



## CONFERENCE 2023 HIGHLIGHTS

Saturday 11 November 2023 at the Treacy Centre, Parkville, Melbourne

Dear Friends of Life

Congratulations to our CEO Mary Collier for the splendid work she did in arranging our conference which was held at the Treacy Centre, Parkville Melbourne on 11 November 2023.

Thanks are also due to Michael Fewster who did an enormous amount of work in publicizing the conference with fruitful results. Thanks are also due to other committee members like Luisa Romanic for a most successful raffle, Patrick McKay, Mary Hart, Dominic Amato and others.

All of the speakers were of a very high standard - the majority having to travel to Melbourne from interstate. I opened the conference with an account of my very early days of involvement in the prolife cause, beginning with a few examples of how I learnt as a pharmacy student the reality of abortion.

My involvement began in 1968 - with pressure in The Age newspaper at the time - for the legalisation of abortion for "rape and incest and deformities".

It was in 1968 that the British parliament legalised abortion and this I believe, led to similar moves in other countries such as the US with the Supreme Court decision of 1973, which swept away all abortion laws in the US.

Tragically in 1970 the Liberal government of Steele Hall in South Australia legislated a blueprint copy of the UK Abortion Act of 1968, without much opposition!

Thereafter, the abortion battle began in this country beginning with the Mackenzie Lamb Medical Practice Clarification Bill in 1973 which sought to legalise abortion in the Territories especially the ACT- from 16 weeks of pregnancy.

After a huge campaign against it - the bill was defeated on 10 May 1973 in the federal parliament in a vote of 98 - 23!

A news report at the time stated "The day David McKenzie and Tony Lamb introduced their abortion law reform bill - Medical Practice Clarification Bill - to the House of Representatives, a huge lunch-time crowd came to show their support. However, the Right to Life organisation organised 1000 people, bussed in from interstate, to be present and they erected a marquee on the opposite side of the parliamentary lawns".

Thereafter, I became involved in much politicking - lobbying with colleagues in federal parliament and later in state parliament, sometime with success, but not always!

Unlike other prolife groups in this country, we followed the US movement with at least six of us attending US Right to Life conventions over the years.



Margaret Tighe

We were always very active at times of election both state and federal - seeking commitments from would-be politicians and advertising the results in newspapers. To this day we still do this.

On one occasion the leading politics writers in The Age - Michelle Grattan - saying we were like "sheep dogs snapping at the heels of politicians".

Meanwhile another leading commentator Mungo MacCallum said we were the "Viet Cong of the prolife Movement".

For many years we have continued to battle on - in both state and federal parliaments and increasingly this has meant battling against anti-life legislation both abortion and now physician-assisted suicide.

Tragically the killing has progressed and has spread around the nation but we must not give up in demanding respect for human life! That is why we must continue the fight for life in this country. If we are not silent - we will save some lives at least!

### PROABORTION P.M. BOB HAWKE - AND THE ROLE HE PLAYED.

Just before Bob Hawke was elected Prime Minister of Australia in 1983 he had become leader of the ALP at the expense of Bill Hayden.

At the ALP conference prior to this election, Bob Hawke was the first speaker in support of the motion of then Senator Susan Ryan, for the ALP to adopt a policy of abortion on demand (with a conscience vote allowed).

As he was the new messiah for Labor the motion was overwhelmingly carried!

Margaret Tighe - PRESIDENT



RTL A will be publishing the speakers' video presentations together with the individual transcripts on our website soon.

A hard copy of the presentations will be compiled and will be available in early 2024.

Please support us to defray our costs in videoing and publishing this material - which will help us all to promote the prolife message more widely in the community.

[www.righttolife.com.au/donate](http://www.righttolife.com.au/donate)

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**Professor Margaret Somerville**  
AM, DSG, FRSC, FRSN, DCL

"To minimise the use and impact of legalised euthanasia we must understand what dying persons need and want and identify and address the reasons they seek VAD and make them irrelevant.

Dying people need compassionate accompaniment, not lethal injections. Even many of those who have requested euthanasia change their mind when given good palliative care.

That accompaniment takes time and we see ourselves as "time-poor". Euthanasia is a time compressor.

We need to ask questions such as are we not prepared to watch and wait in order to accompany the dying person?

Has "radical individualism" blinded us to the importance of relationships for humans?

Have we become "human doings", rather than human beings and only the former are valued?

Some experiences cannot be time-compressed without destroying their essential essence, and dying in a relationship is one of them. Consequently, it is an ethical imperative to ensure that high-quality palliative care is available for all who need and wish to have it".



**Professor Joanna Howe**  
PhD, M.St. Legal Research, LLB,  
Bachelor of Economics

"The creation of Emily's List in 1996 has been pivotal to making our state and federal parliaments more radical on the issue of abortion than the Australian population".

"This has meant that each of our state and territory parliaments have passed abortion up to birth on demand despite the fact that only 31% of Australians support abortion up to 20 weeks. Up to birth would be even less".

"We can see a different story emerge in the US. Although Emily's List was created in 1985 with the specific and singular focus of expanding abortion, only seven years later an alternative (Susan B Anthony Pro-Life America) - a political arm of the pro-life movement was created.

The legacy of SBA List is significant. Roe v Wade prevented abortion bans pre-viability but when it was overturned the prolife movement was ready. The effect of a proper parliamentary representation of the people's views on abortion has meant that in the US the laws are much more balanced and only 8 states out of 50 are as extreme as Australia"

"In Australia we've never had the handbrake of Roe and yet we have never focused on getting prolife politicians elected. Importantly, SBA List hasn't focused on niche parties but on infiltrating mainstream political parties with prolife candidates.

They've also used the organising model for grassroots fundraising and campaigning to change hearts and minds of ordinary people and build general education and awareness on abortion".



**Richard Egan BA Grad Dip Lib Sc.**

"It was claimed during the parliamentary debate in Victoria that legalisation would prevent 50 suicides each year. Not only has there been no such decline, but there were 62 more suicides in Victoria in 2022 than in 2017, when this claim was made. The suicide rate among those aged over 65 years increased in Victoria between 2019 and 2022 by 42 per cent—five times the increase in New South Wales. The international evidence shows decisively that legalising assisted suicide and euthanasia does not prevent suicide and probably increases non-authorised suicide as well as the overall suicide rate. We need to reaffirm suicide prevention for all and not abandon those we think would be better off dead by affirming suicide or euthanasia as a valid choice".

For more information [www.australiancarealliance.org.au](http://www.australiancarealliance.org.au)



**Associate Professor Marion Harris**  
MBBS FRACP Medical Oncologist,  
Melbourne .

"So my opposition to VAD stems largely from a medical perspective. I truly believe that it's unnecessary. With top quality specialist medical care in 2023 if that's available and utilized, I think as a policy it's unsafe. I don't feel that doctors should be involved in intentionally causing the deaths of their patients. I think many of the patients themselves stand to die much earlier than they should.

It creates the need for some to ask for care instead of having an expectation of care as a default in their illness. I think many requests are motivated by fear and lack of understanding or misinterpretation of the normal dying process. Previously, prior to VAD being available in Victoria, when a person expresses suicidal ideation or wishes that they could die it's standard medical practice to try and find out why. And that might include a psychiatric assessment or if a person has I -has a life limiting illness - palliative care assessment and all emphasis is on trying to help and assist that person to cope and to feel better.

With euthanasia now, the process of suicide prevention is inverted and instead the focus and energy is on trying to help the patient to end their life if they meet the eligibility criteria.

So this often causes what some would consider to be a form of medical neglect, setting the patient on a trajectory with the single focus to the exclusion of what a medical and caring professions should be trying to do is to recognize, address and improve the distress that they have.

Since euthanasia has been legal in Victoria, generally speaking, I want to reassure people that most patients, especially ones who I see have absolutely no interest. Like we'd expect, most people want to live as long as possible and many are desperate to live".

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**Angela Shanahan**  
Author and Columnist,  
"The Australian", "The Spectator".

"And of course, as time has gone on, our Labor A.C.T. government has lent further and further to the left, so much so that it's now informal coalition with the Greens.

And this is where the danger for the whole of Australia and the link with VOLUNTARY ASSISTED DYING comes in.

Euthanasia is just the latest move by the A.C.T. Government as part of a suite of legislation, an ideological package which aims to create in the federal capital a social template for the rest of the country. Make no mistake, this legislation, along with several other controversial laws, aims to cement the federal capital territories reputation as the social laboratory for Australia.

And that's not all. As the Chief Minister Andrew Barr has often boasted, the A.C.T. will be the first and the leader in social legislation. In other words, what a handful of far-left Greens and members of local Parliament envisage is leadership in remaking all Australia in its own far left image.

It's not an exaggeration of what some see as the Territory crazy dystopian Greens social policies like legalizing hard drugs, transsexual laws which undercut parental authority by preventing confused children from leaving the territory, forcibly acquiring a Catholic run hospital and hospice at the same time as introducing very liberal Voluntary Assisted Dying".



**Janice Speirs**  
Retired nurse,  
Abortion Survivors Network

"We are all chosen and created to live and flourish. I learned quickly that in Australia we people don't know survivors exist. We've all been hidden for others comfort. Abortion is definitely not a topic of conversation and we need to make it so. If I even mention the abortion word, I feel an instant cold blast, as if stepping into a subzero temperature here, I absolutely thank all pro-life organisations in Australia.

And I thank Prof Joanna for her recent and continued media coverage, but most of all, for their heart. People are starting to listen and as a result, change is happening. During these years, I've had much healing ministry and been in a totally different place. I'm now vigilant rather than hyper vigilant and learning to relax and enjoy life somehow.

I sometimes remind myself of Mother Teresa's words.

Any country that accepts abortion is not teaching its people to love, but to use any form of violence to get what they want. This is why the greatest destroyer of love and peace is abortion. Powerful words. My priority is that people realize a baby is a person, although a little person from conception onwards".



**Monica Doumit**  
B Med Sc. LLB (Hons). Grad Cert Legal  
Practice. M Bioeth.

"I prefer the approach of the American playwright James Goldman. Goldman wrote the screenplay for the 1968 film The Lion in Winter, and The Lion in Winter centres on the story of King Henry, the second and his three sons, King John, Richard the Lionheart and Geoffrey, the second Duke of Brittany.

And so at one point, Henry determines that he wants none of his three sons to succeed him to the throne. And instead he wants to bear a new son and heir with a new wife. So he imprisons them. He imprisons his three sons with the intention of having them executed. And at one point during their imprisonment, Richard the Lionheart thinks he can hear Henry approaching and he boldly announces to his brothers he's here, but he'll get no satisfaction out of me.

He isn't going to see me beg and his brother. Geoffrey scoffs and says, Why, you chivalric fool? As if the way one fell mattered. And Richard responds, When the fool is all there is, it matters. My friends, when the fall is all there is, it matters. We need to fight every battle, even if we know we will not be successful.

Because while there might be such a thing as a losing battle, there is no such thing as a futile one.

And even if we can't see it at the time, all battles, including the losing ones, contribute to the cause of life and will ultimately bring us victory. I speak about the importance of the fight".



Conference dinner attendees enjoying the evening and listening to Professor Margaret Somerville's presentation "Living with Euthanasia – Minimising the use and impact of legalised euthanasia (VAD).

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Margaret Tighe

## Margaret Tighe, President – Conference Closure

We mustn't give up – and we must, must never stop speaking out in defence of human life. I've been like a dog with a bone for many, many years. And because – I just couldn't let them get away with it. And I'm sure most of you feel that way, too. And those of you who are much younger, I encourage you to decide to keep up the cudgels and keep on speaking out and getting behind our work.

And in relation to politics. Well, pressure is the name of the game.

And one area in which I think we've had a bit of success, but I hope I won't be proven wrong, is the proposition that the state Attorneys General wanting the federal government to change legislation so telehealth could be used to give advice on euthanasia.

And that has been a stumbling block because federal legislation says that you must not use a "carriage service" (ie telecommunication) to give advice on euthanasia. And here we are – using Lifeline and Beyond Blue to save lives. And those are the organizations saving lives, preventing people from taking their lives. And yet this is what they're wanting to allow now. So far, it hasn't happened.

And I think it's because of the pressure we have been able to exert. And I said to the office how many people have we got in Dreyfus's electorate? And we had quite a few supporters. We encouraged people to contact him - we've been asking them to send emails and letters because if they passed this legislation, it would have been even more dangerous. Imagine people signing their lives away over the telephone to the doctor. Anyway I think we might have had a bit of success with being able to exert a bit of pressure on Dreyfus, who is the Federal Attorney General. I hope I'm not proven wrong. It's one of the things I learned many years ago when I attended my first Right to Life Convention in the United States - and you have to admit the Americans haven't given up the fight – more than any other country. They really haven't.

I can remember hearing Professor Charles Rice, who was the Law professor at University of Notre Dame and gave an example of recent elections held in the state of New York in relation to a prolife group who were active. They were called the Right to Life Party. Well, they had great success, he said. And there was one guy who lost his seat. And what happened when they all got back to resume at the legislature? Where's Vince? He's pumping gas someplace. He lost his job! I mentioned the David McKenzie and Tony Lamb abortion law reform bill – Medical Practice Clarification Bill – in 1973, which really did help establish the cause in this country.

Most of you would remember Malcolm Mackerras, who was a psephologist - he commented on elections and politics. And although there was a lot of pressure exerted on federal MPs over that Mackenzie Lamb bill it was overwhelmingly defeated 98 to 23. Nonetheless, Malcolm Mackerras did say he believed the defeat of David Kennedy in the Federal seat of Bendigo was a significant factor in ensuring the defeat of the bill.

Because David Kennedy should have been safe in the seat of Bendigo. Apparently the night before the election people got out, the gremlins got out, putting material under milk bottles which used to be delivered at the front of peoples' houses. And he believes that when the federal MPs got back and of course Whitlam had won office - where's David Kennedy? – oh he lost his seat'. You know, those right to lifers! So there's no doubt you have to exert a lot of pressure. You really do. So I'm convinced that seeing people here today and with people like Mary, Michael and others, that the cause will continue to be fought. It has to be fought. We can't sit back. We can't sit back and just allow it all to happen. And I'm reminded of the words of a judge during the Nuremberg trials and one of the Nazis who was on trial, he was being questioned and he said, But I never believed it would go this far.

And the judge said it went this far the first time you allowed an innocent man to be condemned to death. And so if we just sit back and say, "oh too hard" and allow it all to happen - well, it will go that far. And it's gone very far now!

## REQUEST FOR BEQUESTS PLEASE!

### When you die, help others to live

#### Please consider The Right to Life Australia Inc

We share a vision for a community where every human life is respected, from conception until natural death, regardless of age, place of residence, gender or disability.

When you write or update your will, please consider The Right to Life Australia Inc. A bequest is a gift made under a Will. A specific bequest is a specified sum or asset, such as property. A residuary bequest is a portion of your estate, after other costs have been paid.

Through a bequest to The Right to Life Australia Inc, you can give the gift of life to the most vulnerable and defenceless of our human family. Your generosity will make a difference to the pregnant women facing difficulties who contact us. We want to support and encourage them in their very challenging circumstances.

Legislatively we are working to uphold the right to life of all unborn babies and prevent destructive laws. Euthanasia is also being practiced in all states and soon to be territories in Australia even though we have very good palliative care. We need to maintain and extend good palliative care instead of killing. We are opposing human embryo experimentation so that the exceptionalism of human beings is respected and protected. You can be a practical part of this vision. On behalf of the most vulnerable members of our community, we sincerely thank you for your generous support.

#### BEQUEST wording:

I bequeath to

The Right to Life Australia Inc.

the sum of \$xxxxxx

for the general purposes of The Right to Life Australia Inc.,

161A Donald St. Brunswick East, VIC 3057.

PO Box 2029 Brunswick East VIC 3057

ABN 12 774 010 375

ASIC Registration Number: A0042146V

#### OR

I give, devise and bequeath

xx% of my residuary estate,

to The Right to Life Australia Inc.

for the general purposes of The Right to Life Australia Inc.,

161A Donald St. Brunswick East, Vic. 3057.

PO Box 2029 Brunswick East VIC 3057

ABN 12 774 010 375

ASIC Registration Number: A0042146V