



# VESNZ NEWSLETTER

Issue 20

June 2011

Voluntary Euthanasia Society of New Zealand Inc. [www.ves.org.org.nz](http://www.ves.org.org.nz)

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## NOTICE OF VESNZ ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, 2011

**Saturday, June 25, 2011 at 2.00 pm at  
The Community Centre, 56-58 Bay Road, Kilbirnie, Wellington.**

[The Hall is in the main shopping area of Kilbirnie. Parking is available behind the building in Childers Tce. No. 2 and 3 buses from the Railway Station go to Kilbirnie and stop just a few minutes walk away as does the Airport Flyer, for help with accommodation etc see below]

### AGENDA

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. Apologies  | 6. Appointment of Auditor                   |
| 2. Minutes of the AGM Meeting of from June 26, 2010 | 7. Election of Officers                     |
| 3. Matters Arising                                  | 8. Notion of Motion re Membership Secretary |
| 4. President's Report                               | 9. Amendments to the Rules                  |
| 5. Adoption of Annual Accounts                      | 10. General Business                        |

### Notes about the AGM

#### Election of Officers:

We are looking for a new **National Secretary** and **National Treasurer**. Nominations can be taken from the floor at the AGM, but if you feel that you can assist the Society in these two critical positions, please contact either Rex Steele or Kevin Brennan.

**Please note:** Written nominations for Officers at National level must be received at PO Box 24 270, Manners St. Central, Wellington by the first post on **Friday, 24 June 2011**. However nominations may also be made from the floor of the meeting. It is the responsibility of the nominator to obtain prior and willing consent of the nominee.

#### Amendments to the Rules:

**An AGM—HOW BORING!!**

**This AGM will be a little different!.....**The rules (Constitution) of the Society have been amended, and these proposed amendments will be presented to the AGM for confirmation or rejection. A copy of the proposed amendments to the rules is included with this newsletter.

**How will that affect me and you?** - I live in Waikikamukau and can never get to Annual General meetings, or even branch meetings. Well, one of the major changes proposed is to introduce postal voting for the election of officers of the Society, and for any subsequent rule changes. There are other changes proposed, but this is the most critical for the Society to move to a more democratic base in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Any Rule change has to be carried by 2/3 of those present at an AGM. The quorum (the minimum number) for an AGM to proceed is 20 members. (We have a membership of 1115 across the whole of NZ. Last year's AGM had 27 members present.)

**We hope that as many members as possible will be able to attend this important AGM meeting.** Several Wellington members are willing to host anyone from outside the capital who may require accommodation. The meeting is in Kilbirnie, which is on the Airport Flyer route. If anyone is considering coming by Ferry, please let me know.

Please contact Janet Marsland if you have any questions or need accommodation etc.  
[jmm@paradise.net.nz](mailto:jmm@paradise.net.nz); 04 938 4381; 13 Tennyson Street, Petone 5012

**J.M.M.**

*Cont..d over*

## AGM Details continue

### Notice of Motion to create a new Office of Membership Secretary:

**That a new Office, Membership Secretary, be created to more effectively carry out the administrative work of the Society.** *Moved by Frank Dungey*

This will require the following amendments to the Rules:

Rule 15. OFFICERS will need to have the following added: **(vi) A Membership Secretary**

Rule 26 DUTIES OF OFFICERS will need to have the following words deleted from

Clause 1 "to maintain – in collaboration with the Branch Secretaries – a complete roll of the members" and the following clause will need to be added: **(iv) THE duties of the Membership Secretary shall be to maintain – in collaboration with the Branch Secretaries – a complete roll of the members".**

## Coming Events

### AUCKLAND BRANCH

#### **AUCKLAND AGM (and Terry Pratchett DVD )**

Will be held on  
**Saturday 30 July at 2.00 pm at the  
Mt Albert Bridge Club Rooms,  
Wairere Avenue, Mt Albert.**  
[If transport assistance is required:  
Contact Alastair 585 2370]

The Auckland AGM will be followed by a DVD of Terry Pratchett, the famous science fiction/fantasy author who has been diagnosed with early onset dementia. Having gone public he is also speaking out clearly about both his personal wish for voluntary euthanasia, and the need for it to become legal. It is an interesting DVD, well worth watching.

### WELLINGTON BRANCH

#### **The 2011 A.G.M OF THE WELLINGTON BRANCH**

Will be held on  
**Saturday 9 July at 2.00 pm**  
**at the Library meeting room, Public Library,  
Britannia Street, Petone**  
We are hoping to have an outside speaker for the event;  
more details will be available later

### KAPITI - HOROWHENUA BRANCH

During the months of **June & July** members will be invited to small local meetings with the emphasis on members getting to know each other in their area and at the same time taking the opportunity to discuss their ideas and aspirations for future branch activities.  
**The first branch-wide public meeting**  
is to be held in **August**.  
Details will be sent out closer to the meeting date.

## Branch News from around New Zealand

### **AUCKLAND**

Greetings from the Auckland branch of VESNZ. This is, I hope, the first of regular updates about what we are doing in Auckland. First, an important date for your calendars – our **next meeting:**

**the Auckland AGM** is to be held on **Saturday July 30 at 2.00pm.**

Please read the details above under **BRANCH MEETINGS.**

As of the last AGM the Auckland branch has a new Chairman, Alastair Hubbard and, as of March this year, a new secretary, Rosie Kaplan. Rex Steele who has been on the Auckland committee for the last two years and national secretary for the last year has resigned. Big thanks for Rex for the work he has given the organisation. Eric Perrett who has also been a committee member for two years would like to resign. This means we need new committee members, please think about putting your name forward at the AGM. You could contact us via the office phone **630 7035** and follow the directions

**R.K.**

## KAPITI-HOROWHENUA BRANCH

Here is good news for VESNZ. On Saturday afternoon, 2 April, in a crowded Community Centre at Paraparaumu, the new Kapiti/Horowhenua Branch was formally constituted. The National Chairman, Kevin Brennan, presided over the occasion with the support of the Wellington Chair, Janet Marsland. The new Branch has taken over part of the large Wellington area. This new Branch is the good news and raises the question "why not more?" If the Society is keen to change the present legislation, there should be Branches springing up all over the country. The new Branch covers the long stretch from Foxton south to Paekakariki.

The newly elected committee together with other staunch supporters have formed a "working group" initially to focus on members in local areas getting to know each other and encouraging new people to join in. This whole area has a very high (26% proportion of people over 65, twice the national average) and many are concerned to be able, if necessary, to choose the time to die. A poll taken in September last year, shortly after the death of Dr John Pollock, showed that 76% of those polled, supported the aims of VESNZ.

Those elected to the Committee were The Very Rev John Murray, chair, Carole Sweney, secretary, Alison Wilson, treasurer, Marie Christoffel and the Rev Dr Keith Carley. The Secretary may be contacted at: PO Box 224, Waikanae 5250 ph.04 293 2786 [vesnzkh@actrix.co.nz](mailto:vesnzkh@actrix.co.nz)

J.S.M.

## WELLINGTON BRANCH

On the afternoon of April 2nd a very special joint meeting of the newly formed Kapiti / Horowhenua Branch and the Wellington Branch was held. More than 40 people gathered to formally inaugurate the new branch. The meeting was chaired by Kevin Brennan the National President, who welcomed everyone and congratulated the VESNZ members from the area on their initiative in setting up a new branch. They then elected their first committee.

The many members of the Wellington Branch who had travelled up for the occasion then took over the rest of the meeting. Janet Marsland (Wgtn. Chair) explained that this was an opportunity for members to consider what we wanted in legislation to make Voluntary Euthanasia, or a 'good death', a possibility and she circulated a questionnaire for those present to complete on what we each meant by a good death. Janet then invited Jean Cartmell, a long term member of VE groups in both the UK & NZ to speak. Jean gave a very clear presentation of the current situation in New Zealand, set against a historical overview. The meeting then divided into groups and discussed some of the issues raised. Lively discussions followed and could have continued for much longer but it was time for afternoon tea and some members were needing to depart.

This joint meeting was a great launch for the new branch especially as both at the meeting and in the days immediately following, many new members joined the society.

P.H.

**Frank Dungey Retires** - For 33 years, Frank Dungey has pursued the ideal of a New Zealand in which people suffering at the end of their lives could legally ask for help in dying. In 1978 as a member of the Humanist Society, he joined with others to form a Voluntary Euthanasia Society (NZ) which met in Wellington.

Since then, he has worked unremittingly for the cause. As a foundation member, he took on the roles of both Secretary and Treasurer and has performed one or other and frequently both of these roles continuously during the intervening 3 decades. From time to time he also took on the role of President and as the official spokesman for VES until recently he appeared on radio and television programmes as well as speaking to service clubs, church groups, nursing associations etc. making a cogent case for voluntary euthanasia. He was a moving force in the 2004 amalgamation with VES (Auckland) to form VESNZ and became the first National Treasurer, a post he still holds. He oversaw the purchase and expansion of a library of books, DVDs and CDs on the subject of V.E. Until the amalgamation, he also wrote and distributed a newsletter keeping members in both the Wellington district and throughout the South Island in touch and up to date with events.

The first ever VES was formed in Britain in 1935, but it was many years before other countries followed. Frank joined the British society and subsequently several of the Australian societies to keep abreast of world events

and by 1980 there were 18 countries willing to form a World Federation of Right to Die Societies. As might be expected Frank was involved from the early beginnings. He was asked to serve as Director-at-large by Derek Humphry, the author of the first book describing methods of self deliverance which has been a best seller for many years. After 4 years as Director, he served as Secretary for 4 years and finally 4 years as the Treasurer on the Board. He attended the global conference in Nice in 1984, and has attended all the biennial conferences of the WFRtDS since, unless prevented by health concerns.

Frank has now decided it is time to resign from the National Committee. His years as National Treasurer have left the Society with a very healthy bank balance; he leaves a legacy of careful, efficient stewardship and a deep concern for the Society he helped to form. He will be much missed, especially by many of the long term members for whom the Society will not be the same without his name appearing prominently in its communications.

J.C.

# NEWS FROM OVERSEAS

## Australia

According to the Australian Greens Party, the group 'Christians for Voluntary Euthanasia', created by retired Baptist Minister, **Trevor Bensch** in 2009, has played a significant role in gathering the support of South Australian Members of Parliament for the current euthanasia bill.

Although it is unlikely that the organisation will receive much support from churches and the wider Christian community, it is clear that the organisation is heavily influencing debate on the subject.

Reverend Bensch said that "there is strong public support amongst the more enlightened and thinking Christians for our legal right to make end of life decisions and countering the mis-information put forward by religious opposition to every person's right to a dignified and pain-free death."

## Switzerland

In May of this year, voters in the canton of Zurich overwhelmingly rejected calls to ban assisted suicide and also to outlaw the practice for non-residents. They defeated both of these measures which had been pushed by political and religious conservatives. Out of more than 278,000 ballots cast, the initiative to ban assisted suicide was opposed by 85 percent of voters and the initiative to outlaw it for foreigners was rejected by 78 percent, according to Zurich authorities.

Under Swiss law it is legal to assist a person to commit suicide as long as the helper has no vested interest in the death and assistance can only take a passive form, for example it is legal to procure lethal medication for another person but not to administer it. One seasoned Swiss campaigner for assisted suicide called the outcome of the Zurich vote "a strong affirmation that Swiss voters believe in self-determination at the end of life" and also that it sends "a clear signal" to the Swiss parliament that it should lower the legal hurdles for elderly clients seeking its help.

## USA - Final Exit Volunteer Found Innocent

A jury in Phoenix, Arizona found the medical director of **Final Exit Network**, the national right-to-die

group, innocent of conspiring to assist in a suicide, but could not reach a verdict as to one of the organization's 'exit guides.' After a two-week trial, the Maricopa County Superior Court jury found **Dr. Lawrence D. Egbert**, 83, of Baltimore, the Network's volunteer medical director, **not guilty** of conspiracy to commit manslaughter by aiding in a suicide. However the jury could not reach a unanimous verdict as to **Franklin R. Langsner**, 86, a suburban Phoenix resident and 'exit guide' for the Network, who was charged with manslaughter by aiding in a suicide and with conspiracy.

The jury voted 7 to 1 to acquit Langsner of conspiracy, and 4-4 to acquit him of aiding in a suicide. The result of the two-week trial was a blow to the Phoenix police and the Maricopa County sheriff and prosecutor's offices who had conducted an extraordinarily expensive, nationwide investigation in an effort to charge and convict the Network's volunteers and had, with the Georgia Bureau of Investigation, unsuccessfully solicited hundreds of other law enforcement agencies across the country to charge the Network's volunteers with crimes in connection with other deaths.

## Step backward for self-deliverance in Oregon

The Oregon state senate recently approved a Bill which would make it an offence for companies to sell helium hood kits to Oregonians, and the Bill now goes to the House. Although the proposed legislation doesn't conflict with the DWD Act, which allows physician assisted dying, it means that individuals charged under the law could be brought to Oregon to face their charge.

The day after this approval, the California home of the only known distributor in the United States of the helium hood kits was raided by FBI agents. They removed computers and materials related to the business and also intercepted a batch of suicide kits that had already been taken to a local post office for mailing.

The Bill will be sent to the House in the next few weeks for the final vote

## Branch Contact Details

**Auckland Branch:** PO Box 210, Ostend, Waiheke Island 1843 Tel: 09 630 7035 [auckves@xtra.co.nz](mailto:auckves@xtra.co.nz)

**Kapiti-Horowhenua Branch:** PO Box 224, Waikanae 5250 Tel: 04 293 2786 [vesnzkh@actrix.co.nz](mailto:vesnzkh@actrix.co.nz)

**Wellington Branch:** PO Box 24 270, Manners Street Central, Wellington 6142 (04) 384 2646 [pathubbar@xtra.co.nz](mailto:pathubbar@xtra.co.nz)

### VESNZ—National Committee

**President:** Kevin Brennan, **Immediate Past President:** Jack Jones, **Secretary:** Rex Steele, **Treasurer:** Frank Dungey,  
**Committee:** Suzy Austen, Elizabeth Cronje, Pat Hubbard, Janet Marsland, Eric Perrett, Mabel Smith,  
**Newsletter Editor:** Beverley Hurrelle