

OMID ENDS HIS LIFE IN SWITZERLAND

Omid T has been the subject of a legal challenge to the UK law. MDMD has been supporting this case since it was first brought by Omid's legal team in March 2017. Those close to him were aware for some time that Omid was suffering beyond the level he could endure. It was therefore not surprising that he chose to go to Switzerland to end his life. He eventually achieved the end he wanted but he struggled far too long and faced huge legal and logistical difficulties. This made an inevitably sad and unpleasant situation intolerable. Our thanks go to Omid for his courageous campaign. Our sympathy and understanding go to his family.

A week after Omid's death his legal case was rejected by the high court. More information is on our website in a number of articles eg www.mydeath-mydecision.org.uk/omid-ends-his-life-at-lifecircle-in-switzerland/

GUERNSEY ... AND NOW JERSEY

Earlier this year a campaign in Guernsey attempted to get a right to die law passed, modelled on the Oregon approach (restricting access to those with six months or less to live). This was rejected in May by the Guernsey parliament by 24 votes to 14, following a 3 day debate. However, a new campaign is now underway in Jersey. The Jersey campaigners do not want to be restricted to the Oregon model and seek a broader discussion which can avoid some of the problems of the Oregon approach. They have requested help from MDMD and others to support them. Although our campaign is focused on England and Wales, MDMD is doing what it can to advise and support the Jersey team.

TAKE 10 MINUTES TO TALK TO YOUR MP

Although they don't always show it, MPs are human beings, and if their hearts and minds are with us then the law will eventually change. A face-to-face conversation at your local MP's surgery works best, as it is not easy for a politician to dismiss someone sitting across the table sharing their story. Take ten minutes (or longer, if your MP is generous!) to talk to your MP about why end-of-life-choice is important to you and what they can do to help. Contact details are available at: www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/mps/ If you are unable to attend in person, a phone call, personalised letter or personalised email are good alternatives. Email Carrie Hynds on campaigns@mydeath-mydecision.org.uk if you would like to know where your MP is likely to stand on assisted dying legislation, want advice on how to handle the conversation, or if you have talked to your MP and would like to report back. Carrie will collate people's experiences, good and bad, so that we can identify sympathetic politicians, help persuade those on the fence, and know where the points of objection are in order to counter them effectively.

MDMD APPOINTS A CAMPAIGNS AND COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER

We are delighted that Keiron McCabe started work on 1st October. His time is split between this position and a Right to Die Campaigner role for Humanists UK. He will be boosting our media presence, providing much needed help and expertise for MDMD's voluntary team. Keiron is based in the Humanists UK offices and can be contacted at keiron.mccabe@mydeath-mydecision.org.uk MDMD is very grateful to Humanists UK for their support in enabling this role, and to the generous donor who made it possible. We strongly retain our independence and our openness to supporters of all faiths and none.

MDMD/FATE MEETING OCTOBER 13TH

MDMD Patron Prof. A C Grayling's talk was both provocative and amusing. Taking his cue from stoic philosophy he argued that death can be liberating; that the right to life is really a right to a life of a certain minimum quality; and that when that quality is no longer possible it follows that there should be a right to a peaceful death. Description and audio of the talk is available here:

<https://www.mydeath-mydecision.org.uk/info/lectures/oct-2018-acgrayling-lecture/>

The talk was followed by a screening of unique footage of Omid's final moments at Lifecircle. The relief on Omid's face, his relaxed manner and the speed and peace with which he was able to end his life with medical assistance were very moving.

UPDATE ON MDMD PLANS FOR INCORPORATION

MDMD is currently an unincorporated body with a single page constitution. This brings severe limitations – not least in the fact that Executive Council (EC) members have personal liability. Insurance cannot cover everything. This was a key driver for the AGM confirmation of progressing to form a company limited by guarantee, with a full constitution, as such an entity will be recognisable to the outside world (e.g. funders) as having the set-up for good governance.

Planning for incorporation, the Organisation Sub-Group (OSG) has done a great deal of work since the AGM on a new management structure for MDMD Ltd. There are eight prospective members of the first board (seven of them existing EC members), with task allocations according to their respective skill sets. The proposed roles are:

Chief Executive Officer (Chair of the Board)

Chief Financial Officer

Chief Operations Officer (and company secretary)

Membership and Transformation Director

Campaign Policy Director (accountable for overall strategy),

3 Associate Campaign Directors for Medical, Political, and Disability issues.

Alongside that, the OSG has developed a set of memorandum and articles (i.e. a constitution) and is developing policies for the new entity. The constitution is based on that recommended by the Charity Commission for companies limited by guarantee. MDMD Ltd cannot itself be a charity because it is a political campaigning group, however as it will be a not-for-profit organisation it makes sense to adopt an approach akin to that of a charity.

To avoid the situation that has arisen at Dignity in Dying, which has limited its aims, the OSG has included provision for the removal from membership of MDMD of anyone who fails to support its full objectives.

To sign off on the OSG's work, lawyers have been appointed, who will also help with the transition from the current body to a registered company.

In the coming months, existing donating supporters will receive full explanatory papers along with the Executive Council's recommendations for dissolution of the existing MDMD and the formation of the new one. In practice, it is expected that there will be little noticeable change in MDMD's interface with its members (as they will be called) and other supporters.

FROM OUR WEBSITE...

New stories on our website provide thoughtful comment on right-to-die issues, promoting a serious discussion of the underlying issues. Some of the new articles added to our website include:

News that The Economist published a series of excellent essays by many notable figures on both sides of the right to die debate, including from MDMD's patron and founder Dr Michael Irwin.

<https://www.mydeath-mydecision.org.uk/economist-essay-series-on-assisted-dying/>

The Scottish parliament changed their definition of “terminal illness” as it relates to some benefits. Doctors successfully argued to remove any time limit, leaving the decision to them. This is similar to Canada’s assisted dying legislation, where this is permitted for people whose death is “reasonably foreseeable”. This should have welcome implications for a Scottish assisted dying bill <https://www.mydeath-mydecision.org.uk/scottish-parliament-removes-time-limit-in-definition-of-terminally-ill/>

The case of Dr David Goodall who travelled from Australia to end his life in Switzerland aged 104 <https://www.mydeath-mydecision.org.uk/dr-david-goodall-104-travels-from-australia-for-a-good-death-in-switzerland/>

An inspirational BBC Ideas animation by philosopher Nigel Warburton titled “Should we be able to choose our own death?” <https://www.mydeath-mydecision.org.uk/should-we-be-able-to-choose-our-own-death/>

NEXT LONDON MEETING

The next FATE/MDMD meeting will be held at 2pm on **Saturday 27th April 2019** in the Sarah Fell Room at Friends’ House, 173-177 Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ. Provisionally the speaker will be Kathryn Tucker, Executive Director, End of Life Liberty Project in California.

Please note that *advance registration for this meeting is essential*. Confirmation of the speaker, title and registration details will be sent to supporters in due course.

QUOTES

“I am deeply honoured to be a patron of My Death, My Decision. I think this organisation has a real opportunity to start afresh with our thinking and arguments about Assisted Dying.” Prof A C Grayling in his lecture to MDMD October 2018. <https://www.mydeath-mydecision.org.uk/info/lectures/oct-2018-acgrayling-lecture/>

“In Holland, Belgium and Switzerland, [medical aid in dying is based on] intolerable suffering – you don’t have to be expecting to be dead in six months. Have Holland, Belgium and Switzerland fallen apart, has society collapsed as a result of this ‘evil’? No.” Retired Neurosurgeon Henry Marsh Reported in the Independent. <https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/health-and-families/health-news/surgeon-backs-good-death-plans-and-reveals-his-own-10204415.html>

“I’m not frightened of dying, but I am frightened about the way I die”
Helen Johnson, (James Howley’s partner who ended her life in Switzerland)
Reported in Daily Mirror
<https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/dignitas-devoted-man-dying-partner-12450953>

“I am 104 years old so I haven’t got much time left anyway. I might as well not have [my health] getting worse and worse, making me unhappy as it goes.”
Dr David Goodall Reported in Daily Mail
<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-5695623/David-Goodall-Swiss-clinic-slams-Australia-euthanasia-laws.html>

You can contact us by email to mail@mydeath-mydecision.org.uk