

# South Australian Voluntary Euthanasia Society Inc.

**Patrons:**

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To all members of the South Australian Parliament

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## GOOD DEATHS HAVE POSITIVE EFFECT ON THE GRIEVING PROCESS

Dear member,

Health care experts have long observed the difficult grieving process of those left behind after a loved one's 'bad death'. The Netherlands law permitting choice for voluntary euthanasia has encouraged open discussion about all end-of-life situations. Much research has been conducted, and I draw your attention to the recent release of some results

The University Medical Centre in Utrecht surveyed 189 bereaved family members and close friends of terminally ill cancer patients who died by voluntary euthanasia and compared this to 316 of those with the same condition who died natural deaths, between 1992 and 1999. (BMJ 2003;327:189, 26 July "*Effects of euthanasia on the bereaved family and friends: a cross sectional study*")

It was found that the bereaved families and friends of the first group whose request for voluntary euthanasia had been acceded to, had less traumatic grief symptoms, less current feeling of grief and less post-traumatic stress reactions than the second group.

The following factors aided the grieving process of the bereaved:

- Open discussion with their loved one
- Open discussion with medical and nursing carers
- The opportunity to farewell their loved one
- The opportunity to reconcile any relationship differences
- The knowledge that their loved one's intractable suffering was ended humanely
- The knowledge that their loved one's request for voluntary euthanasia was given respectful and rational consideration

It is interesting to note that these factors correspond to those seen to be most important by the people who actually request voluntary euthanasia as the only means for final relief of their intolerable suffering.

Our knowledge about the practise of voluntary euthanasia, both in Australia and worldwide, is increasing in leaps and bounds and this study has opened our eyes to another aspect not often acknowledged. I urge you to consider the research and to give the Dignity in Dying Bill your best attention. Your rational decision making will enable responsible voluntary euthanasia legislation that has many humane social benefits.

Yours sincerely,

**Frances Coombe**

**President**