

# Opinion OURS & YOURS

## War story has connection to our world today

The book *Ordinary Women* is an epic generational tale from World War II that was written on Bruny Island

Around Christmas in 2002 a truly unique book was launched in Hobart. Titled *Ordinary Women*, it featured a bleak cover photograph of a bombed German city, Dresden, and on its back flap a drawing of author Edward Kynaston by the legendary cartoonist Michael Leunig.

As a lifelong haunter of bookshops I should have known about it, but it never registered on my radar.

Then a few weeks ago, scanning shelves at a family member's home I came across this 489-page volume about three generations of a German family.

The book's Tasmanian connection is intriguing. It was written on Bruny Island by Edward Kynaston, previously literary editor of the "lean and nosy" 1970s newspaper *Nation Review*, where he met and befriended Leunig. The publisher was Dover-based Esperance Press.

The "ordinary women" of the book are a family of Dresden residents.

They're ordinary in the sense that they once lived normal lives, but the oppression and cruelty of the Hitler regime and the terror and deprivation of total war bring out the extraordinary in them.

There is a disconcerting parallel between those times and now.

Leading today's rise of populism and autocracy is the US, the country that for 80 years gave weight and energy to the causes of human rights, democracy, world order and the rule of law.

Those causes are now being up-

**Peter Boyer**



ended by the Trump regime. For all the war memorials and Anzac Days in this country, most of us see territorial war as a scourge suffered by others.

That's certainly true for me, born just after the last big one ended and a lucky loser in the dreaded 1960s Vietnam conscription lottery.

As the author says at the outset, *Ordinary Woman* is a real-life story – "only the characters are fictitious".

As such it's an exceptional social history of an advanced industrial economy under a totalitarian dictatorship.

Well-informed by his direct connections with the family in question, Kynaston's elegant, uncluttered writing draws the reader into the ugliness of fascism and war.

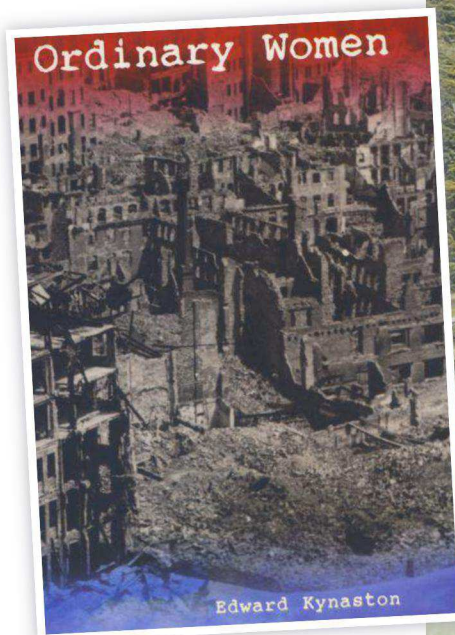
The book includes a hilarious put-down of the Hitler salute at a Berlin cabaret in late 1943, when the Nazis were starting to look like losers.

A family friend recalls a man standing silently on stage and raising his right arm in the familiar pose.

After a pause one audience member – "some party member I should think" – stood and raised his arm.

Others in the audience followed one by one, in awkward silence.

Among the few holdouts left sitting was the storyteller, who recalls that finally the man on stage beamed at

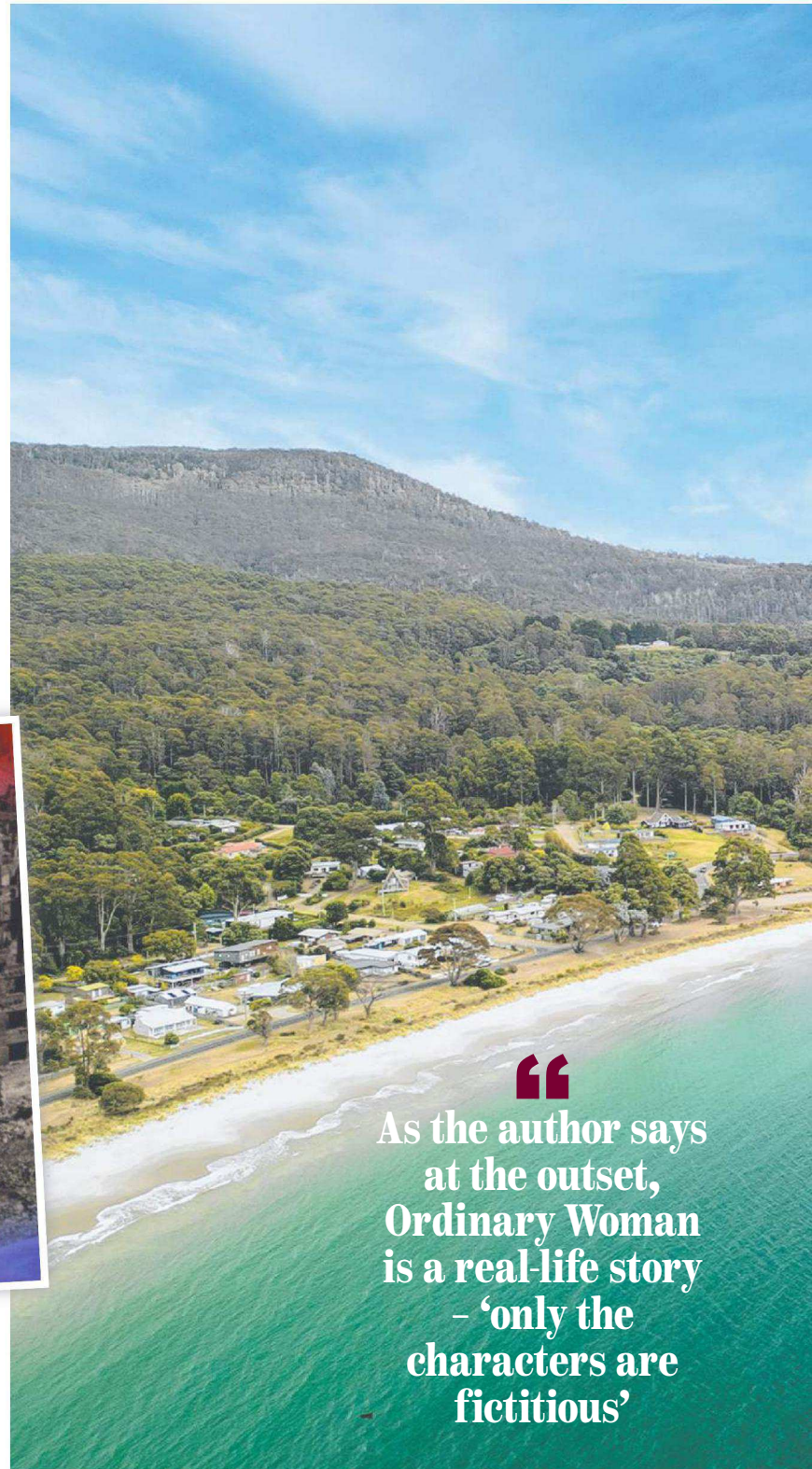


the audience and said, "That's how high my dog jumped today" at which "everyone collapsed roaring with laughter, and with relief, I shouldn't wonder."

Horrific as it is, the territorial warfare of today has not yet sunk to the awful depths of the Nazi holocaust and World War II.

Dresden, a jewel of medieval Europe, had escaped the war virtually intact until British and US aerial firebombing in February 1945 killed around 25,000 inhabitants.

The Dresden story was brought into sharp focus in the classic 1969 novel *Slaughterhouse Five* by Kurt Vonnegut, a prisoner of war in the city when the bombs fell. *Ordinary*



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*Women* tells of the even more immersive experiences of families living there long before, during and after the bombing.

It was no accident that *Ordinary Women* emerged as a book on this side of the world.

The last of those three Dresden generations, represented by the character Anita Brook, emigrates with her remarkable mother, Erna, from Germany to Australia in 1948,

grateful, as the story says, "that the long shadows that still live over Europe do not reach this far."

The real-life name of the fictional Erna was Lida Richards-Segar. Anita was her daughter Petra, and as the book says they emigrated to Melbourne, where Petra met and married Welsh-born Harvey Williams, aka Edward Kynaston.

The pair moved to South Bruny where the book was written in a house

## Griefline provides support without fear of judgment

I was stunned to hear on our local TV news recently: "AFL Hall of Famer Robert Walls has passed away after choosing to use voluntary assisted dying."

With one eye on my computer and the other on the TV screen, I looked up in surprise, wondering if I had heard correctly – so casual, as if it was so normal to be publicly acknowledging a voluntary assisted dying death like that.

Voluntary assisted dying is a different kind of death.

One in which the individual's

Voluntary assisted dying is a different death and brings a unique grief, writes **Robyn Maggs**

autonomy is respected. Where choices are made by them, rather than the medical profession upon which they depend.

A death where it is possible to specify the day and time that one wishes to die.

To choose the people, the music, the surroundings. My favourite: the property owner who took the substance surrounded by his sheep.

Grief comes in many forms.

As a clinical psychologist, I worked differently with the young mother whose baby had been stillborn; the mother whose son died in a car accident; the grieving man whose wife had dementia; the vet devastated by the suicides of two of his colleagues and alarmed at how common suicide was in his profession.

I was sent, from time to time, elderly people who lived alone who were grieving the loss of their much-loved dog.

As Australia began its tentative voluntary assisted dying (VAD) steps, it was thought that VAD grief might be the same as, or less than, or greater than, normal grief.

There has been growing recognition that VAD can introduce unique grief and bereavement challenges for families, friends and carers. And that it can be difficult to access grief counselling professionals.

While those who choose the compassionate gift of voluntary assisted dying speak of the relief that can bring, there can be challenges for their family and friends.

They are dealing with their loved one's suffering; dealing with the anticipatory grief involved; helping navigate the sometimes complex VAD process; and, in spite of strong support for VAD throughout Australia, may be coping with animosity from family or community members who oppose VAD.

This can become a distressing factor in more dysfunctional

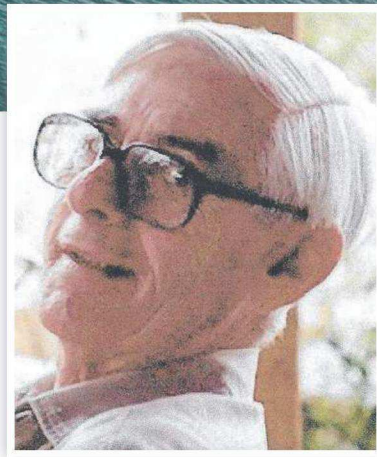


## Talking Point

The hot topics that have Tasmanians talking  
Have your say, email [talkingpoints@themercury.com.au](mailto:talkingpoints@themercury.com.au)



Ordinary Women was written on Bruny Island by Edward Kynaston, inset, previously literary editor of the 'lean and nosy' 1970s newspaper Nation Review. Picture: Supplied



looking west over a tranquil channel. Both died on the island, Edward in 2000 and Petra in 2004.

"An epic in the true sense of the word ... a story of such overwhelming power that it lodges permanently in the reader's mind" was how Penguin Australia editor Sophie Hamley described Kynaston's text in a 2001 reader's report for her employers. But they passed up the challenge to publish.

Ordinary Women may not be a book for everyone, but it's an outstanding primer for understanding today's world.

Esperance Press is still publishing Tasmanian literature, and your favourite bookshop can still obtain copies. Or you can order direct by googling the publisher's name.

**Peter Boyer is a former journalist and public servant. He writes mainly about the science and politics of climate.**

# for those affected by voluntary assisted dying choice

families, where communication is difficult. Research that interviewed family members and carers was undertaken in Victoria.

There were mixed feelings about the quality of grief counselling available and it was felt by participants that VAD-specific grief and bereavement services would be welcomed, given the uniqueness of the situation.

The uniqueness of VAD was echoed by a number of respondents, who commented that they felt unsupported after the VAD death.

In response to national requests

for support with VAD-related grief, Dying with Dignity Victoria partnered with Griefline, Australia's national free grief and loss support service, to develop and fund a groundbreaking pilot of VAD-specific grief and bereavement support groups.

Today, Griefline is the only organisation in Australia providing dedicated grief support for people affected by VAD.

Go Gentle Australia has confirmed that while Lifeline plays a vital role in crisis support, it is unable to provide ongoing grief

support for people affected by VAD. Griefline reports that they have already received a number of self-referrals to the VAD Support groups from Tasmania.

Now in its second year, the program provides free, online post-VAD support groups – a six-week program (two hours per week) – as well as pre-VAD online drop-in sessions (one hour per month) for the families, friends and carers of people seeking VAD.

Groups are facilitated by a Griefline grief and bereavement counsellor and supported by a

Dying with Dignity Victoria lived-experience peer.

Together, they provide "a safe space for you to connect and share with others who can relate to the uniqueness of loss and grief associated with VAD".

Participants from across Australia have said the groups helped them feel less alone in their VAD-related grief. Griefline also plans to develop a meaning-centred therapy program specifically designed for people considering VAD.

The Griefline link is [griefline.org.au/get-help/vad-](http://griefline.org.au/get-help/vad-)

support-groups or simply google VAD Griefline.

As increasing numbers of Tasmanians with a terminal illness choose a VAD death, the ripples spread through those around them: family, friends, carers, professionals and others.

For those who need it, during or after the journey, Griefline provides support without fear of judgment or misunderstanding.

**Robyn Maggs is a Tasmanian clinical psychologist who is working in the area of voluntary assisted dying.**

## 'Safe as banks' – does it still hold currency?

Victims of cyber crime aren't guaranteed to be compensated, writes **Terry Aulich**

**J**ust when you thought banks were able to guarantee your funds against the shocking effects of cyber criminals stealing the lot, there are now doubts about two things.

Are banks really able to deliver their much-advertised promise to thwart the criminals who prey on the average customer and are they willing to be on your side and actually compensate and restore your stolen money?

Banks are closing branches almost on a daily basis, encouraging customers to do all their banking online.

That does make for convenience but it also loses some of the security that can quite frequently be done better in a face-to-face transaction especially where the staff already know their customers.

Now that online migration is well underway, the criminals, many of them from rogue countries like North Korea, Russia and Iran, are also changing the way they operate.

Their goals are twofold. One is to simply steal money through a variety of online techniques, the other is to undermine the stability of our service systems and especially our financial systems.

The latest scam is very professional indeed. The hackers ask for your co-operation in catching the criminals who at this very moment are invading your bank accounts.

All the victim needs to do is to give the supposed government's Cyber Security Centre access to the victim's accounts so that the criminals can be tracked and thwarted in real time.

Great service from the government. The harried and upset victim is persuaded to co-operate

and they allow the fake government agency to trawl through their financials even allowing their passwords or biometrics to be used to catch the criminals in the act.

The victim complies with the request, in some cases thinking that biometrics like retina, finger, face and other scans will provide temporary protection.

The fake government Cyber Security Centre operator even sets a time like seven in the morning when the money will be returned and the criminals caught or traced.

Seven o'clock comes. The victim returns to their computer or mobile, logs on and all their money is gone.

The rest is history, or is it?

The bank will restore and compensate the victim for the theft?

The answer is, not necessarily.

If the victim has been duped into co-operating in any way with the scamming criminals, there are cases where the bank either is slow to compensate, fails outright to restore the stolen money or makes the victim jump through so many hoops they often give up.

Unfortunately in Australia, the customer does not have the victims-of-crime protection that customers in the UK have.

There, banks are required to restore accounts and compensate in almost all cases of cyber crime. Safe as a bank seems to have some meaning there.

It's time that our banks fulfil their side of the bargain, unless of course they want to re-open branches and provide face-to-face service again.

**Terry Aulich is a Hobart-based privacy specialist who writes the international privacy guidelines for biometrics**