

Anti-war protester proud of paint job

TEN years on, one of two protesters who painted a No War slogan on the Sydney Opera House says he has no regrets.

On March 18, 2003, Briton Will Saunders, 42, and Hunterman David Burgess, 33, climbed up the sails and applied three coats of red paint in their protest against the looming Iraq war.

The act landed the activists in jail for nine months of weekend detention for malicious damage.

It also split the country between those shocked by the vandalism of a national icon, and others who supported the anti-war message.

"It was a message that really spoke what most Australians were feeling in their hearts that morning when George Bush went on TV to give Saddam [Hussein] 24 hours to leave Iraq," Mr Burgess said yesterday.

Mr Burgess said the ensuing court process and controversy was a taxing experience.

"It was a pain in the butt for all of us, but 10 years later, thinking about the support we had, even in court – we can sit pretty comfortably with it," he said.

Mr Burgess said the greatest endorsement of their protest came from the Danish architect who designed the Opera House, Jorn Utzon.



FOR ALL TO SEE: Sydney Opera House staff attempt to remove the graffiti after it was painted by the anti-war activists.

He sent the activists two autographed photographs of the Opera House before his death in 2008.

The No War slogan and worldwide protests against the US-led 2003 invasion of Iraq reflected people's opposition to a military operation based on the premise of eliminating weapons of mass destruction, Mr Burgess said.

Meanwhile, former Defence Department Secretary Paul Barratt, now president of the Campaign for an Iraq War Inquiry (CIWI), said an inquiry was needed into why the Howard government sent Australian troops to Iraq.

"Overwhelming opinion around the world was at the time, and remains, that the war was illegal, that is, an act of aggression," he said. AAP



NO REGRETS: War protester David Burgess says he's comfortable with his action a decade ago against the war in Iraq.



MARC RUSSO

Device may help relieve bad pain

By ALISON BRANLEY
Health Reporter

A NEWCASTLE pain specialist and his patients have been involved in major research into the use of a new spinal cord stimulator that helps patients with chronic back pain.

Dr Marc Russo and his internationally renowned pain management colleagues presented the results of their review into the use of the Senza medical device at The Australian Pain Society's annual scientific meeting in Canberra on Sunday.

The spinal cord stimulation device uses high-frequency waveforms to treat hard-to-treat pain in the back and limbs.

Doctors implant a small battery pack in patients that sends 10,000 high-frequency signals a second along a small electrical lead embedded in the spine to the affected area.

The waves extinguish the pain signal at the spinal cord before it gets to the brain.

The research examined 280 cases in Australia, including 70 in the Hunter.

Low-frequency systems have been used since the 1960s but this is the first system to have success with high-frequency waves and has led to significantly reduced pain-killer use among patients.

"It appears this is a very promising pain reduction technique," said Dr Russo, who runs the Hunter Pain Clinic at Broadmeadow.

Right to die debated

Greens MP slams 'religious' views

THE NSW Greens say people whose religious views are blocking voluntary euthanasia laws are making the lives of vulnerable people even more wretched and should butt out.

"It's time they recognised they are in the minority and got out of the way," Greens MP Cate Faehrmann said.

Her comments came as she launched a photo book and an online video promoting voluntary euthanasia yesterday as part of her campaign for a Rights of the Terminally Ill Bill, expected to come before

Parliament later this year.

NSW Premier Barry O'Farrell will allow a conscience vote if the laws are debated.

"I've indicated that if it should come up, members of the Liberal Party will have a conscience vote," he said.

Mr O'Farrell declined to outline his own views, saying it would come down to the laws introduced.

"These are complex matters.

You wait to see the legislation, you wait to see what's being proposed, and then you make a decision," he said.

The latest Greens campaign shows Loredana Alessio-Mulhall, who is in the advanced stages of multiple sclerosis and wants to die at a time of her choosing.

"She represents a growing movement of people who are experiencing first-hand how

cruel our laws can be," Ms Faehrmann said.

"Loredana is given every assistance to live an increasingly undignified life, yet society is turning its back on her when all she is asking for is the right to die with dignity."

Ms Faehrmann said Ms Alessio-Mulhall could not take her own life because she had lost the use of her limbs.

And if a loved one assisted

her to die they could be tried for manslaughter or murder.

"There could not be a more stark example of how unjust and senseless the law is in this area," she said.

"It's time those people with strong religious views who are blocking the passage of voluntary euthanasia laws recognise their views are making some very vulnerable people's lives even more wretched."

State and federal parliaments have refused at least four attempts to legalise euthanasia in recent years. AAP

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