

# **MEDIA RELEASE**

**NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA**

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## **Euthanasia debate comes to Launceston**

Well-known euthanasia proponent Philip Nitschke will debate with local and national personalities in Thursday night's debate at the Annexe Theatre, Inveresk.

The motion for the second event in the 2011 UTAS public debate series states: *The house moves that voluntary euthanasia should be legalised.*

Speakers for the motion are Neil Francis, CEO of YourLastRight.com/ the peak body for aid-in-dying law reform in Australia; Dr Nitschke, director of Exit International; and Nica Cordover, an advocate for legislative change in voluntary euthanasia law reform since her husband suffered with motor neurone disease.

Speakers against the motion are executive officer for NSW Right to Life, Paul Russell; local GP and former MHA Dr Frank Madill; and Betty Roberts, OAM, social convenor for the Catholic Women's League Australia Inc.

The debate MC is Dr Polly McGee, entrepreneur, blogger and senior lecturer in commercialisation and entrepreneurship at the Australian Innovation Research Centre at UTAS.

The event starts at 6.30pm for drinks, 7pm for the debate, followed at 9pm for drinks and finger food. The debate is being held by UTAS Alumni.

**For more information contact Sharon Webb, UTAS Communications and Media Office, ph. 0438 510 616.**

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## The Personalities

**MC Dr Polly McGee** is one of the co-founders of Startup Tasmania, an organisation dedicated to helping entrepreneurial Tasmanian fast growth businesses start up and stay up. Polly runs a successful clinic for women in business and writes a regular mumpreneur business blog for Start Up Smart. Polly is a senior lecturer in Commercialisation and Entrepreneurship at the University of Tasmania in their MBA and undergraduate program, she is the chapter manager for Pitch Club in Tasmania, a mentor for Business Mentor Services Tasmania and sits on the boards of the Children's Food Education Foundation and *Island* magazine. In her spare time, Polly blogs, writes, cooks, drinks Tassie pinot and is co-host of Huon FM Saturday sports program *Fulltime*.

**Neil Francis** is Chairman and CEO of YourLastRight.com/, which is the peak body for aid-in-dying law reform in Australia. It is the national alliance of all state and territory Dying With Dignity and Voluntary Euthanasia societies. Neil has qualifications in medical technology, business and communications, a decade of medical research experience, and a number of personal experiences with loved ones who have had to bear unrelievable suffering due to untreatable illness. He recently completed an extensive literature search on aid-in-dying and perceptions of a 'good death', creating a library of almost 1,000 journal papers. This extensive resource covers beliefs and values (including religion), medical practice in various jurisdictions, palliative care, mental health and dementias, matters of concern and contention, and outcomes of assisted dying particularly in jurisdictions where one form or other is legal.

**Dr Philip Nitschke** has been the face of the voluntary euthanasia debate for more than a decade, both in Australia and around the world. He came to prominence after becoming the first doctor in the world to administer a legal lethal voluntary injection to four terminally ill patients in 1996 under the Northern Territory's Rights of the Terminally Ill Act. Philip has written and advocated extensively on the issue of end of life rights and is the co-author of two books, the banned *Peaceful Pill eHandbook* and *Killing Me Softly: Voluntary Euthanasia and the Road to the Peaceful Pill*. He is director of Australia's peak voluntary euthanasia / assisted suicide information and advocacy group, Exit International. Philip holds a PhD in applied physics from Flinders University and is a graduate of the University of Sydney medical school. He is the recipient of many humanitarian awards and has been nominated for Australian of the Year six times.

**Nica Cordover** completed a BA (Hons) in Social Anthropology in Kent, England and a Diploma in Social Administration from the LSE. She worked

with the socially disadvantaged in community housing and in the justice and mental health sectors. She taught in Amritsar, India for one year under the auspices of VSO (Voluntary Service Overseas) and later obtained a Certificate III in aged care. The family first settled in Australia in 1985 and have lived in Tasmania since 2004. She returned to England frequently in the past decade, until the onset of her husband's condition, to act as relief carer for her mother who suffered from vascular dementia. Her husband Robert was diagnosed with motor neurone disease in 2008. As a result he and the family became passionate advocates for voluntary euthanasia law reform. Nica was his full-time carer until 2009 when the effects of the disease became unbearable and he took his own life. Since that time Nica has continued to advocate for legislative change, including making submissions to the Tasmanian Parliamentary Committee Inquiry into the 2009 Dying with Dignity Bill.

**Paul Russell** has worked against euthanasia and assisted suicide legislation in South Australia for many years. In 2010 he created the HOPE network to campaign against the euthanasia bill that was defeated in the South Australian Upper House late last year. Paul was made vice chair of the International Euthanasia Prevention Coalition based in Canada at their symposium in Vancouver in June. Until recently Paul was also chairman of the board of management for the Southern Cross Bioethics Institute, and he currently works as executive officer for Right to Life New South Wales. Paul and Anne have seven children and the family is based in Adelaide.

**Dr Frank Madill** was born in Victoria and graduated from Melbourne University. He moved to Launceston and spent nearly 20 years as a GP in the northern suburbs. He also ran a sheep stud at Romney Marsh. In 1986 he was elected to State Parliament, becoming a minister in 1992 and speaker in 1996. He retired from Parliament in 2000 and has since combined part-time practice of medicine with lecturing at UTAS and the AMC. Frank has had three books published: *If you faint, fall backwards!*, *It all comes back to sheep* and *Why politics Dr?*

**Mrs Betty Roberts** OAM, Social Issues Convenor for the Catholic Women's League Australia Inc, is the founder of Pregnancy Support. She is also a founding member and life member of the Board of Caroline House, a home for women suffering addiction. She is also founder and director of Holyoake Tasmania, a program for the parents, spouse, children and friends of people with addiction. She is the first Tasmanian director and currently 'fellow' of Drug Free Australia. For the past six years Betty has been the social convenor for the Catholic Women's League Australia Inc. She is married to Noel Roberts and they have eight children.