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Renewed push for exclusion zones in NSW

A bill aimed at preventing "sidewalk counsellors" talking to women considering abortion is again being pushed for debate in the NSW Parliament.

Labor MLC Penny Sharpe says that she will attempt to further the *Summary Offences Amendment (Safe Access to Reproductive Health Clinics) Bill* as part of her stated intent to protect women who access services at reproductive health clinics from 'harassment' and 'intimidation'. Similar laws are already in operation in Victoria, ACT and Tasmania, and the Northern Territory has also recently passed similar legislation.

Ms Sharpe says that "women trying to access reproductive health advice and abortion clinics should not have to run the gauntlet of people who try to stop them with physical harassment and verbal abuse".

However, the people the bill is targeting are hardly advocates of harassment and intimidation. Most sidewalk counsellors primarily pray or provide information to people attending abortion clinics, promote alternative services and options, and counsel those affected by unplanned pregnancy.

The importance of this kind of work was acknowledged in the United States when the Supreme Court there struck down similar legislation. As Michael Quinlan wrote in *Catholic Weekly* last year, once women know they can access other forms of help, many choose alternative options.

Additionally, existing laws in NSW already prohibit threatening, intimidating, and offensive behaviour, so there is no need for extra legal protection in this regard.

The bill may undermine freedom of speech and religion, and may infringe on an individual's freedom of political communication as has occurred elsewhere.

Pro-lifers Kerry Mellor, 76, John Popplewell, 76, and Ken Clancy, 79, are currently having their case heard in a Canberra Magistrates Court after being charged under exclusion-zone laws simply for silently praying outside an ACT abortion clinic last year.

However, a decision handed down by the High Court last October may also influence the passage of the NSW bill, when former Greens leader Bob Brown successfully challenged a conviction for protesting in a logging exclusion-zone.

In the case of *Brown vs Tasmania*, the court held that provisions in the Tasmanian Protestors Act placed an undue burden on the implied freedom of political communication by using exclusion zones to ban environmental protesters at forestry sites.

If the Sharpe bill passes, laws stipulating 'safe zones' of 150 metres around health clinics would come into effect in NSW.

Anti-slavery bill introduced into NSW Parliament

In response to a recent NSW parliamentary inquiry into human trafficking, Christian Democratic Party MLC Paul Green has introduced an anti-slavery bill into NSW Parliament.

Mr Green, who also chaired the committee, said modern slavery is often hidden, and manifests itself as human trafficking, forced labour, forced marriage and debt bondage.

"I believe in doing all I can to see this blight removed from our society," he said. "Everyone: man, woman and child – particularly women and children who are severely disadvantaged by this barbarous trade – deserve to live free from servitude and slavery."

FamilyVoice NSW State Director Aaron Wright commended his efforts.

"I think for most of us, we consider slavery as one of the sins of the past," Mr Wright said. "Sadly, it is a dark reality – even in Australia. It is encouraging to see the Hon Paul Green taking the lead on this issue."

'Sanctity of life' motion defeated in Senate

On 14 February, former One Nation now independent senator Fraser Anning introduced a motion calling on the Senate to recognise the sanctity of life.

The senator also introduced a second motion calling for funding to provide counselling services to women considering abortion.



Senator Fraser Anning

While acknowledging that abortion is "a divisive and emotional issue that affects our entire community", he explained his reasons for moving the motions.

"Queenslanders have come to me with concerns that women in a vulnerable state may not have the support that they require before, during and after a pregnancy," he said.

Senator Anning's move received considerable support from some conservative senators, including Eric Abetz, Cory Bernardi and Lucy Gichuhi, but was unfortunately condemned by a number of Greens and many other senators, leading to the motions' defeat.

Anning alluded to a certain level of hypocrisy in their stance:

"We have seen certain members of the Socialist left express outrage over the destruction of animals, yet will advocate for allowing the termination of a human life," he said.

"The attacks on our Christian heritage and traditional values are increasing day by day, we should not be ashamed to stand up and protect what we hold dear."

Highlights from our religious freedom submission

Australia's growing multicultural make-up, along with the increasing secularisation of public life and the media, has given rise to dismissal, and in some cases hostility, towards those who hold strong religious views.

Despite the fact many Australians have traditionally been raised with cultural values based in Christian values, our society is gradually abandoning their Christian faith in exchange for a humanist worldview.

This situation, underscored by the fallout of the same-sex marriage debate, has highlighted the absence of clear legal protections for many of the fundamental freedoms we have traditionally taken for granted.

It is in this context that FamilyVoice prepared a submission for the Ruddock-led review into religious freedom in Australia.

Our submission detailed a number of issues facing people of faith in modern Australia, emphasising the encroachment of anti-discrimination laws upon freedom to express religious convictions in the public square.



Here are some of the main points highlighted by our submission:

- Australians remain free to express what they believe so long as parliaments do not pass laws that infringe these rights, but there are no protections in place to prevent infringement from occurring;
- Parts of anti-discrimination law represent a direct assault on religious freedom by prohibiting some conduct that may be required to give effect to religious beliefs. Religious beliefs generally make moral distinctions between right and wrong, between good and bad, whereas anti-discrimination laws may declare conduct giving effect to such moral distinctions to be unlawful;
- When religious freedoms and equality norms clash, Australian commentators and policy makers increasingly question the place of "exemptions" for religious groups in anti-discrimination law;
- Where they were originally intended to support access to social goods for minority groups, anti-discrimination laws are now increasingly focused on self-identity;
- Anti-discrimination laws commonly include exemptions for religious beliefs, practices or organisations. However, some exemptions have proved to be inadequate and have denied people the right to act according to their conscience; and,
- There is a growing push to expunge exemptions for religious groups from anti-discrimination laws, further inhibiting religious expression.

Comprehensive protections for religious freedoms need to be enshrined in law. The massive number of individual submissions to the inquiry (over 16,000) demonstrated that growing secularisation and the absence of protections together present a threat to peace and cohesion within our society.

Cultural Leadership Symposium UK – preparing for the next horizon

In late January, FamilyVoice National Director Rev Ashley Saunders travelled to London with National Development Officer and Tasmania Director Jim Collins. Their purpose was to deepen connections with like-minded Christian organisations in the UK, as well as to learn from those standing firm for God's view of life in a rapidly changing society.



Dr Joe Boot

"We met with a series of senior leaders – sharing insights on our work and hearing their inspiring stories and predictions on what we may face in the West in coming decades," Mr Saunders said.

The trip was a busy time of meetings, interviews and a parliamentary briefing – with a conference rounding off the time.

"It is so important to recognise the global nature of the issues we now face," Mr Saunders said. "Britain's amazing impact on the world was founded on biblical values – but that is being eroded at an astonishing rate.

"We were warned that the West faces difficult days, and church leaders cannot afford to compromise or ignore the cultural realities. We met brave everyday Christians – teachers, prison chaplains, school principals and parents – who are living out their faith with God's extraordinary grace. They have simply stood and He has helped them shine."

While in London, our team took part in Christian Concern's Cultural Leadership Symposium on education.

Wilberforce Academy Director Dr Joe Boot has accepted the invitation of FamilyVoice as keynote for a national tour this November.

"Joe's ability to unearth biblical practical truth and help inspire faith into the lives of the next generation is wonderful", Mr Saunders said.

"We're looking forward to equipping Aussies to do likewise later this year!"

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GPO Box 9894, Sydney NSW 2001
phone: 1300 365 965 fax: 08 8223 5850
email: office@fava.org.au www.fava.org.au

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Rev Ashley Saunders

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Deeper wisdom shapes generations

It's getting harder for parents to properly supervise and train children in the wise use of technology, as children are increasingly teaching their bemused mums and dads the finer points of computing. Perhaps for the first time in history the young know more than the old as far as technology and innovation are concerned.

However, with the acceleration of progress must come a matching wisdom, otherwise we may find technology brings a blight instead of a blessing.

Of great concern, therefore, is the ever-increasing risk to young people of internet pornography, and this has led to legislation in the UK for age-verification controls on adult websites.

Yet there are already many calling for these controls to be scrapped, alleging that such impositions will merely drive teenagers into using the so-called "Dark Web".

However, while wrong-doers will always try to circumvent regulation, it would be absurd to scrap the positive and indeed educative functionality of this law.

But a deeper question relates to why our culture is producing a generation that is losing respect for parents and abandoning the values that have served our society well – values such as loving our neighbour and the recognition that human beings are inherently valuable and deserving of respect for self and for others.

Love for our neighbour has implications to ensure that what happens to the children next door is good, right, safe and secure. Recognition of the dignity of humanity has implications for the way we raise children in the family and at school.

Instead of effectively ushering children into accepting twisted and harmful sexualities in the guise of anti-bullying curricula, our government and our schools would do well to restore respect for parental rights in education, and to encourage families towards values highlighting the dignity of the individual and the importance of community.

Children who are raised to know the love of God, and the neighbourly obligations that flow accordingly, are less likely to resist the wise discipline of the family, the school and the law.

And when it comes to the online world, they will handle technological changes and challenges more wisely, according to the values that have shaped their character. And in being confident in their own dignity and value, they can then extend that confidence into becoming positive role models for their peers – actively shaping future generations.

Transgender swim night 'divisive'

By Reverend Ashley Saunders, National Director FamilyVoice Australia

In February of this year, Melbourne's Darebin City Council hosted a trans-only swim night at a local community pool.

Only those identifying as transgender were able to attend, along with their families. According to the organisers, the event was about "providing indoor pools where trans and gender diverse people can exercise, socialise and feel safe". However, the event has proved controversial, with some members of the community seeing the event as divisive. And they are right.

The fact is, events like this are not just about accommodating a self-described "marginal" group; perhaps this wouldn't be such a problem.

The transgender movement is, in fact, highly political, and it seeks acceptance for its radical views about the basis of human identity – claiming that your sexuality is whatever you claim it is, regardless of what the evidence says. And these claims can change shape and shift with little or no logical reasoning.

Ideological shifts currently taking place in the transgender movement illustrate the point. The American Psychological Association (APA) has begun to speak in language that actually reverses the basis of a person's sex. Their recent publication, *Answers to Your Questions about Transgender People, Gender Identity, and Gender Expression*, expresses the view that a person's sex is something that is "assigned" at birth, and that an inner "gender identity" is the true basis of a person's sex.

In a recent appearance before a federal district court, Dr Deanna Adkins, a professor at Duke University who also heads up a child and adolescent health program, stated, "From a medical perspective, the appropriate determinant of sex is gender identity."[1]

According to Adkins, "It is counter to medical science to use chromosomes, hormones, internal reproductive organs, external genitalia, or secondary sex characteristics to override gender identity for purposes of classifying someone as male or female."

How a medical scientist and doctor can argue this on a logical, scientific basis is unclear, not least because social scientists and gender activists have so recently been insisting that gender is a social construct, while sex represents biological fact. Now, it seems they want to argue the other way around.

The contradictory nature of such "medical" and "scientific" testimony should lead us all to consider the transient basis of the transgender movement's ideological foundations, and to be wary of what may be required of us next.

Therefore, we should be very concerned about democratic and representative bodies, such as councils, being caught up with such a spurious ideological agenda.

If it's a closed door, transgender-only swim event today, just what agenda-driven scheme will the council be swept up by tomorrow?

All citizens should be treated equally and be given equal access to public facilities – regardless of gender, ethnicity, sexuality or background. To do otherwise is simply to promote segregation and division within the community.

1. Ryan Anderson, 'Transgender Ideology Is Riddled With Contradictions. Here Are the Big Ones', *The Daily Signal*, February 08, 2018.



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Revitalised in Witness – lessons from the '59 Billy Graham Crusade

Billy Graham visited Australia and NZ for four months in 1959. This Crusade, his first of three, was, at a national level, perhaps the closest Australia has come to what could be described as a revival.

By Karl Faase

In the Australian culture of 1959, it was not usual for people to go and hear an American preacher. In fact, the last US evangelist in Australia before Graham rolled up his huge tent and left Melbourne after the site was hit by stink bombs.

Nevertheless, Graham's '59 visit was the first and most significant of his three Australian crusades (also in 1968 and 1979), and the numbers of people involved in preparation, attendance and response were astounding.

Many in our churches today are sceptical of the effectiveness of this style of mass evangelism now, suggesting we have "moved on" from that approach. While this may be an acceptable view, it could also be helpful to look closely at the '59 crusades and consider why they made such an impact.

Preparation

Preparation across the nation resulted in surprisingly large numbers of people getting involved. Counsellors were trained for the crusade meetings in their thousands. There were also volunteers for the support roles and massive choirs. So great was the response to the call for choirs in Sydney that there were two separate choirs each with 1,000 people.

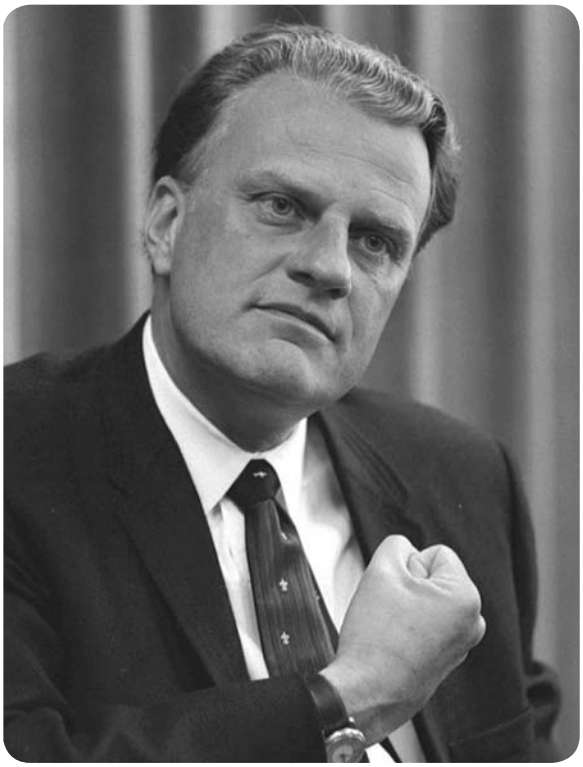
The churches prepared their local areas by surveying homes to gauge the spiritual state of the nation. The *Sydney Morning Herald* reported that at least 300,000 of the 500,000 homes in Sydney at the time were visited and surveyed.

Prayer was mobilised in incredible numbers for these crusade meetings. There were local cottage prayer meetings as well as large gatherings. By April 1959 there were 40,000 prayer partners in prayer for the Crusades across Australia.

Numbers

There were 114 meetings in 106 days across Australia and New Zealand, with meetings held in Melbourne, Hobart, Launceston, Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, Perth, Adelaide, Brisbane and Sydney.

To gain an understanding of the interest in these Crusade meetings, the Melbourne story gives a clear picture. The meetings started at the West Melbourne Stadium which held 7,500 people. When 10,000 turned out they realised the venue was hopelessly inadequate, so they soon moved to the Sidney Meyer Music Bowl. On the first night at this new venue 25,000 people attended. This grew to 70,000 on the Sunday afternoon. Sadly, due to the yearly Moomba festival the Crusade meetings had to be moved again. Even with a poor venue and unseasonable rain and cold weather the following meetings had attendances between 18,000 and 25,000.



Evangelist Billy Graham, who passed away recently aged 99

The final Melbourne event turned out to be history-making. Held at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, a staggering 143,000 people attended. To this day, this still stands as the biggest crowd ever to assemble at the iconic venue.

The Melbourne story was repeated across the country, with an overall attendance of three million. Many thousands more heard Graham preach on radio, television or in cinemas. They read about him on the front page of the newspapers, and landlines relayed services to over 400 remote and regional communities throughout Australia.

Response

At the end of the Crusades, a conservative number of enquirers who walked forward was 146,000 people. So, what happened to those enquirers and did these responses make a difference to our nation?

Those who made a response at the meetings were referred to local churches. Some churches had an enormous number of referrals, and in most cases they stayed on as members. St Stephens Presbyterian Church on Macquarie Street, Sydney had to hire an extra minister to deal with the influx.

Societal Influence

While statistical coincidence doesn't necessarily mean causality, some statistics that correlate with the timing of the 1959 Crusade may give us a glimpse into its impact on people's lives. There was a brief halt in the increase of crime for 1960-6, and 1960 recorded the slowest growth in the number of ex-nuptial births in a decade.

Another profound impact was on people's life and career decisions. The impact in theological colleges training people for Christian ministry was felt almost immediately. Overall, there was a widely-reported "deepening of spirituality" because of the Crusade.

The 1959 Billy Graham Crusade in Australia had a remarkable impact at the time and an ongoing long-term influence. This was not just the result of one great preacher coming to town. It was the outcome of the church working together, sustained prayer, an anointed preacher who presented the Gospel in ways that could be clearly understood and without apology, outstanding organisation and the power of the Spirit of God at work in the lives of those who heard the message.

Whilst it would be foolish to try to replicate these events, it is a challenging reminder of what God can do when we focus on the Gospel and work together for Kingdom outcomes.

Edited with permission from the following article: http://www.crossover.org.au/revitalised-in-witness-the-lessons-from-the-billy-graham-crusades-of-1959-pt-3/