Nancy’s Friends Network
New Service Stretched

Since its launch in November 2005 demand for the Nancy’s Friends support network has grown. There have been more than 18 requests for Friends from around Australia and the January relocation of Exit in Exile to New Zealand, has led to requests from Exit members in New Zealand. The need for someone to talk to about end of life issues choices and options is universal.

Nancy’s Friends now operates all over Australia. This support network provides those who contact the service (known as “travellers”) with a range of advice and information ranging from a friendly ear over a cup of tea to practical and timely information about end of life choices (eg where to purchase disposable Helium cylinders).

According to Nancy’s Friends Coordinator Lindy Boyd, the popularity for the Friends Network stems from a need to “know that one is not alone in one’s thoughts about planning for death. Many travellers who want control over the dying process do not know others with the same beliefs and often feel isolated. Voluntary euthanasia is not necessarily something that they can discuss with their friends or family. Nancy’s Friends provides a caring and supportive network of information, advice and assistance.”

“Of course, Nancy’s Friends operates well within the law. The last thing we need is any of our volunteers in trouble with the law for assisting with a suicide. One of the most useful features of the two day training workshop was the presentation to the Friends by prominent civil rights lawyer Terry O’Gorman”, said Lindy.

Philip Nitschke adds that he is delighted with the way the new Network is being used by travellers. “I have long suspected that there would be a need amongst Exit members for someone trusted to talk to, particularly in light of the new censorship law which prohibits and restricts the use of the telephone. The Nancy’s Friends service goes some way towards filling the gap between the workshop program - predominantly for well members - and private visits useful for those too ill, or with needs too specific to be well served by workshops”.

Once a Friend is assigned to a person, the waiting time is significantly minimised with those who are seriously ill having a wait of only a few days. "I think Nancy Crick – after whom the network has been named – would be very proud of what we have achieved in such a short period of time" said Dr Nitschke.

The next Nancy’s Friends Training course will be held in Melbourne in late June. Exit staff will also travel to New Zealand to run a training course there in late June – early July.

If you wish to volunteer your time and be trained as a Nancy’s Friend in either Melbourne or Wellington please call the Exit office on 0500 83 1929 (NZ 61 500 83 1929) or email Lindy Boyd on lindy@exitinternational.net.

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Mr PM, Please Have Us Arrested

The Suicide Related Material Offences Act became law in Australia at midnight on Friday 6 January 2006.

To voice their objection to this law, around 30 Exit members gathered at short notice at the Double Bay library in Sydney to send emails and mobile phone messages to the PM - describing how he could go hang himself.

This last minute mass civil disobedience was reported in the Sydney Morning Herald as “Mr PM, Please Have Us Arrested”. Exit is grateful to the members who came together to show support.

Sydney Morning Herald
Letters Focus on VE

Exit member Caren Jenning showed bravery with her feature letter “Ill Thought-out Suicide Law Censors a Generation” in the 2 January SMH letters. Caren’s moving letter prompted 2 weeks of correspondence from Exit supporters and the public alike and also featured opinion editorials by Marshall Perron and Greg Barns. Thank you Marshall and Greg and everyone else who spoke out.

Exit Phones and the New Law

At the time of press, the main Exit office phone number 0500 83 1929 is being answered variously from the Darwin, Cairns and Melbourne offices of Exit. While this phone number may now well be tapped by the Australian Federal Police, supporters of Exit should note that phone administrative assistance in regard to workshops, clinic visits and mail orders is continuing just as before. We do not believe that the use of the phone or email to organise workshops or private clinic visits falls under the jurisdiction of the new law.

Exit Phone Number Changing

From February 2006, the Exit phone number will be changing to a 1300 number. This means that Exit supporters in Australia will be able to phone Exit for the cost of a local call, regardless of whether the phone is answered in Australia or NZ.

Farewell Eboni

On Friday 13 January, the wonderful Eboni Grace resigned her position as Exit’s receptionist. Eboni felt that with the new law she was at risk. Exit understands her concern and would like to publicly thank her for her contribution to Exit and wish her all the best in the future.

Welcome to Bev Hurrelle

From February 2006, Exit is delighted to welcome long time Wellington Exit member Bev Hurrelle to the reception desk of Exit. Bev will be answering the Exit phones in Wellington from 9am – 1.30pm Monday to Friday AEST. The new Exit International phone number for New Zealand will be announced shortly.

Remember, even though Australian supporters will be speaking to Bev in New Zealand, everyone will only pay the cost of a local call. There is also NO need to dial the international 0011 number as a prefix.
“DIY Voluntary Euthanasia: The Handbook” Goes to Print

The name of the new practical handbook is now finalised and the book is about to go into print. DIY VE is the practical handbook that was displayed at the Exit Conference last November (under the provisional title Killing Me Softly: DIY Voluntary Euthanasia). Once the book is printed, we will advise on its distribution.

The price of DIY Voluntary Euthanasia: The Handbook is yet to be determined.

2006 Exit Workshops Focus on Helium

Preparation of the new 2006 Workshop program has been completed with the inclusion of new audio visual material for presentation. This series includes all new sections on:

• Helium including a review of control equipment and techniques,
• Reviews the barbiturate Peaceful Pill (Peanut) project
• Takes a fresh look at the proposed inorganic (cyanide) peaceful pill.

The 2006 workshop series is filling fast with several dates already booked out. If supporters wish to attend an Exit workshop, please phone, email, fax or write a letter to the Exit office notifying us of your interest. Workshops are free to supporters.

Exit Helium Pressure Kits - At Last

After weeks of delay caused by legal threats and other concerns, orders for helium pressure kits are now being filled. The issue has been resolved by splitting the product into the pressure measuring component and the helium delivery items.

Full details of the book will be included in the next edition of the Deliverance Newsletter.

In the meantime, the original Killing Me Softly: VE and the Road to the Peaceful Pill book can be purchased in Australia from your local bookshop or from Exit online, by phone or from the Order form in this Newsletter. In New Zealand Killing Me Softly is available at Parsons Books at 126 Lambton Quay Wellington. Parsons also do mail order.
New Zealanders’ preparedness to allow discussion of voluntary euthanasia is in marked contrast to Australia where a new law prohibits it, writes PHILIP NITSCHKE. (This editorial has been edited for length.)

In modern civil society, freedom of speech and the right of assembly have long been taken as staples of Western democratic systems. In Australia, as elsewhere, citizens have been encouraged to discuss ideas openly and without fear of government intimidation and persecution. Not any more. The enactment last week of the Suicide Related Materials Offences Act 2005 has changed all this, at least in Australia. This is why I have come to New Zealand. This is why your land of the long white cloud has been such a breath of fresh air.

In short, the new law makes it a crime for Australians to use the phone, fax, email or internet to discuss the practicalities of end-of-life issues. This means that my country has gone from leading the world with the first right-to-die law just on a decade ago to showing how a modern government in a developed Western nation can condone the broad censorship – and hence stifling – of the words, conversations and ideas of its citizens.

Unlike New Zealand, Australia has no legislated right to free speech. The naysayers in Australia use this omission in our national human rights agenda to ask: “Am I surprised that the Howard coalition Government has seen fit to dictate to rational, adult Australians what they can and can’t say on the phone or by email, or on the internet?”

My welcome in New Zealand has been warm and embracing. From the staff at the airport all the way through to your Immigration Minister David Cunliffe in his statements. Less welcoming, however, is the attitude of the Medical Council of New Zealand. In the past, this body has alleged that my workshops were a breach of the law. In 2003, they accused me of encouraging people to suicide. Let’s be clear about this. I no more encourage people to commit suicide than I encourage them not to. Exit International workshops are about information. Grown adults can make up their own minds. They don’t need my advice.

In my book, Killing Me Softly: Voluntary Euthanasia and the Road to the Peaceful Pill, I even made mention of the aggressive approach of the medical council. They said then and now that I cannot hold workshops or public meetings because I am not registered as a doctor in your country. On this point they are right. I am not medically registered in New Zealand.

When I sought registration some years ago, I was asked by the Council to provide a letter of good standing from my own state medical body. However, since I am registered in 7 Australian states, I need 7 letters. Too much bureaucracy, too much cost, and for what? Talking about an issue which is already way beyond the realm of traditional medicine. The manufacture of the peaceful pill has nothing to do with doctors or medicine. At a practical level, it is about organic chemistry. At a political level, it is grey power at its best. And this is the point. As a genie, voluntary euthanasia is out of the bottle and dancing around.

In the absence of good law – one that is perhaps based on seniority in years (everyone over the age of 80 gets automatic access to a peaceful pill) – it is not up to me, or the Medical Council (or even the politicians) to tell those in their latter years how they must die. We are all born, we all live and we all die. It seems to me an idea the rest of us should start getting used to.
Exit goes to some length to differentiate itself from traditional Voluntary Euthanasia Societies both here and overseas. The recent actions of the New Zealand Medical Council have served to make this distinction even clearer.

As described in *Killing Me Softly: VE and the Road to the Peaceful Pill*, I believe the medico-legal (also known as the law reform) approach to Voluntary Euthanasia does little to promote the interests and dignity of sick or elderly people.

Rather, by its very nature, a law on VE will do little more than create a small exclusive sub-group within society, a group able to get lawful help to die. To join this group you will need to be extremely sick (almost dead in fact) and will need to present yourself to those who will judge your eligibility (always doctors). This legislative model promoted by VE societies is based on illness - a discourse which places the medical profession to the very heart of the action.

Despite Marshall Perron maintaining that he never wanted the sick to be subjected to some macabre test in order to qualify to die, that is exactly what VE laws do. The onus is on the person to prove they are eligible: terminally ill, of sound mind etc etc. There is no “right to die”. Rather, one only has the right to ask permission to die, permission that may or may not be granted. None of my four patients, the first people in the world to use voluntary euthanasia legislation, would have made use of this law if they had access to a Peaceful Pill.

Historically, it is only recently that doctors have become involved in the dying process. This is a point to remember. Dying is not necessarily a medical experience, but rather is a social, cultural and very natural act.

For an organisation to focus, therefore, upon law reform is to condone the paternal role of medicine in everyone’s death. It is to support the authority of doctors - as it is vested in them by law - to make one of the most fundamental decisions that anyone of us will ever need to consider.

This is why Exit cannot and will not support the medico-legal approach to VE. If law reform is to be considered at all, it must be based upon a universal model of access to information and methods. To date, the Drion Model is the only end-of-life theory that provides for this.

The late President of the Dutch Supreme Court, Huib Drion, advocated that everyone over a certain age should have access to lethal drugs. No ifs, no buts. There should be no tests, no hurdles. Drion assumed - correctly - that age teaches us well.

In Exit workshops we now focus almost exclusively upon Drion’s Universal Model. This is why the actions of the NZ Medical Council are so misplaced.

Our workshops are not some quasi-medical consultations. Nor do they draw particularly on the knowledge that comes from my medical training. Workshops were pioneered by Exit, and at them we present practical information and practical solutions, Information that comes from our ambitious Exit Research and Development program.

If my medical education taught me anything it was to recognise the privilege of the medical profession for what it is. Often interfering, often paternal and frequently scared out of its wits about its own irrelevance as death is faced.

Exit maintains that ALL elderly people, not just the terminally ill, have the right to a peaceful death if and when they wish. Drion’s Universal model is enshrined in the Peaceful Pill project and it is the pursuit of this goal that clearly differentiates Exit International. If only we had more judges like Huib Drion.

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**Bequest to Exit**

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

Please consider Exit in your will. Forms available by phoning the office.
Order Form

* Conference Kit (surplus conference delegate bags)  □ $A50 donation $NZ59

* Exit Tshirt (Exit purple - My Life My Choice)  □ $A25, $NZ34
  Sizes XXL □  XL □  L □  Med □

* DVD - Mademoiselle & the Doctor
  90 Minute Director’s Cut  □ $A55, $NZ59

* Killing Me Softly VE and the Road to the Peaceful Pill  □ $A37, $NZ58 (1 copy)
  (by Drs Philip Nitschke & Fiona Stewart, Penguin)  □ $A66, $NZ98 (2 copies)

Contact Details

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………………………………………………………Postcode……………………………………………….

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

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- All Proceeds go Directly to Exit -
Exit International in New Zealand

Over the New Year, Exit made a very successful 11 day trip to New Zealand to launch Exit’s new “Exit in Exile” website. While in New Zealand Exit also conducted workshops and public meetings in Wellington, Christchurch and Auckland. Indeed, Exit’s largest ever workshop was held in Auckland where 55 people attended. Public meetings held in these cities were also particularly well attended.

The main purpose of the trip over this holiday period was the launch of Exit’s new “Exit in Exile” website. The shift of a significant proportion of Exit’s website over to New Zealand has been undertaken in direct response to the Suicide Related Materials Offences Act 2005.

To mark the introduction of the new legislation, a press conference was held at the Auckland office of the VE Society of New Zealand. Exit’s new Auckland-based web hosting company, PrimeHost, who have generously supported Exit, attended along with Jack Jones President of the VE Society of NZ.

Media coverage of the New Zealand trip was very good with a front page article in The Dominion Post newspaper and significant coverage in the New Zealand Herald, The Press and the Waikato Times. Jack Jones made numerous public statements supporting Exit all through the time of our visit and we are very grateful for the Society’s support.

Exit now has over 300 members in all parts of New Zealand. We extend a special welcome to these new supporters.

Exit would like to thank Jack, Geoff and Mabel in Auckland, Jean, Pat and Bev in Wellington and David and Aileen in Christchurch for helping make the visit so rewarding.

Exit Mexican Tour

Exit has been inundated with requests for information on the “Mexican Option”. The information kit prepared to help travelers has proved to be extremely useful, but it has been suggested that a guide able to provide the personal assistance that might be required in Mexico would be greatly appreciated.

An opinion piece by Philip was also commissioned by The Press in Christchurch (see p.4) New Zealand radio were also keen to discuss the new censorship law – in particular Australia’s lack of a Bill of Rights and the absence of any right to free speech. But it was The Peaceful Pill project that proved to be of greatest interest, with many New Zealanders asking whether such a project could be set up in that country. Over 60 people put their names down to be part of a development group for such a strategy.

Well known New Zealand journalist and talkback host, Lindsay Perigo, invited Dr Nitschke into the studio for a full 2 hours of radio talk-back in Auckland. While most callers were supporters of the voluntary euthanasia and were genuinely interested in the implications of the new Australian law on freedom of speech, many wanted to know more about the proposed NZ Peanut Project. Of course there were also the usual handful of callers with strongly held religious viewpoints who criticised Exit and Dr Nitschke unconditionally.

Exit Mexican Tour

Exit has been inundated with requests for information on the “Mexican Option”. The information kit prepared to help travelers has proved to be extremely useful, but it has been suggested that a guide able to provide the personal assistance that might be required in Mexico would be greatly appreciated.

To address this need Exit members will be able to participate in a guided tour to Mexico later this year. Details of the dates and travel arrangements are now being organised. If you are interested in participating contact the Exit office on 0500-83-1929.
The New Zealand Medical Council

While a good deal of the media coverage of Exit’s visit concerned Philip’s possible relocation to NZ, the media also took considerable interest in the actions of the New Zealand Medical Council.

In mid January, Dr Nitschke received a letter from the Medical Council suggesting that in conducting workshops in Christchurch, Wellington and Auckland he may have been practising medicine without a license. By this the Council suspected that Exit workshops constituted medical practice.

In New Zealand, the practice of medicine without a license attracts a fine of up to $10,000 and a possible three months jail.

Exit will be strongly contesting the claim and has already taken legal advice on the issue. On the basis of the advice to date, we are pleased to say that we are optimistic that the Council actions will not lead to criminal charges.

Although Dr Nitschke has been registered for many years as a medical practitioner in every state and territory of Australia, this process has been largely a formality, and Philip has not practiced medicine for close on 10 years. Death with dignity and hence Exit International is NOT about the practice of medicine.

Indeed, the entire point of Exit workshops is that they go beyond the medical model of dying – that everyone needs a doctor in order to die and that the doctor is the best person to provide advice on the dying process.

Unlike other VE groups, Exit does not see death as a medical issue. Exit does not support the mandatory involvement of doctors in dying (although doctors and other health workers may well be involved if that is what the person wishes). It is, therefore, not only ironic but inappropriate for any Medical Council to try to claim ownership over a workshop program which has been specifically designed outside the medical model and the medical profession’s understanding of death and dying.

Exit will keep all supporters fully informed of these proceedings. The New Zealand Medical Council is due to meet in mid February and Exit expects to be notified of the outcome of this meeting soon after.

New Zealand – Future

To clarify – the Exit office is already receiving phone calls and letters asking for confirmation about any move from Australia to New Zealand. Dr Nitschke would like to reassure all Exit supporters that for the foreseeable future he will continue to live in Darwin.

From his home in Darwin, however, Philip expects to be much more mobile. For instance, in between conducting workshops in Australia between January and June 2006, Philip will be back in New Zealand on two separate occasions.

Firstly, Dr Nitschke will return to Wellington for the launch of his new book in April. (New Zealand’s Bill of Rights includes freedom of speech which makes the book’s publication an immediate possibility.) In June, Philip will again be in New Zealand where, with Amanda McClure and Lindy Boyd, he will conduct New Zealand’s first Nancy’s Friends training workshop (host city to be confirmed).

Exit Chapter Meetings

NSW: Newcastle Chapter - Newcastle Workers Club, noon 1st Monday of every month. Next meeting 6 Feb, 6 March etc.
Qld: Gold Coast Chapter - Community Room [above Rockman’s Dress Store] Pacific Fair, Broadbeach. Inaugural meeting Wed 1st March 10.00am til 12.00 noon. RSVP John Edge 07-5536-6502
ACT: Canberra Chapter - Is meeting Sunday 12 Feb at 2pm. RSVP George on 02-6282-0022
Vic: Melbourne Chapter - Bring-a-plate lunch, 12 noon, Sun 26 Feb at Northbrook House Malvern. RSVP Peter Draper on 0410-583-969.
SA: Adelaide Chapter - Saturday 25 Feb, Midday, at Fullarton Park, Bring-a-plate lunch RSVP Bill Lawson 08-8271-2846
WA: Donnybrook & Bunbury - Meetings are planned early March. Call Exit for more.

ALL MEMBERS & GUESTS WELCOME