minelli via videolink from the Dignitas organization in Switzerland.

To kick start the 2005 conference, on the Friday before the conference, a group of around 30 Exit members donned purple t-shirts and took up placards, to march to the Roma St Police Headquarters in an effort to obtain applications for gun licenses. This street demonstration was great fun and was intended to illustrate the hypocrisy of current law; a law that allows citizens to acquire a gun, while denying elderly and seriously ill adults access to civilized, dignified and peaceful alternatives.

The march was covered by both the *Courier Mail* newspaper and Brisbane TV news.

The Exit conference provided delegates with a broad range of speakers and issues. Included in the program on the Saturday were the results of the recent Quality of Life Issues and End of Life Choices Survey – reported by Dr Wendy Gunthorpe; a rather vibrant debate about the role of Religion and Australian Politics took place between Senators Barnaby Joyce (Queensland Nationals) and Lyn Allison (Australian Democrats) and chaired by NSW Greens MLC Ian Cohen. Of particular note was Barnaby Joyce's rather spectacular late entrance to this session to resounding audience applause; an insightful panel discussion hosted by Greg Barns (barrister and columnist) with discussants Janine Hosking (film maker) and Chris Griffith (*Courier Mail* journalist) on the way in which the Media handles a sensitive issue such as VE.

On the second day of the conference, the first session was provided by videolink with keynote speaker Mr Ludwig Minelli who is founder of the Dignitas organization in Zurich. The videolink was followed by a very moving but insightful panel discussion with sisters Lyn, Karen and Shelley Verschoor. The Verschoor sisters link to Dignitas was through their father Andres who, suffering from cancer, traveled to Switzerland in mid 2005 to die using the Dignitas service. The final session on the Sunday morning was a debate about the usefulness of an organisational focus on VE law reform as opposed to direct action and whether these two approaches can ever co-exist.

Sunday afternoon was devoted to the Suicide Related Materials Offences Act. The President of the Australian Council for Civil Liberties, Terry O'Gorman, was joined by Greg Barns and Brian Greig to discuss this insidious legislation and its implications for Exit, and Dr Nitschke in particular.



Above: At the march



The Conference Kit

Exit International Conference 2005



Evelyn Martens - Right to Die Canada

The conference closed at 3pm with Dr Nitschke announcing the new appointments of John Edge and Dr Wendy Gunthorpe to the Exit board of directors as well as the restructure of Exit into Exit Practical and Exit Political. (There will be an overview of the structure and corporate governance of Exit in the 2005 Annual Report - due out February 2006).

In the feedback received already by Exit, it would seem the conference was a huge success. Exit takes enormous pride in delivering to members a weekend that was invigorating, highly relevant and cutting edge in theme and delivery. The next Exit International conference will be held in Melbourne in 2007.



Philip Nitschke, Sen Lyn Allison, Ian Cohen MLC, Sen Barnaby Joyce

Dr George Exoo: It was with great regret that Exit accepted the last minute decision of Reverend Dr George Exoo of Compassionate Chaplaincy not to attend the conference for legal reasons. We hope that he may join us for some future conference.

Finally, on the 2 days immediately following the conference, the first Nancy's Friends training workshop took place. The full report of Nancy's Friends Network will be published in the 2005 Exit Annual Report - due out February 2006.

Conference Breakfast

With the withdrawal of Dr George Exoo from the Exit breakfast, Exit was delighted that former Democrats Senator Brian Greig agreed to change hats from host to speaker. With the champagne flowing, and the bacon and eggs disappearing fast, the conference breakfast was a highlight of the weekend.



Greg Barns, Fmr Senator Brian Greig, Terry O'Gorman

Brian spoke tellingly and eloquently of his experience in the Federal parliament and of his involvement in the micky mouse Senate Inquiry into the Suicide Related Materials Offences Law. With a sparkle in his eye, Brian proved – as many who have heard him speak in the past know well – an entertaining and impressive speaker. The Australian Senate is very much the poorer for his absence.



Robyn & John at the Champagne Breakfast



Ladies at Breakfast



More breakfast goers

Exit International Workshops

Exit has now confirmed workshop dates for 2006. To attend a workshop, people must be members of Exit. Please call or write to the Exit office to register your interest. Exit will then mail you a letter with full details closer to the time.

Upon receipt of this letter, and if you plan on coming to the workshop, members **MUST** rsvp by telephoning or writing to the Exit office. With workshops now booking out months ahead, the administration of workshops is becoming increasingly complex and a clear picture on numbers attending is very helpful.

Exit Workshop Dates - 2006

Wellington - Wed 4th Jan

Auckland - Sat 7 Jan

Christchurch - Mon 9 Jan

Melbourne - Sat 25 February & Mon 22 May

Brisbane - Friday 24 March

Maroochydore - Monday 27 March

Gold Coast - Thursday 30 March

Lismore - Sunday 23 April

Newcastle - Tuesday 25 April

Sydney Thurs 27 April & Sat 29 April

Wollongong - Monday 1 May

Canberra - Saturday 20 May

Adelaide - Friday 26 May

Perth - Friday 9 June



Tony Beks auctioning Gordon Bell's 06 Calendar at the Conference Breakfast



Ebony & Kerri at work at the Breakfast

Exitorial

It is with mixed feelings and a heavy heart that I write this editorial. In many respects, 2005 has been a watershed for Exit, and for me personally. On the positive side, 2005 has seen the expansion of Exit membership by around 20%. This is hugely encouraging and due to many factors, not least the publication of *Killing Me Softly* earlier in the year.

2005 has also seen the first ever Peaceful Pill project come to fruition. The concept of a Pill available to all over a certain age that would provide a peaceful death at the time of one's choosing came from the late Dutch Supreme Court Judge, Huib Drion. The Peanut Project makes his dream a reality and me tremendously proud of the Exit members who took part in the first event. This project has enormous significance for the VE movement. At last, a solution that provides genuine end of life choice, a solution not bound by and one that does not depend on the support of the political process or the medical profession. We look forward now to the inevitable expansion of the Peanut project.

The success of the recent Exit conference in Brisbane is another reason to reflect on the year past. This conference was the largest that Exit has ever run and brought together an array of speakers and delegates that should cement in anyone's mind the need for space to discuss the myriad end of life issues that make up the VE debate. The feedback from the conference has been enthusiastic and I am grateful to Exit staff and our member volunteers and supporters for making it possible.

In the days immediately following the conference, the first training workshop for the new Nancy's Friends Network took place. I wish to thank publicly our Nancy's Friends coordinator Lindy Boyd and Exit member Mary Fahy for their ongoing support of this service which believes that dying people should not have to be alone. Already a number of sick people are being visited by Friends.

On the darker side, as 2005 draws to a close I feel increasingly pessimistic about the current Australian political climate. While I will not be moving to New Zealand permanently, there is every sign that commuting will become a new way of life for me; adding stress to me and expense to our organisation. I will do whatever is necessary to maintain Exit, but this is in the knowledge that things cannot and should not always

Philip Nischke

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Donate to Exit

Exit relies on donations to fund its research & workshop/ clinic programs

Donations are accepted at any time

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Bob Dent Award 2005

The 2005 Bob Dent Award was this year accepted by Bill Godfrey on behalf of his brother John and in memory of their mother, Elizabeth. Bill traveled from his home in Hobart to Brisbane to accept the award.

In 2004, John Godfrey was charged with assisting the suicide of Elizabeth Godfrey. After a trial by jury, John was found guilty and given a suspended one year's sentence. Yet it was in the sentencing remarks of Justice Peter Underwood of the Tasmanian Supreme Court – and as a result of the Godfrey case- which most impact on the VE cause.



John Godfrey (centre) with Judy Dent & Philip Nitschke

In an astute observation of the woeful state of Australian laws surrounding assisted suicide, Underwood said "It might be said that those who wish to end their lives but are physically unable to do so are discriminated against by reason of their disability.

It is not the function of the court to engage in debate about the appropriateness of the crime of aiding suicide. That is for the general community and its democratically elected representatives".

Lifetime Contribution Award

In 2005, Exit established the Lifetime Contribution Award to acknowledge and celebrate the efforts of an individual within the VE movement. The inaugural award was presented to Sandra Milne from Brisbane.



Sandra Milne with Judy Dent

Over the years, Sandra has been proactive in many practical areas associated with VE, most notably organizing and participating in the first Cogenie construction workshop in 2003. Sandra continues to support VE in small and silent ways which drive this issue forward. Exit congratulates Sandra Milne on her resilience, courage and the leadership she has shown in relation to Voluntary Euthanasia.

The Peanut Project cont

The weekend was captured in still photographs and a short documentary has also been made. In recent weeks, this 18 minute film has been screened at public meetings around Australia. Exit would like to thank photographer Dave Hancock and film maker Steve Hopes for their contribution in documenting this historic event.

The Future of Peanut



The finished product

While the participants of the first Peanut Project are still busy at work refining their peaceful pills, once this is complete the equipment of the first project will be passed on to subsequent groups.



Drying the alcohol

At the current time, more than 200 Exit members have expressed interest in being involved in a future group. Exit asks that members be patient as the Project hand-over occurs. It is expected that two or three more groups of 20 members each will be involved in the Peanut Project by the end of 2006. Members wishing to participate in the Peanut Project are asked to register their names with the Exit office.

e-Deliverance

Conference Kits

Not surprisingly, the 2005 Exit Conference Kits were a huge hit among delegates. Exit still has a number of spare conference kits available. To obtain a conference kit, we are asking Exit members to make an extra donation to Exit (>\$50). We have only a limited number of spare Kits so it is a first come first served basis.

Exit Chapters

Exit Chapters are now operating all over Australia with meetings planned or already held in many cities. If Exit members would like to meet other members in their local area, please call the Exit office and we'll put you in contact with your local Chapter.

Exit Chapters provide a local contact for members and facilitate some Exit services - such as checking whether purchased Helium cylinders are full. The Chapters also represent the social side of Exit. To register for Exit workshops or clinics or obtain Exit products, members are still asked to contact Eboni in the Exit office on 0500 83 1929.

Australian of the Year

For the second year running, Exit Director Dr Philip Nitschke found himself a finalist in the Australian of the Year Awards. Fying back to Darwin for the Awards night on Thursday 24 November, the 2006 Northern Territory Australian of the Year was awarded to central Australian art patron Peter Fannin.

We, the staff of Exit, would like to thank Exit member Deborah Vincent of Broome for nominating Philip, although we are also aware that more than one member submitted nominations. We would encourage Exit members to continue to nominate Philip as we feel this is a good way to advance and legitimize the right to die issue in these times of moral censureship.

Exit Office News

Exit office hours are 9am – 3pm Monday to Friday. If you call the office and get the voice mail – instead of the real life Eboni – please leave a message and we will return your call. Please DO NOT hang up without leaving a message, as then you will have to ring again. Over the Christmas break the Exit office will **close at 3pm on Friday 23 December and reopen at 9am Monday 2 January**. During this time, members are welcome to leave a message. Messages will be checked daily.

Go Hang Yourself Day

On 6 January 2006, the Suicide Related Materials Offences Act becomes law in Australia. As announced in the November *Deliverance*, Exit is asking elderly and seriously ill members to join our action of mass civil disobedience. The action that Exit is promoting involves sending one or more of our politicians an email or fax or making a phone call to their offices. The important thing is that the form of communication makes mention of voluntary euthanasia or even a particular suicide method.

For example, Exit members could send Prime Minister Howard, Senator Chris Ellison, Minister Kevin Andrews, Attorney General Philip Ruddock or Minister Tony Abbott suggestions on hanging – as abhorrent as this common suicide method is. The communication might include the product code of rope available from Bunnings or Mitre 10, the type of knot that can be tied, and what sort of ladder might be useful.

This action is, of course, not intended to represent a serious suicide suggestion nor wish ill on the PM and his colleagues. Rather, it is to demonstrate the ridiculous nature of this new law, which prevents adults from using any of these carriage services to discuss end of life issues, even in the most tangential of terms.

Exit encourages members to join us in this action. Remember, old age and illness brings a special sort of immunity from prosecution as no government will want to risk being seen to be putting 80 or 90 year olds on trial for talking about an issue which is of immense importance to them.

Helium Connection Kits

Legal problems associated with the distribution of the Helium Conversion Kits have intensified leading to further delays in distribution as advice is sought from Exit lawyers. Exit asks members who have ordered the Kits to be patient while a legal solution to their supply is worked through. The Kits will be supplied in the New Year, but in a way that keeps Exit staff safe from legal harm.



Order Form

* **Conference Kit (surplus conference delegate bags)** \$50 donation

* **Exit T-shirt** (Exit purple - *My Life My Choice*) \$25

sizes: XXL XL L Med

* **DVD - Mademoiselle & the Doctor - 90 Minute Director's Cut** \$55

* **Killing Me Softly VE and the Road to the Peaceful Pill** \$37 (1 copy)
(by Drs Philip Nitschke & Fiona Stewart) \$66 (2 copies)

Contact Details

First Name(s).....Last Name.....

Address.....

.....Postcode.....

Exit Member No (if known)Telephone.....

Payment Options

I am paying \$on (today's date).....by:

Visa Mastercard Bankcard Cheque/Money Order

Credit Card No.....Name on Card.....

Signature.....Expiry Date.....

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- All Proceeds go Directly to Exit -