

From: **Jacqueline Laing**

Subject: **Letter Update**

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In **Briggs v The Walton Centre NHS Trust & Another [2016] EWCOP 53**, Mr Justice Charles concluded that it was in the best interests of war veteran, Paul Briggs, to have tube feeding and fluids terminated. A side effect of withdrawing food and fluids, it was accepted, was that after several days he would die of dehydration.

Paul Briggs was not in a persistent vegetative state. He was not even dying. He was clinically stable and he was minimally conscious. In order to survive, like all of us, he needed food and fluids. Tube feeding and fluids were classified as "life sustaining treatment" in the controversial case of **Airedale NHS Trust v Bland [1993] AC 789**, and it is this technical terminology that obscures the reality that a severely disabled, non-dying man was dehydrated to death, in what was declared his "own best interests".

Paul Briggs may have been the first man formally to be sentenced to death for being "minimally conscious" but now he won't be the last. We can now expect medical killing to be rationalised further by financial, medical, political and research interests undermining the rights of severely disabled people to be cared for, fed and hydrated.

Dr Jacqueline Laing
BA LLB (ANU) DPhil (Oxon)
Barrister, High Court of Australia, Solicitor, England & Wales
Supervisor, Hughes Hall, Cambridge