

South Australian Voluntary Euthanasia Society Inc.



Patrons: Emeritus Professor JA Richardson,

Society Address: SAVES

PO Box 2151 Kent Town SA,

Phone (08) 8379 3421

Internet: <http://www.saves.asn.au>

To all Members of the South Australian parliament 23/7/02

The plastic bag is to voluntary euthanasia what the coat hanger was to abortion.

Dear Member,

You may have heard about Dr Philip Nitschke's decision to produce plastic exit bags for use by those who are wishing to end their lives because of unbearable suffering from a hopeless illness (The Australian 10th July). These will be given freely to members of his Exit organization which numbers 2,500 members so far.

Last year I wrote to inform you about the activities of the Self-Deliverance New Technology Group (Nu-Tech) which aims to devise effective and accessible means of self-deliverance, ie of ending one's life simply and painlessly. The plastic exit bag is only one of the initiatives of this group and it is being promoted worldwide. These techniques have evolved through frustration at the reluctance of legislators to legalise and control voluntary euthanasia under medical supervision. They aim to bypass legislative control and the health professionals.

Legislators no longer have to decide between bringing in a law to permit and regulate voluntary euthanasia, or maintaining the existing ineffective prohibition, because prohibition is no longer an option. This is an alarming prospect that opens the way for ill considered suicide, particularly of the distressed young and the anxious ageing.

The effect of trying to prohibit an end-of-life option that is demonstrably needed has been either to cause patients to die in unwanted suffering, or make doctors resort to subterfuges, or even outright civil disobedience, to help them. No one should be proud of this unregulated area of medical practice.

It will be in the public interest to counteract these swift and disturbing developments by enacting a wise and cautious law that puts Parliament in charge. The Dignity in Dying Bill 2002 does exactly that, while leaving patients and doctors full freedom of conscience. Please give the Bill your support, make any amendments which you think would add to its integrity and, most importantly, remain in control.

Yours sincerely,

Frances Coombe
President