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SPARKING A BETTER CONVERSATION
AROUND END OF LIFE.





**THE STIGMA SURROUNDING DEATH IN OUR
DEATH-DENYING CULTURE IS CERTAINLY
SOMETHING TO BE BROKEN DOWN.**

Margaret, supporter, QLD

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A Message from Andrew Denton



When Go Gentle Australia was launched at the National Press Club in 2016, Voluntary Assisted Dying (VAD) remained illegal across Australia. In my speech, I referred to the unfair fight which had seen more than 50 failed attempts to introduce such legislation since the repeal of the Northern Territory law 20 years earlier.

On the one hand, were the powerful, wealthy, and well-connected hierarchies of the Church and their surrogates in the medical profession and politics. On the other, "the elderly, the sick, the grief-stricken, the traumatised – those least capable of pushing back". Go Gentle was set up to be their voice: to push back against the powerful misinformation campaign which had persuaded MPs to vote against a law overwhelmingly supported by the people.

Three years later and much has been achieved. VAD is now law in Victoria and Western Australia. Almost every professional medical body – with the

notable exception of the AMA – now supports, or has moved to a neutral position on, this issue. Public support is now well over 80%.

What has led to these changes? First and foremost, parliamentary inquiries put permanently on the record what opponents of these laws have striven, always, to minimise or deny. The cost borne every week across Australia – measured in suicides, lingering and agonising deaths, and deep family traumas – because of our existing end-of-life laws.

Secondly, two state governments took the principled decision to put forward legislation, despite knowing it would bring powerful forces against them. The capacity for a government to set the parliamentary timetable; resource expert panels to help devise, and then argue for, a workable law; and deploy officials to help Ministers prevail in brutal parliamentary debates, turned out to be the crucial difference between success and failure.

Thirdly, no longer content to hide behind the mantra of 'do no harm', more members of the medical professions ignored efforts at intimidation from within their own ranks to stand up and argue for a law which better protected both them and their patients.

Finally, as we saw last year in WA, the passing of these laws has been a

remarkable expression of people power. We have been humbled to work side by side with Dying With Dignity, and also with grievously ill Australians determined that others be offered more compassionate choices, even if they themselves should not live to see them.

The small, but fierce, team at Go Gentle has been at the forefront of these battles over the last three years, working long hours, fueled, in equal parts, by passion and compassion. To them, as well as to our hands-on Board, my deep thanks. Behind them sit literally thousands of Australians – some household names, others deeply private – who have stepped up to support our work. We are truly in your debt.

Despite recent successes, much remains to be done: Two-thirds of Australians still do not have access to full end-of-life choices; some doctors still peddle the untruth that giving more money to palliative care will end all suffering; Church leaders still argue that VAD is reminiscent of Nazi Germany; and despite the stark suicide statistics among the terminally ill, politicians still say we should 'not rush' laws.

At the Press Club, I closed with the words "write this law and right this wrong". As the last few years have shown, the powerless many can prevail over the powerful few, and justice can be done.

A Message from the CEO



It's been a big year for Go Gentle Australia – one of growth and consolidation in which we were thrilled to contribute to Western Australia becoming the second state to pass a voluntary assisted dying law. It has been a privilege and an honour to be CEO of an organisation that strives for important law reform and for better outcomes for some of the most vulnerable Australians – those with terminal illnesses and their families and carers.

I want to take the opportunity to thank our staff and every supporter, donor and volunteer who has played a role in making 2019 such a success – we could not have done it without your dedication and hard work.

In a little over three years we have gone from a being a startup in the strictest sense of the word (one staff, no office), to becoming a startup with one foot on the ladder (several staff and an office!) We have been fortunate to secure

philanthropic support to help propel our next-level growth. This support will go a long way to guaranteeing our operational costs over the next two years.

The extra staff and office space meant we could concentrate on creating the additional resources we needed for the WA campaign and our wider educational work. We now have an e-book collection, two films, and several guides to accompany our foundational materials; the Better Off Dead Podcast series, and the book *The Damage Done*. All are available on our website.

We conducted our first survey to collect information from our donors and supporters. This was a valuable exercise for our project planning and we will be doing similar questionnaires in future to gain insight into what issues concern our community and to fill any gaps in resources.

As we look to 2020 and beyond, a number of opportunities and challenges present themselves. We have put together a multi-year plan that shifts the organisation's emphasis somewhat, away from the immediate demands of campaigning to focus more on longer-term research and education, particularly of MPs and members of the medical professions. Any resources we create will continue to have at their centre the needs of people living with a terminal

illness and their families and carers. Too often these voices are unheard.

While our focus will shift in 2020, we will continue to advocate for change and to support the hard work of other advocates and individuals in jurisdictions where there is still no access to compassionate end-of-life options.

Making these projects a reality will require a concerted fundraising effort and we will be seeking fresh ways to engage donors. Ours is a unique challenge – dying well is not always the easiest cause to promote. However, we are buoyed by the commitment of our supporters who understand, often from first-hand experience, how important it is to tackle this issue.

We thank everyone who has contributed so far, no matter the size of the commitment. Your broad goodwill and generosity are the reasons we look to 2020 with such confidence.

Kiki Paul

Who We Are

Our Mission

Go Gentle Australia is an expert advisory and health promotion charity founded in 2016 to spark a better national conversation around death and dying, and end-of-life choices.

Our Objective

To help relieve the distress, helplessness and suffering experienced by Australians with untreatable or terminal illnesses, and their families and carers.

We focus on promoting evidence that is based on established facts and peer-reviewed research.

Strategies

To achieve our objective, we:

Educate the community about death and dying and the end-of-life options available (within current legal frameworks).

Act as a central point of connection for all voices supporting Voluntary Assisted Dying (VAD) and act as a representative of the community in educating and informing policy discussions on assisted dying, approaches and best practices.

Create a central hub of information for all matters related to end-of-life conversations and choices, including a national archive of testimonies from people living with a terminal illness, families, doctors and nurses.

Evaluate and correct misinformation about end-of-life choices.

Values

Go Gentle Australia is an organisation that values choice, respect, compassion and truthfulness.

We argue for the **choice** to decide what happens to us at the end of our lives, including not to be forced into avoidable suffering when we are at our most vulnerable.

We recognise the right of all Australians to hold differing religious, spiritual and secular beliefs. We treat everyone with **respect and compassion**.

We abide by strict standards of evidence gathering and only provide **truthful** information. We are open and honest about our positions and partnerships, and always operate within the law.

PHOTO: JOSH RAYMOND



WE SEE DEATH NOT AS A RIGHT, BUT
AS A FACT AT THE END OF LIFE. WE
ARE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER — WE CAN
HELP EACH OTHER TO GO GENTLY

Andrew Denton

At A Glance

The Go Gentle story so far



GGA launches at National Press Club
GGA publishes 'The Damage Done'
SA Campaign 'Be the Bill' begins

2016



GGA launches the 'Stop Victorians Suffering' campaign
GGA airs short film 'Stop the Horror'
VIC passes VAD bill

2017



GGA lodges WA Parliamentary Inquiry Submission
GGA finalises ACT Parliamentary Inquiry Submission
GGA launches first public fundraising campaign

2018



GGA launches WA Campaign
GGA lodges QLD Parliamentary Inquiry submission
GGA submits report to aged care Royal Commission
Belinda's Brave Walk
GGA releases 'The Broken Hearted' feature film
Rally For Choice
GGA airs documentary 'Fatal Fraud'
WA VAD Bill passes into law

2019



Andrew Denton delivers National Press Club speech launching Go Gentle Australia.



Kylie Monaghan, was the face of South Australia's 'Be the Bill' campaign.



Victorian MPs celebrate passing of the VAD Bill.



Kass Hall and Sir Elmo front GGA's first public fundraising campaign.



Belinda Teh sets off on her walk across Australia in support of the WA VAD Bill.



Alannah MacTiernan MLC and Premier Mark McGowan celebrate the passing of the WA VAD Bill.

Our Team

Kiki Paul

CEO

Kiki's experience spans a business career running a financial services group for 20 years, as well as various volunteer roles and board membership in the not-for-profit sector. She has been with Go Gentle Australia since its inception in 2016 and has been instrumental in establishing the organisation's business and governance structures, and managing multiple, successful, state based campaigns for new legislation. She is passionate about making the world a better place.

Steve Offner

COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER

Steve joined GGA after more than two decades in journalism and corporate communications, including as media adviser for the Australian Marriage Equality Campaign. He coordinates GGA's national communications strategy, media engagement, and digital platforms. He holds a Master of International Relations from UNSW and a Bachelor of Communications/ Journalism from Charles Sturt University.

Renae Titchmarsh

PROJECT OFFICER

Renae's skills as a graphic designer and illustrator have made her an invaluable asset to the team. Renae is responsible for ensuring 'the pop' of GGA's digital and social media assets, and the accessibility and readability of our publications and brochures. She is also a fierce guardian of the brand.

Jack Tompsett

PROJECT OFFICER

Jack joined GGA to help coordinate and manage Belinda's Brave Walk. He is extremely passionate about supporting end-of-life choice, amongst other social and environmental causes. Jack studies Communications at the University of Technology, Sydney, majoring in Creative Writing and Social/Political Science.

WA Campaign

Joey Armenti

WA CAMPAIGN MANAGER

Joey's experience as a strategic adviser to government and a career in public relations and communications made him the ideal leader of the Western Australian VAD campaign. His exceptional people skills, political nous and impeccable connections across all sides of politics ensured doors – and minds – remained open.

Sacha DeVelle

PROJECT OFFICER

Sacha joined GGA in May for a five-month stint to provide research and administration support to the WA campaign, particularly the organisation of the Rally for Choice in Perth. A former Principal Research Fellow and Head of ACER (Australian Council for Educational Research) Perth, Sacha has a PhD in Linguistics.

Marcus Podyma

COMMUNICATIONS AND CAMPAIGN OFFICER

Having worked on two successful political campaigns in WA, Marcus left full time study to advocate for the passage of the Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill 2019. He is in his penultimate year as a Juris Doctor student at the University of Western Australia and is committed to progressive law reform and public policy.

Our Board

GGA's board members are all volunteers who bring significant experience from their fields of expertise. The Board meets monthly to guide and assist the organisation to achieve its strategic goals.

Peter Thompson

Peter has extensive experience in commercial and corporate law, specialising in the entertainment and media industries.

Andrew Denton

Andrew is one of Australian media's genuinely creative forces with a career covering radio, television and film. He is the creator of the podcast series Better Off Dead, investigating why good people die bad deaths in Australia.

Tanya Jones

Tanya is a strategic communications professional with over 20 years of experience running large corporate, brand and political advertising campaigns.

Craig Stafford

Craig has worked in the finance industry for 25 years spending most of that time researching, and helping clients invest in, listed companies in Australia and throughout the world. He is passionate about health, education and sport.

Erik Locke

Erik is a public affairs and public relations professional with more than twenty years of experience at the senior levels of politics, communications, policy development and advocacy. He has worked as an official and chief of staff in three jurisdictions and held senior management positions in public relations, public affairs and in the union movement.



"People's stories
have great
power."

Kerrie,
supporter, VIC

2019 Highlights

18 FEB GGA publicly backs WA Senator Jordon Steele-John's call for a royal commission into the mistreatment of people with disabilities.

15 APRIL GGA lodges 170-page submission to the QLD Parliament's inquiry into aged care, end-of-life and palliative care and voluntary assisted dying.

22 MAY GGA makes 72-page submission to the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety.

24 MAY GGA provides detailed feedback to WA Ministerial Expert Panel on the proposed VAD framework.

28 MAY Victoria's Premier Daniel Andrews farewells Belinda Teh on a 70-day walk from Melbourne to Perth in support of VAD laws.

6 JUNE GGA calls for restraint from the media and anti-VAD groups in the wake of inaccurate news reports of the death of Dutch teenager Noa Pothoven.

19 JUNE Victoria's landmark voluntary assisted dying law takes effect.

23 JUNE Belinda's Brave Walk reaches the WA border.

2 AUG GGA lodges 175-page submission to the SA Parliament's inquiry into end-of-life choices.

4 AUG Kerry Robertson's family approaches GGA to tell the story of the first person to make use of Victoria's VAD law. Kerry died in Ballarat on 15 July.

5 AUG GGA releases feature documentary *The Broken Hearted: Life, Love and Death in WA*.

6 AUG WA government tables in parliament the WA Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill 2019.

6 AUG Belinda's Brave Walk arrives at the steps of WA's parliament house, met by the Premier Mark McGowan and 300 supporters.

15 AUG GGA presents the VAD Doctors Forum in Perth, with Oregon physician Dr David Grube.

28 AUG Debate on assisted dying begins in the WA Legislative Assembly.

2 SEPT GGA publishes 'A Guide to the Debate Ahead: Voluntary Assisted Dying in Western Australia.'

3 SEPT GGA's Rally for Choice attracts 700+ supporters to the steps of Perth's parliament house.

5 SEPT GGA releases a mini documentary *Fatal Fraud*, exposing the covert tactics of the anti-VAD lobby.

25 SEPT The VAD Bill passes the WA Legislative Assembly by 45 votes to 11.

13 OCT Ahead of the debate in the WA Upper House, GGA releases results of community polling showing overwhelming support for VAD in WA, with 1 in 2 people saying they are prepared to change their vote at the next election on the issue.

14 OCT GGA publishes 'The Full Picture: A critical analysis of allegations of 'wrongful deaths' in Hon. Nick Gorian MLC's Minority Report.'

15 NOV Belinda Teh donates \$5,000 raised during Belinda's Brave Walk to the Kalgoorlie Health Campus for the purchase of an air mattress for palliative care patients.

20 NOV 7,460 signatures in support of VAD collected by Belinda's Brave Walk are tabled in the WA Legislative Council.

10 DEC The WA Parliament passes into law the VAD Bill 2019.

2019 Achievements

17,377

SUPPORTERS, UP FROM
12,918 LAST YEAR

700+

ATTENDEES AT THE
RALLY FOR CHOICE

762

DONORS, UP FROM
358 LAST YEAR

7,460

WA PETITION
SIGNATURES

7

E BOOKS PRODUCED

2

FILMS MADE

4 SUBMISSIONS

2 PARLIAMENTARY
INQUIRY
1 ROYAL COMMISSION
1 MINISTERIAL EXPERT
PANEL

658

SOCIAL MEDIA
POSTS

9.4 MILLION

AUSTRALIANS WITH
ACCESS TO VAD LAWS

>80%

SUPPORT FOR VAD
LAWS NATIONWIDE

3 MILLION

STEPS - BELINDA'S
BRAVE WALK FROM
MELBOURNE TO PERTH

1

VOLUNTARY ASSISTED
DYING LAW PASSED

Western Australia Passes VAD Law

HIGHLIGHT

On 10 December, Western Australia became the second Australian state to pass a voluntary assisted dying law giving terminally ill people choice at the end of life.

The WA Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill 2019 passed into law after a long and bruising parliamentary debate that lasted more than 180 hours.

their pain and suffering legally.

"This is about allowing for choice for those people who are dying and in pain, so that they don't have to go through those last weeks and months in agony," Mr McGowan said.

Go Gentle Australia congratulated the people, politicians, doctors and

The Bill's passage into law was the culmination of one of the biggest public and community consultations ever undertaken in WA, including a 12-month cross-party parliamentary inquiry and a six-month Ministerial Expert Panel investigation. All up the inquiry and expert panel considered more than 1,200 submissions and the testimony of more than 1,000 participants.

That Western Australia has now followed Victoria in passing an assisted dying law is validation that previous end-of-life options in those states were not sufficient to alleviate all pain and suffering for every terminally ill person.

Every Australian state must now make passing voluntary assisted dying laws a priority.

"It goes without saying that we could not have done this without Go Gentle Australia."

Dinny Laurence, Dying With Dignity, WA

WA Premier Mark McGowan said it was a historic, but also sombre, day for everyone who had fought to give terminally ill people the option to end

nurses of WA for their determination to stand up on behalf of some of their state's most vulnerable citizens – the terminally ill.



PHOTO: DAMO NGUYEN



JACQUI, KERRY AND NICOLE.
PHOTO: SUPPLIED

'Beautiful and Peaceful': Daughters Farewell First Person to Use Victoria's VAD law

HIGHLIGHT

In August, Bendigo woman Kerry Robertson became the public face of assisted dying in Australia when she was named as the first person to use Victoria's new VAD laws.

Kerry, 61, died in a nursing home in Bendigo on 15 July from metastatic breast cancer. She was the first person to receive a permit under the new Voluntary Assisted Dying Act, and the first to see the process through to its end.

Her daughters Jacqui and Nicole, who were at her bedside, said their mother's death was "beautiful and peaceful".

"She left this world with courage and grace, knowing how much she is loved," Nicole said.

"It was the empowered death that she wanted," Jacqui added. "We were there with her; her favourite music was playing in the background and she was surrounded by love."

Kerry was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2010. Despite treatment, the cancer metastasized into her bones, lungs and brain. In March 2019, when the disease had also spread to her liver and the side effects from the chemo were no longer manageable, she made the decision to stop all treatment.

"Palliative care did their job as well as they could, but it had been a long battle," Nicole said. "She was tired, the pain was intolerable and there was no quality of life left for her."

The pair said their mum's experience had reinforced their belief that anyone who has a terminal diagnosis, and who is suffering and in intolerable pain, deserves the choice of a voluntary assisted death.

"It is the most compassionate, dignified and logical option for those suffering in the end stages of life," said Nicole.

"Thank you to Kerry's family for sharing this story. How lucky that Victorians are able to make this choice."

Lisa, supporter, SA

Awareness and Health Promotion

Our mission is to improve the national conversation around death and dying, and in particular create an open dialogue about the need for kinder, more compassionate end-of-life choices.

The WA Campaign

In early 2019, as the Western Australian government prepared to introduce a bill to legalise voluntary assisted dying (VAD), we embarked on a campaign to help WA become the second Australian state to pass a VAD law.

The campaign focused on the desperate need for a VAD law and, until this was achieved, to bear witness to the needless suffering at the end of life endured by many West Australians, their families and carers.

Throughout the year, GGA maintained a targeted media, **social media and paid advertising campaign**, conducted **seat polling** and provided **briefings and information materials** to MPs and other stakeholders, designed to keep the VAD discussion factual and focused.

In February, we formed a **local campaign team** to forge relationships and open communications channels with key stakeholders and decision makers, including MPs.

In May, we provided funding and logistical support to **Perth woman Belinda Teh to embark on a walk**

across the country in support of the WA VAD bill. Print, broadcast and digital media followed Belinda's progress across the country and her public engagements and a strong social media presence strengthened awareness of the issue.

We worked closely with CGM Communications and publicists across four states Natalie Cameron (NRC Communications), Niki White (Nikstar), Alicia Brescianini & Cathy Gallagher (ABCG Film) and Nicole Haack (The Message Bureau) to promote Belinda's Brave Walk and the VAD issue.

In September, as deliberation on the VAD bill began in the WA Legislative Assembly, we gathered more than 700 VAD supporters at a **Rally for Choice** on the steps of Parliament House in Perth.

We facilitated a visit to Perth of Oregon doctor and **VAD campaigner David Grube**, who hosted a forum on VAD for doctors and nurses. We also facilitated a visit to Perth by Nicole Robertson and Jacqui Hicks, the daughters of **Kerry Robertson**, the first person to make use of Victoria's VAD law. Nicole and Jacqui appeared on the 7 Network's top rating current affairs program, *Flashpoint*, describing their mother's "beautiful and perfect" death.

Through our published e-books – as well as through private briefings – we kept MPs informed about the facts of the debate.

On 10 December, after a bruising four-month parliamentary debate and more than two years of evidence gathering, public consultations, and one of the most extensive parliamentary inquiries ever undertaken in Australia, the Parliament passed into law the WA Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill.

Our Stories

Storytelling on behalf of those living with a terminal illness, and their families and carers, is a crucial part of our mission. Those most affected – the elderly, the sick, the grief-stricken, and the traumatised – are often those least capable of public advocacy.

As part of the WA campaign, we worked with Dying With Dignity to collect more than 200 stories of the suffering endured by Western Australians in the absence of a VAD law. Some of these people courageously shared their stories in our feature-length documentary *The Broken Hearted*. Our website, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter became front-line resources to spread the message about the desperate need for law reform.

In August, we premiered ***The Broken Hearted***, a 70-minute documentary film detailing the stories of dozens of Western Australians left traumatised by the needless suffering of loved ones in the absence of a VAD law.

"I have taken responsibility for myself all of my life. Why not for my death?"

Isobel, supporter, ACT



Perth Rallies for Choice

On 3 September, around 750 people turned out in the cold and intermittent rain to rally in support of the WA Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill 2019 as it passed its first vote in the lower house.

Buoyed by an atmosphere of energy and optimism, rally speakers including **Belinda Teh, Deborah Allcott and Lizz Clarke** delivered a clear and unambiguous message about the broad public support for a law allowing terminally ill Western Australians to avoid unnecessary suffering at the end of life.

Belinda Teh told the rally she had been warned not to get her hopes up about the VAD Bill succeeding. "And yet I do hope," she said. "I hope for a future where we can one day look back and say to each other: 'How did it take us so long?'"

The Broken Hearted

HIGHLIGHT

We all know the pain of losing someone we love. But what if witnessing your loved one die is so cruel it tears your life apart?

On 5 August, Go Gentle Australia and filmmakers Juliet Lamont and Josh Raymond premiered a 70-minute documentary *The Broken Hearted* at a capacity screening for West Australian parliamentarians. More than 300 people attended the premiere at Perth's Palace Cinema.

It was the culmination of more than three months of interviews and filming during which ordinary West Australians told their stories of needless end-of-life suffering which had left scars across generations.

They spoke of the horrors they had witnessed, despite the often-heroic efforts of doctors and nurses.

Screening just days before the start of the WA Parliament's debate about whether or not to legalise voluntary assisted dying, the film was an opportunity for ordinary people to deliver a message: "What happened to us should never be allowed to happen again".

Filmmaker Juliet Lamont said it had been a privilege to bear witness to the private suffering of 45 remarkably



brave Western Australians. "I am fundamentally changed as a result of hearing these stories of love, loss and pain," she said.

Josh Raymond said the process was particularly intense and unusual, even for documentary makers. "These are stories of incredible resilience and sacrifice. To record and show these intense private moments has been a wonderful and disturbing unveiling of the things which we never talk about but definitely should."

3 Million Steps to Change a Law

HIGHLIGHT

In August, after 70 days, 3,500 kms, and four pairs of shoes, young Perth woman Belinda Teh completed her walk across Australia in support of voluntary assisted dying laws.

Belinda's journey began from the steps of Parliament House in Melbourne on 28 May, and ended at Perth's Parliament House, where more than 300 supporters, including the WA Premier, were on hand to meet her.

"Thanks to every brave West Australian who put their shoulders to the wheel and raised their voice."

Belinda Teh

The 27-year-old, who grew up in Perth's southern suburbs, carried a white rose every step of the journey in memory of her mum, Mareia, who died in agony from aggressive breast cancer in a specialist palliative care facility in Perth in 2016.

Doctors refused Mareia's requests for help to die quicker because the option was not legal in WA at the time. Launching her campaign, Belinda said: "This is a once-in-a-generation chance to change the law in WA so that what happened to my mum doesn't happen to anyone else."

Belinda's trek took her through Victoria, the first state in Australia to legalise assisted dying in 2017, South Australia

and WA. As an 'assisted walk', she had help from a support vehicle and from the public.

In WA, she passed through the Great Southern, Goldfields, South West and Peel regions on her way to Perth, meeting supporters and collecting

signatures for a petition calling for an assisted dying law.

The final day of her walk, from Murdoch Hospital in Perth, saw dozens of nurses turn out to show their support.

At Parliament House, Premier Mark McGowan welcomed Belinda home with a basket of white roses. Also on hand were Deputy Premier and Minister for Health Roger Cook, Opposition leader Liza Harvey, MPs Alannah MacTiernan, Amber-Jade Sanderson, and Robin Chapple, and supporters including GGA's Andrew Denton and former Australian cricketer Adam Gilchrist.

"Along my journey I met so many people with similar stories," Belinda said.

"Their willingness to share their experiences continued to inspire me and gave me the strength to walk to the end to bring this important message to the West Australian Parliament."



"In awe of this warrior gal, hero of Australia, Belinda Teh. Thank you for the inspiration."

Therese, supporter, NSW

PHOTO: MURRAY ARMENTI

Research and Advice

As an ethical advisory and health promotion charity, we promote only information about end-of life care based on established facts and peer-reviewed studies.

Our research and analysis helps to correct misinformation about end-of-life choices and voluntary assisted dying laws and provides valuable resources for medical, legal, political and community leaders on end-of-life law and practice in Australia.

Parliamentary Submissions

In 2019, we participated in the public consultation processes of various parliamentary inquiries and the royal commission into aged care.

Throughout April, we finalised a 170-page submission to the **Queensland Parliament's Select Committee Inquiry into End-of Life Choices**. The inquiry, ongoing throughout 2019 and early 2020, was investigating whether voluntary assisted dying (VAD) should be legalised in Queensland as part of a broader approach to better end-of-life care.

Our submission collated information from previous parliamentary inquiries into end-of-life care – in Victoria and Western Australia – and from

multiple international jurisdictions where VAD laws are operating. Our submission stressed that in all of these jurisdictions, after 10, 15 and even 20 years, there is still widespread public and political support for assisted dying; fears about the abuse of the vulnerable have not been realised; and there is no loss of faith in doctors or a degradation in palliative care – in fact, their opposite.

In August, we submitted a similar document to the **South Australian Parliament's Joint Committee Inquiry into Voluntary Assisted Dying**, which was investigating whether SA should implement VAD laws similar to those introduced in Victoria.

Off the back of our Queensland submission, in September the Parliamentary Committee charged with oversight of the Queensland inquiry invited us to participate in a public consultation in Brisbane alongside other pro-VAD organisations.

Aged Care Royal Commission

In May, we submitted a 72-page report, focusing on the issue of elder abuse, to the **Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety**. The submission addressed two significant

problems that we have heard about in aged care at the end of life: not recognising a person's legal right to refuse treatment and/or sustenance, and; inadequate palliative care, particularly pain management and sedation.

Both problems result in mistreatment and abuse of people accessing aged care services at the end of life. Both reflect what elderly Australians fear most about dying: a denial of autonomy, dignity, choice and control.

Publications

In August, we published **a series of e-books** on the state of assisted dying in Australia, based on our Queensland and South Australian parliamentary inquiry submissions.

In September, as part of our Western Australia campaign, we released **'A Guide to the Debate Ahead,'** which was made available to politicians and the public as a user-friendly roadmap to the arguments and counterarguments likely to dominate the parliamentary debate.

Also as part of the WA campaign, we published **'The Full Picture: A Critical Analysis of Allegations of 'Wrongful Deaths' in Hon. Nick Goiran MLC's Minority Report.'**

"Be patient. Just constantly explain the importance of VAD. It will take time for many people to change their minds."

Tom, supporter, ACT

The document is a forensic analysis of the 27 alleged cases of 'wrongful deaths' under VAD and euthanasia laws around the world, according to the Hon. Nick Goiran (MLC) in his dissenting WA Parliamentary Committee report. Anti-VAD campaigners routinely cite these alleged wrongful deaths as core arguments against the adoption of VAD legislation in Australia.

Our research revealed three concerning realities:

- The 'wrongful deaths' case studies relied overwhelmingly on omission of crucial facts, half-truths, or unsubstantiated information.
- Many of the key contributors to the case studies had an undeclared affiliation to religious beliefs, which had at their core a fundamental and enduring opposition to VAD.
- Only five of the 27 cases were relevant to the legislation proposed in Western Australia. All of these deaths were legal; none had been the subject of any inquiry.

Oregon Expert Visits WA

HIGHLIGHT

"Personal feelings do not belong in the exam room. What belongs in the exam room is professionalism, and professionalism is about putting the patient first."

This was the message from Oregon physician Dr David Grube (pictured above) during his visit to Australia.

Go Gentle Australia helped Dr Grube travel to Perth in August to give presentations to medical groups and talk to politicians ahead of the parliamentary debate on the WA Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill 2019.

The national medical director for Compassion and Choice, a US-based end-of-life charity and advocacy group, Dr Grube offered a valuable perspective on Oregon's 22-year-old Death With Dignity Act, one of the first laws of its kind in the world.

Dr Grube made it clear he was not in Australia to "tell MPs what to do" regarding the VAD Bill vote. Rather, he said, he could provide insights into Oregon's two-decades of experience in legally helping terminally ill people to die and offer relevant medical, legal, political and community context on what

can be an emotionally charged and confusing debate.

He said Oregon's laws showed it was possible to enact safe, workable and enduring assisted dying legislation with safeguards for the vulnerable.

By 2018, Oregon's physicians had written 2,217 prescriptions while 1,459 patients – about 65 percent –

"These laws spur conversations between patients their doctor and their loved ones."

Dr David Grube

had ingested the lethal substance. The regime is well regulated and received by the medical fraternity and the public.

Since 1997, when Oregon enacted its law, eight other US jurisdictions have introduced assisted dying legislation – Washington State, Colorado, Hawaii, New Jersey, Vermont, Maine, California and the District of Columbia.



Education

The ability to make good decisions at the end of life requires access to reliable information.

Creating trustworthy educational resources is central to our mission to spark better conversations about the end of life.

Countering wrong information about voluntary assisted dying (VAD) and other end-of-life options is also crucial.

Countering misinformation

In the second half of 2019, we released a mini-documentary *Fatal*

Fraud to tackle head-on the often covert tactics used by opponents of assisted dying (and other evidence-based public policy initiatives) to influence political decision-making.

Timed to coincide with the Western Australian parliamentary debate on the VAD Bill, *Fatal Fraud* is an analysis and critique of Canadian film *Fatal Flaws*, a documentary that aims to sow fear, uncertainty and doubt about VAD laws in the minds of the public and politicians. In WA, we showed the film to MPs and other key decision makers as a counterpoint to opponents' unfounded claims.



"Conversations about death, dying and end-of-life choices need to start early in life."

Garry, supporter, VIC

E-books

In August, we created a series of e-books based on our submissions to the Queensland and South Australian parliamentary inquiries into end-of-life choices. The e-books, which are free from the Go Gentle Australia website, include:

Assisted Dying in Australia Today:

An incoherent, largely unregulated and inequitable legal situation.

Beyond Pain: Why more resources for palliative care alone won't address the need for Voluntary Assisted Dying.

Responding to Key Arguments Against VAD.

Fear, Uncertainty and Doubt: Tactics used to create an alarmist picture of assisted dying.

A Propaganda Case Study: Fatal Flaws.

Website relaunch

In September, we relaunched our website with changes that allow better access to our materials and resources, including our collection of stories and testimonies written by people living with a terminal illness and by their family and carers. The new site also showcases our foundational resources the Better Off Dead podcast and the book *The Damage Done*, as well as our e-books.

Knowledge Hub

In late 2019, we launched several multi-year projects to create educational materials that draw on the experiences of people living with a terminal illness, and the medical professionals who help them. These projects, along with development of our existing archive of research and other materials, will ensure we continue to fulfil our mission to make available to the public the very best evidence-based material on end-of-life choices.



Fatal Fraud

HIGHLIGHT

To a casual observer, the Canadian documentary *Fatal Flaws* is a slickly produced piece of film-making, purporting to explore the 'truth' about assisted dying around the world.

A closer analysis, however, shows the film is something far more troubling. Despite its claims to the contrary, it fails to show a balanced view or disclose the full story about the so-called "evidence" and "experts" it relies upon to discredit voluntary assisted dying.

It is, in fact, a very clever piece of propaganda.

Since its release in 2018, opponents of assisted dying have screened the film for politicians in Canberra and in Perth in an effort to influence parliamentary debates on VAD laws.

As a counterpoint, Go Gentle Australia created its own mini-documentary – *Fatal Fraud*. In it presenter Andrew Denton, with the help of leading authorities, forensically dissects how the Canadian filmmakers deploy the tactics of emotional manipulation, framing and omission to sow

fear, uncertainty and doubt about assisted dying in the minds of viewers.

We believed it was essential to expose these tactics to prevent the film from corrupting evidence-based debate about VAD in Australia and elsewhere.

Yet *Fatal Fraud* is much more than just a rebuttal of anti-VAD tactics and misinformation. It is a case study of the techniques used against a range of evidence-based public policy initiatives. It is an important educational tool for anyone embarking on law reform in public policy who must counter obfuscation and misinformation.

The film is available on our website.

"Everyone sitting on the fence and every politician should view this film."

Fiona Jacobs, Nurses Supporting Voluntary Assisted Dying, QLD

PHOTO: A scene from Canadian documentary *Fatal Flaws* featuring filmmaker Kevin Dunn (centre).

Operations

All of our staff efforts, resources and funds are directed towards achieving our mission and objectives – to spark a better conversation around death and dying, and to help relieve distress, helplessness and suffering at the end of life.

In 2019, we secured several donations from philanthropists to ensure the sustainability of our operations over the next two years.

We also secured **shared office space** in central Sydney.

Our capacity received a further boost through the recruitment of a full-time communications manager, a part-time graphic designer and a part-time projects officer, bringing the number of FTE positions to three. These staff were additional to the local team assembled for the Western Australian campaign.

Fundraising

As a small charity that receives no government funding, we rely on the generosity of donors. In 2019, several philanthropic donations were central to our ability to cover operational costs, while other tied donations contributed to the roll-out of our WA campaign. Our end-of-financial-year fundraising campaign, which ran this

year in conjunction with Belinda's Brave Walk, raised close to \$30k towards our education and awareness raising campaigns in WA.

The organisation's **ongoing sustainability** depends on converting these campaign-based donations into regular giving: supporters who see the value of our ongoing research, awareness raising and educational work.

Bequests

In March, we surveyed our supporters for the first time, and included a question about a willingness to leave a bequest to GGA in their Will. Responses were encouraging and informed the creation of an ongoing bequests program.



Supporter Survey

HIGHLIGHT

Our first supporter survey confirmed Go Gentle Australia has the backing of a highly engaged, and informed, community.

We received an overall response rate that was well above the industry average and the answers revealed some interesting information.

Unsurprisingly, the typical GGA supporter is mature (55+) and female. The most common reason given for connecting with GGA and the issue of VAD was 'choice' – the simple belief that "Australians should have the choice that voluntary assisted dying laws with strong safeguards offer". Others said they were "considering their own end of life plans and care options", or "knew or loved someone whose death might have been less distressing if they had a voluntary assisted dying choice".

Respondents were also keen to put their convictions into action. Their most preferred forms of advocacy were to sign a petition in support of voluntary assisted dying in their state or territory, to start conversations with family and friends, and to contact their local MPs to ask them to support VAD legislation.

Survey Results



Words from our supporters

- "IF I KNOW I HAVE A TERMINAL SICKNESS AND HAVE TO SUFFER FIRST, THEN IT'S NOT NEGOTIABLE. WHY SUFFER FOR NOTHING?"
AVRILLE, QLD
- "KEEP THE CONVERSATION GOING. THANKS GO GENTLE FOR YOUR EFFORTS."
KATHERINE, AUS
- "MOST PEOPLE I KNOW OF MY AGE AGREE WITH ME THAT THEY WANT CHOICE AND DO NOT WANT HEROIC EFFORTS TO KEEP THEM ALIVE WHEN LIFE IS UNPLEASANT AND UNDIGNIFIED."
GEOFF, NSW
- "KEEP UP THE PRESSURE ON GOVERNMENTS."
LYNETTE, SA

Financial Report

for the year ended 30 June 2019

Consolidated Statement of Surplus or Deficit

	2019	2018
Assets		
Current Assets		
Cash on hand	556,776	150,058
Receivables	14,746	6,815
Other	7,633	-
Total Current Assets	579,155	156,873
Total Assets	579,155	156,873
Liabilities		
Current Liabilities		
Payables	26,380	6,059
Total Current Liabilities	26,380	6,059
Total Liabilities	26,380	6,059
Net Assets	552,775	150,814
Equity		
Current year earnings	401,961	(171,773)
Retained surplus	150,814	322,587
Total equity	552,775	150,814

Consolidated Statement of Financial Position

	2019	2018
Revenue	870,745	718,118
Administration expense	49,013	27,491
Program delivery costs	304,279	776,324
Employee benefits expenses	115,492	86,076
Current year surplus before income tax	401,961	(171,773)
Income tax expense	-	-
Net current year surplus	401,961	(171,773)
Other comprehensive income	-	-
Total comprehensive income for the year	401,961	(171,773)

A copy of the full financial statement is available at the [ACNC website](#).

Ocean of Time Janet Cohen, NSW

"Dramatically severed from life before cancer, I was like a sailor who'd survived the storm, but was now cast adrift on a vast ocean clinging to a flimsy life raft of nature, creativity and meditation to help me face the forecast of an untimely death."



Go Gentle
Australia

COVER IMAGE: BELINDA TEH LEADS SUPPORTERS ON THE FINAL
LEG OF HER WALK ACROSS AUSTRALIA IN SUPPORT OF WA'S
VOLUNTARY ASSISTED DYING BILL. PHOTO: JOSH RAYMOND

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