



The U3A Crier

NEWSLETTER OF NATURALISTE
UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE INC

AUTUMN 2022

FROM THE EDITOR - AND CHAIR

Wow! What a start to 2022 in my new role as Chairman (under our Rules) aka President. Firstly, a big thankyou – again – to Joan Parke (who has also passed the role of Editor for *The U3A Crier* to me) for her tireless efforts on behalf of all of us as members of Naturaliste U3A.

I hope you all survived (in good ways!) the Festive Season and managed to have some fun with family and friends. You may have heard about the *Listons' Nonholiday Saga: another Covid Melodrama*. We didn't cruise, we were forced into hotel quarantine, we were shut out of WA whilst in quarantine, we survived, we stayed safe, we missed Enrolment Days (sorry!), we arrived the night the border opened, we survived (again) self-isolation until we had yet another negative PCR and were released into the community on February 13th. What about you?

Tell us your stories for our next edition of *The U3A Crier*. Gwyn Cracknell's *Into Poetry* group has provided something on the topic for us. See page 7.

Some of you will know about the dilemmas of our 'choice' to be conservative and ask all of you to show evidence of Covid vaccination. So I contemplated the meaning of 'Pro-choice'. I enjoy research and was not surprised to find that the origin of 'Prochoice' is around abortion, not vaccination. Generally, people who identify as 'Prochoice' believe that everyone has the basic human right to decide when and whether to have children.

On another tack, new 'mandates' are seen to 'violate the right to bodily privacy', be 'coercive' and 'demeaning', and attempt to celebrate 'responsible' people who follow the rules, and shame the 'irresponsible' who do not. These comments don't relate to vaccines. They were written in the mid-1980s by an American really riled up about what he saw as overbearing new laws requiring people to wear seatbelts. For many this wasn't about how effective seatbelts were, it was about the government telling people what to do. Restricting choice. If governments can mandate this, what else?

So, in relation to vaccination for Covid, the language has been adopted by people who declare they are 'pro-choice' not anti-vax. Is this a valid reason not to be vaccinated? Using the 'my body my choice' argument by those who are anti-Covid vaccination appears to be intentional. Or is it about being asked to provide evidence. Either way it has been problematic for the Naturaliste U3A Committee and some Course Leaders. "Pro-choice', co-opted from controversial debates, and

repurposed to express hesitation, ends up amplifying the vaccine scepticism” three researchers who are exploring vaccine confidence wrote. They cite the phrase “my body, my choice” and explain that it’s being used by US groups resistant to the vaccine to “promote their own agendas”.

Professor John McMillan from the University of Otago and Editor of the *Journal of Medical Ethics* suggests that both of these debates appeal to a central and important ethical consideration and that these momentous decisions are simply not akin to saying no to a safe and effective vaccination.

He suggests four reasons why people don’t get vaccinated:

- Ideological opposition (which exists on the far right and far left side of the political divide).
- A belief in ‘freedom of choice’.
- Risk-to-benefit ratio. When people weigh up the risks of getting vaccinated versus the risk of catching Covid-19 and just decide not to bother.
- Uncertainty. They just don’t know enough.

<https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/explained/127300075/covid19-nz-the-prochoice-argument-againstvaccines-explained> accessed 13 February 2022

There has been resistance to vaccinations since at least the late 18th century when the British physician Edward Jenner began to promote them as a prophylactic measure against smallpox. One of Jenner’s contemporaries, the caricaturist James Gillray, famously lampooned people’s fears by imagining how cows grotesquely begin to sprout from the limbs and faces of the newly vaccinated.



A satirical cartoon by James Gillray *The Cow-Pock—or—the Wonderful Effects of the New Inoculation!*, published in 1802. Wikimedia Commons accessed 13 February 2022

Further, Professor McMillan points out that for many, or perhaps most of us who decided to accept the vaccine, it wasn't a particularly hard or significant choice. He believes that when it comes to abortion or assisted dying, there isn't (broadly speaking) "radical disagreement about the evidence underpinning the debate". Despite what some people say, the 'pro-choice' vaccine argument just doesn't hold the same sort of clout.

This is a useful segue into talking about one of my other hats as a Hospice Volunteer. At the end of last year I came across this wonderful opinion piece (well, actually, David McDonald put me on to it!). It's about Voluntary Assisted Dying (VAD) laws. Or lack thereof in this case – in NSW. Many of you will be aware that VAD became lawful in Western Australia on 1 July 2021. More about that later.

Here's the article by 95-year old Ted Raftery, lecturer with the Central Coast U3A who wants to die on his own terms.



Accessed from the *Sydney Morning Herald* online website 20 November 2021 11:35am

I'M 95 TODAY - AND I DON'T NEED A YOUNGSTER LIKE OUR PREMIER TELLING ME HOW I MAY DIE.

In describing his negative position on euthanasia, Premier Dominic Perrottet revealed a major problem within himself that he probably has not yet recognised – his youth. This in itself is a strength. It can power his enterprise, ambition to achieve – but also it can cloud his perspective.

As someone celebrating his 95th birthday on Thursday, I do not claim the wisdom of age but I sense a much longer perspective. Now, as I face my end in a year or a couple of years' time, I have one simple desire. All I want is to have the right to live and the right to die in my own time.

That I am personally healthy, not ready to die at this time, is irrelevant. However, I demand my right to make my own decision. I am not telling the Premier – or indeed the state Labor leader, also opposed to the assisted dying bill before Parliament – what they should decide to do when they are my age. That is not my business – as my decision should not be theirs.

However, preventing a law that would allow me to have that freedom is incredible. It is ludicrous that a youngster like Perrottet, 39, can assume he knows how it feels to be old.

More importantly, though, I am not alone. I am a member of that growing cohort of The Ancient – 75 to 100 years old. We all share an ever-sharpening perception of death on our journey. This is not necessarily a frightening prospect in itself, but there is terminal pain, isolation, bereavement, lack of control of bodily functions, poverty, all experienced by many of our members in their later years.

Is palliative care the answer? There is only one person who has the right to make that decision.

There is another fundamental point for our prime legislator to consider: What is the law? Simply put, it is a community sanction to prevent one person harming another. And who is harmed by the decision of another person to end her/his life in a reasonable fashion with family by the bedside?

Euthanasia – like the right-to-wed issue confronting Malcolm Turnbull four years ago – is one of those perennial ethical problems that transcend party politics. So the political answer is usually a conscience vote and the one thing we didn't vote for in the last election was a candidate's conscience. The problem then remains: how to gauge the attitude of an electorate on an ethical problem not covered in party politics.

One could look at opinion polls, with 75 to 80 per cent popular support for euthanasia. Imagine a national census that asked Yes/No questions on ethical positions, allowing political candidates to call up the responses by postcode. Our Premier also describes euthanasia as a problem created by an uncaring society. It is not. It is a problem caused by some people who deny other people a fundamental right.

In the last few years we have had a societal revolution in this country. Social achievements such as: abortion rights, recognition of the rights of LGBTQ, the rise of women, the uncovering of institutional rape of children.

Who wants to keep us chained to the past? The dinosaurs marching down Macquarie Street with anti-euthanasia banners. Please, just get out of the way. There is a social revolution going on around you – you are being left behind. It is embarrassing to see grown-ups acting like this.

I believe our Premier is a good man, an honest man, but a truly honest man will recognise that he must accept his own frailty. In this case, the frailty of his youth. He is, like virtually all other politicians voting on the assisted dying bill, under 75. And what is the age group that will be most affected by their decisions? Over 75. Who will speak for them?

Twenty years ago I was 75. Then, I did not sense the urgency of death. Now I do and I say to our politicians: Recognise your ignorance and defer to old age. Not to the sagacity of old age but to its reality.

ABOUT A MOTHER AND SON ...

On a poignant yet somewhat amusing note, farewelling your mother at the funeral home can have a lighter side for those of us with a quirky sense of humour. Some of you will recognise this particular son, photographed by his brother after their mother's funeral, pondering why this bin is positioned just outside such a venue!!!



Thanks to the photographer (David McD) and Garry McD for giving permission to publish this photo!

So, thinking about what Ed wants

WHAT IS VOLUNTARY ASSISTED DYING (VAD)?

The main purpose is to provide for and regulate access to voluntary assisted dying. VAD is legal in Victoria (from 2017), WA (July 2021) and Tasmania (from 2021), and will be in Queensland (from 2023) and South Australia eventually. But not NSW or the Territories! For Western Australians, the *Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2019* can be accessed at

https://www.legislation.wa.gov.au/legislation/statutes.nsf/law_a147242.html

Voluntary assisted dying involves a process to access medication and to enable a person to legally choose the manner and timing of their death. Put simply, voluntary assisted dying means that some adults can now ask for medical help to end their life if they have a disease or illness that is so severe it is going to cause their death and their suffering cannot be relieved in a manner tolerable to them. The term 'voluntary assisted dying' emphasises the voluntary nature of the choice of the person and their enduring capacity to make this decision.

<https://ww2.health.wa.gov.au/voluntaryassisteddying> accessed 13 February 2022

A number of information sheets are available via

https://www.healthywa.wa.gov.au/Articles/A_E/End-of-life-care

In brief summary, there are ten major steps in the process beginning with a first request from an eligible person (18 and over; Australian citizen or permanent resident; ordinarily resident in WA for at least 12 months; diagnosed with an advanced, progressive disease, illness or medical condition likely to cause death within 6-12 months. The eligible person must have decision-making capacity and act voluntarily and without coercion. The request will be enduring.

Check out the fact sheets on the WA Department of Health website for detailed information, including a comprehensive seven-page FAQ document.

As Hospice volunteers we are well-briefed on the Law and all of the guidelines. We can talk about whether we wish to engage with those accessing the process. From my experience (very limited!) so far it can be sobering yet rewarding to be engaged.

Colleen Liston.

ANY IDEAS FOR TOPICAL TALK TOPICS THIS YEAR?

Friday 18th March President of the Margaret River U3A, Jenny Bunbury, will talk about their Anniversary celebration plans (they are 10 in March), what they are doing and how Nat U3A assisted them to get going!. They have a large program again this year (25 courses, 12 new). Her husband, Bill, will talk about the course he is running: *The evolution of the Australian Novel* and how he plans to contribute to our new *Social History Talks* course to be run on Tuesday mornings from 9:30 – 11 in Second Semester (postponed from Semester One). **SEE ATTACHED FLYER.**
August (Date to be confirmed) Exploring the Canning Stock Route

ENROLMENT REPORT:

Yeah!! Well done everyone (except the Listons!)

A big thankyou to everyone on our Committee for assisting with enrolments online, at Nova Village on 19th January, and The People Place on 21st January. We have 176 members! So **CONGRATULATIONS** to each one of you for re-enrolling and a hearty welcome to our new (or returning) enrolees.

THERE ARE FIVE NEW COURSES:

CLAY PLAY - Joan Parke

CRYPTIC CROSSWORDS - Richard Liston

STOICISM - Lorraine Watts

THRILLER/CRIME BOOK CLUB - Jacinta Lee

and a blast from the past: **INTO POETRY** - Gwyn Cracknell, described as 'An introduction to the joys of poetry, how poetry is "caught not taught". Questions to be explored will be "what is a poem?", " what are poems about?" "why are poems for?" and "how can I write poetry?". Our aim will be to make poetry more accessible and more enjoyable. This entails not only reading but writing. Your own poetry. Roses are Red, Violets are Blue, Most poems Rhyme. This one doesn't.'

Here's a short version of Pam Ayres' poem on the Corona virus given to us by Gwyn
I listened to it on: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/p08msqp6> ENJOY!



I'm normally a social girl,
But lately with the virus here
You see, we are the 'oldies' now,
If they haven't seen us for a while,
They'll never know the things we did
There wasn't any FaceBook
We may seem sweet old ladies
But we grew up in the 60s –
So here you find me stuck inside,
I finally found myself again,
It didn't really bother me
I'd bake for all the family
So, let's all drink to lockdown
And hope this awful virus
We'll all get through the crisis
Just hoping I'm not far too wide

I love to meet my mates
we can't go out the gates
we need to stay inside
they'll think we've upped and died
before we got this old
so not everything was told
who would never be uncouth
if you only knew the truth!
for 4 weeks, maybe more
then I had to close the door!
I'd while away the hour
but I've got no flaming flour!
to recovery and health
doesn't decimate our wealth
and be back to join or mates
to fit through the flaming gates!

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Tuesday 1 February Semester 1 commenced

Friday 18 March **Topical Talk** Margaret River U3A President Jenny Bunbury

Friday 15 July Semester 2 Enrolments, The People Place (13 July Nova Village)

Feedback is welcome to secretary@u3anaturaliste.com.au

Thanks to **Pauline Rockley** for printing copies and mailing to postals.



Naturaliste U3A Topical Talk

Our first Topical Talk for 2022 will be presented by Jenny and Bill Bunbury.

Jenny Bunbury, President of Margaret River U3A, will talk about their 10th anniversary celebrations and the role NAT U3A played in establishing the MR U3A.

Husband and well-known ex-ABC presenter Bill Bunbury OAM will outline a new course he is running for their group: *The evolution of the Australian Novel*.



DATE: Friday 18 March 2022

TIME: 2.00pm – 4.30pm

VENUE: The People Place, 19-21 Kent St, Busselton

PLEASE RSVP to secretary@u3anaturaliste.com.au or phone/text Janet on 0448 776 337

Light refreshments served and all guests are welcome.

Gold coin donation for Busselton Hospice Care.



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