

South Australian Voluntary Euthanasia Society Inc.

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To members of the House of Assembly

Self deliverance devices are to voluntary euthanasia what the coat hanger was to abortion.

Dear member,

The enclosed article (The Advertiser 5th June) reports on Dr Philip Nitschke's development of the COGEN machine for use by those who are wishing to end their lives because of unbearable suffering from a terminal or hopeless illness. Last year Dr Nitschke had plastic exit bags for this purpose and indeed both these devices are but 2 of a number of self deliverance techniques

In 2001 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. 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