



Media Release

Euthanasia Book Banned

On Sunday 25 February 2007, the Classification Review Board of the Australian Office of Film and Literature Classification announced The Peaceful Pill Handbook authored by Dr Philip Nitschke and Dr Fiona Stewart had been refused classification.

The reasons given for the Refused Classification status include the book “instructs” in the crime of the manufacture, possession and importation of barbiturates. In addition the Board states that instructs in offences under Coroners’ legislation in all states and territories.

Speaking from Los Angeles, book author Dr Philip Nitschke says that the book neither instructs nor encourages. Rather, the book is a source of information about end of life options, in the absence of any voluntary euthanasia laws.

“Ten years ago the Australian government took away the world’s first Voluntary Euthanasia law. Last year they banned Australians from using the telephone, fax, email and Internet to seek information about end of life issues. Now they have taken to banning and burning books.”

“This is the most serious set back for those right to die activists ever in this country. The Office of Film and Literature Classification is supposed to be the independent umpire on matters of free speech. The backflip displayed today by the OFLC can only lead one to conclude that they are an instrument of government, and only too willing to do the bidding of the Attorney General, Philip Ruddock.”

The review of the book came about after the Attorney General and Right to Life Australia appealed the Office of Film and Literature Classification’s initial “Restricted Classification Class 1” ruling of December 2006, which allowed the book to be sold under strict conditions. This appeal set a precedent – no other book on end of life issues has ever been banned in this way

“Free speech is dead in Australia. The government’s attempt to push ideas, words and speech underground sets a dangerous precedent. Elderly and seriously ill Australians will now be amongst the most disadvantaged in the western world when it comes to access to end of life choice information” says Dr Nitschke.

Since its launch in Canada in September, the book has sold over 3000 copies globally with more print runs planned for the USA in March. Despite the Australian ban, the book will continue to be sold in all other countries around the world. The book’s classification is also currently being considered by the New Zealand Chief Censor with a verdict pending.

For Information: Dr Fiona Stewart 0417-398-401 or Dr Philip Nitschke 0407-189-339
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