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Joint Media Release from the Australian Voluntary Euthanasia Societies

NANCY CRICK'S DEATH

The circumstances surrounding Nancy Crick's death have aroused controversy. Commentators and the public should consider the following points when assessing this matter.

(1) Nancy Crick's death was a rational suicide, not voluntary euthanasia. If assistance in suicide is needed, it is essential that there be a compassionate law with strict safeguards.

(2) Nancy's symptoms of constant pain, nausea and vomiting, diarrhoea, and severe and progressive weight loss were entirely consistent with failure of her gastro-intestinal tract which leads to death through lack of nutrition comparable to starvation.

(3) She was suffering from a hopeless illness, which is one that is permanent and incapable of recovery, and which seriously and irreversibly impairs the person's quality of life so that life has become intolerable to that person.

(4) Nancy originally had cancer. The fact that she apparently did not have cancer when she died (based on an apparently leaked pathologist's report) surprised many, but the advice that there was no cancer to be found at her last operation had been clearly known to Nancy. However no one before her death could state with certainty that she did not have cancer.

(5) Nancy was also terminally ill. Her severe weight loss to approximately half her normal weight, presumably due to malnutrition and malabsorption, represents a trajectory of terminal illness that is just as certain to kill her as if she actually did have cancer.

(6) Nancy's decision to end her life was based entirely on her intolerable suffering which was unrelievable, and NOT because she had cancer.

(7) She constantly reviewed her situation, delaying her decision to end her life on a number of occasions, notably to see whether palliative care could ameliorate her suffering.

(8) She found that palliative care eased her pain, but clouded her consciousness and did not help with her other symptoms to her satisfaction. Palliative experts agree that 5-7% of patients are not able to have their suffering adequately relieved.

(9) Nancy had categorically refused (as was her legal right) to have further surgery as the previous operations had provided no benefit.

(10) Nancy Crick's views were open to scrutiny via her website and through interviews with many journalists. No one suggested that she was not rational, or that she was not competent to make considered decisions.

(11) Nancy Crick's decision to end her life was entirely her own as her family have attested. There is no evidence that she was manipulated in any way.

(12) Her decision to make the circumstances of her end-of-life public were entirely her own, and she could have ended the matter at any time.

(13) The manner of her dying was peaceful, dignified and secure, in stark contrast to her 'future' without her own intervention.

The Voluntary Euthanasia State Societies all support the right of a person to have family and friends present when they rationally end their life and believe that these people should not be at any legal risk when doing so. We applaud the courage and decency of the relatives, friends and supporters who granted Nancy's wish not to die alone.

We strongly endorse all those, such as Philip Nitschke, who tirelessly and unselfishly supported Nancy Crick through the suffering of her final illness.

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