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New euthanasia push in QLD, ACT, TAS

Queensland Labor is expected to push an assisted-killing agenda after the party's mid-2017 state conference backed the dangerous Oregon and Victorian model.



Victoria's euthanasia bill passed in November 2017, and provided it receives royal assent, deliberate killing of the terminally ill, rather than symptom management, will be legal in Victoria from mid-2019.

With the formation of a Labor government in Queensland expected as VoxLink goes to press, the likelihood of euthanasia laws being introduced in that state have increased. At its state conference last year Queensland Labor adopted a policy platform in favour of introducing euthanasia legislation, preceded by a parliamentary inquiry.

ACT Chief Minister Andrew Barr is calling for a select committee to investigate establishing a similar euthanasia scheme in the ACT.

Federal Greens leader Richard Di Natale confirmed his party would push for national laws to be changed next year to allow the territories to legalise euthanasia and to lift the import ban on euthanasia drugs.

Tasmania's Greens leader, Cassy O'Connor, has also promised to reintroduce euthanasia legislation if any Greens candidates are elected at next year's state election.

In Western Australia, a parliamentary inquiry continues to make its way through more than 700 submissions on euthanasia. The head of the Australian Medical Association, Michael Gannon, warned WA again on Monday not to follow Victoria's lead, saying a 2015 survey showed the majority of doctors opposed it.

Children euthanised in Canada

And on the overseas front, euthanasia has been legal in Canada for just over a year and pediatricians are already "increasingly" being asked by parents to euthanize disabled or dying children and infants, a survey by the Canadian Paediatric Society (CPS) has found.

Bill C-14 envisaged euthanasia for individuals of at least 18 years of age assessed to be suffering intolerably from a grievous and irremediable medical condition, and with natural death reasonably foreseeable.

But the Commons Justice Committee added an amendment to the bill directing the federal government to review expanding euthanasia on three further grounds: for children, or "mature" minors; solely for mental illness; and allowing advance directives in the case of those with degenerative diseases such as dementia.

The CPS surveyed 1050 pediatricians on their experiences with "medical aid in dying" or MAID, and released a report at the end of October.

Forty-five doctors reported receiving explicit requests from parents to euthanize 91 children, it said. More than half of these requests were for "neonates or infants under a year old."

A further 118 pediatricians had "exploratory" discussions about euthanasia with parents of 419 children.

As for requests from the children themselves, 35 paediatricians reported discussing euthanasia with 60 minors. Nine reported receiving direct requests for euthanasia from 17 minors.

Half of QLD voters want abortion illegal: poll

Queensland voters are divided on the question of abortion, according to a ReachTell poll conducted before the recent election.



Overall, 49.9 per cent of respondents said they would vote for their preferred candidate if that candidate wanted access to abortion to remain a criminal offence.

LNP voters were the most likely to support their preferred candidate if the candidate wanted abortion to remain a crime, with 62.1 per cent agreeing, compared with 42.5 per cent of Labor voters, 20.9 per cent Greens and 59.7 per cent One Nation.

The pre-election poll of 1255 Queenslanders, commissioned by anti-unborn group Fair Agenda, showed more than two thirds of voters thought the criminal status of abortion was "very important" or "somewhat important" when deciding how to cast their vote.

In other related election news, roughly one in every 12 votes did not count in some parts of Queensland but the electoral commission has stopped short of blaming a major change to preferential voting for a statewide increase in dud ballot papers.

The informal vote count from the recent election was as high as eight per cent in some electorates near Ipswich, according to the Electoral Commission of Queensland.

Across Queensland, informal votes almost doubled from the 2015 election, jumping from 56,000 to a little more than 100,000, or 4.16 per cent. That was just shy of the five per cent informal vote at the 2016 federal election.

The Labor government introduced compulsory preferential voting in 2016, meaning electors would have to number every box, notionally giving the ALP an advantage in seats with Greens voters who might otherwise have just ticked a box.

Toowoomba spearheads 'porn free city'

The Sunshine State's City of Toowoomba has reaffirmed its pledge to be "porn free" at a rally on 1st November, following a year of awareness-raising.

The mayor of the city of Toowoomba, Paul Antonio, was one of 200 civic leaders, students, and workers who gathered to hear stories of the personal and harmful impact of pornography, and to read a pledge promising to fight against the spread of pornography.

Mayor Antonio admits that the phrase handed out on cards to men at a Toowoomba park—'I will help create a city free from porn'—is idealistic, but he's committed to the cause and championing healthy relationships.

"I dare say there will be some negative comments about it," Mayor Antonio said. "But we must begin a journey with one step. I think what we've focused on today is the real value of proper relationships. Pornography has no place in that."

A city of more than 100,000 residents, Toowoomba is referred to as the Garden City and is known for being a family-friendly community. It is also home to several adult shops, a brothel and a strip club – though its mayor said the 'city free from porn' push was not aimed at those businesses.

"We're not talking about the people who are visiting the brothel or going along to the strip club," he said.

"We're talking about the people who are impacted by pornography, and its impact on relationships. A proper relationship is the most beautiful thing a human being can have. I don't think pornography has any place in a proper relationship."

Social science research has revealed that married couples who watch porn are twice as likely to divorce as couples who do not, and watching porn has been known to contribute to some sexually aggressive behaviour.

Queensland Labor 'Safe Schools' agenda appears 'fluid'

By Dr Kevin Donelly

Prior to the election, Queensland Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk argued that the Marxist-inspired Safe Schools gender and sexuality program is not being taught in Queensland's schools and, if re-elected, her government had no plans to impose it on students.

The LNP, in its election policy, says that if it wins government it is committed to "withdrawing the Safe Schools Coalition resources from Queensland schools" and implementing a general anti-bullying and anti-discrimination program.

Who to believe? Based on the ALP's 2017 state platform document Putting Queenslanders First, it's clear, while not specifically mentioning Safe Schools, that a Palaszczuk government intends to force schools to adopt similar radical gender and sexuality programs. These are programs and resources that a commonwealth inquiry found unsuitable for students and that have been withdrawn from schools interstate, except for Victoria, the Albania of the south under the Andrews ALP government. The Palaszczuk platform document says an ALP government would "invest in professional development, training and ongoing support for school principals, teachers and support staff so that they can support lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer/questioning students".

Couple that with the ALP's plans to "reduce discrimination, harassment, abuse and bullying against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer/questioning students" and it's clear who to believe.

The only comfort is that the ALP's gender and sexuality policies are not as extreme as the Greens'. A watermelon party that argues gender, instead of being genetically determined, is a "lived" social construct where individuals, including schoolchildren, can self-identify as whatever gender they desire.

It's not just gender and sexuality where the two major parties differ. The LNP is committed to giving schools greater autonomy over decision-making based on research that proves flexibility at the local level raises standards.

Queensland Labor promises to stop funding the program and to undertake a review. This review, no doubt, given its reliance on the support of the Australian Education Union, would return schools to inflexible, bureaucratic control. As an example, instead of letting schools choose staff best suited to their culture and mission, the ALP document states teachers will be chosen by a "a statewide staffing system".

Dr Kevin Donnelly is director of the Education Standards Institute and author of Dumbing Down. This article was first published in The Australian, *22 November 2017, and was reproduced with the author's permission.*

QLD election survey surprise

After years of non-participation the Queensland Labor Party completed the FamilyVoice election survey a few days from the voting date.

"For many years in Queensland and elsewhere we have not received survey responses from the ALP," said FamilyVoice National Director Ashley Saunders.

"We commend the ALP for its renewed democratic cooperation, even though the party scored poorly."

The ALP achieved a total of 39 points out of a possible 100 in the FamilyVoice survey, while the LNP gained 68. The LNP was strongly committed to parliamentary prayer, as well as opposing euthanasia and decriminalising abortion. Both parties committed to freedom of speech, but scored poorly on religious freedoms, prostitution and a safeguard for adopted children. The ALP scored slightly higher on parental rights in schools.

Read more at survey.fava.org.au

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Conscientious freedom isn't discrimination

The limited freedom provisions in the Dean Smith Bill approved by the ALP, the Greens and many Coalition Senators would permit religious marriage celebrants and religious organisations to decline involvement in same-sex wedding ceremonies.

This means that there is a degree of respect for the beliefs of celebrants or churches who do not wish to endorse the re-definition of marriage against their conscientious beliefs.

However, there are other parties, family, friends and businesses who contribute freely or for hire to the day's celebrations and whose whose wish is to commend male-female marriage but not so-called same-sex matrimony.

While marriage celebrants and ministers of religion operate in the sphere of civic authority in relation to marriage, there are many people including bakers, photographers and florists whose business activity is specifically informed by faith convictions about the true meaning of marriage. It is wrong for the state to force any individual or group to assist the celebration of marriage contrary to conscientious beliefs.

Moreover, case law provides no certainty to uphold the right of a religious body or business to not endorse a particular sexual ethic or view of marriage, according to lawyer and blogger Neil Foster, of LawAndReligionAustralia.blog

He cited a 2010 NSW Court of Appeal ruling that upheld the right of Wesley Mission to decline, on religious grounds, to place a foster child with a same sex couple.

In *Christian Youth Camps Limited v Cobaw Community Health Services* (2014), the Christian camp was fined for declining a pro-homosexual group due to inconsistencies in their policies but a 2-1 court majority ruled against fining any individual employee.

Few are aware that prominent UK same-sex activist Peter Tatchell thought that the decision against the Belfast-based Ashers Bakery in 2016 went too far in imposing a burden on religious freedom.

"It is an infringement of freedom to require businesses to aid the promotion of ideas to which they conscientiously object. Discrimination against people should be always unlawful but not discrimination against ideas and opinions," Mr Tatchell told *The Independent.*

Both this Irish decision, and a decision involving Masterpiece Cakeshop in Colorado, USA. and a same sex wedding, are currently on appeal before the final appellate tribunals.

Neil Foster warns that Australia already knows if the advocacy of the Christian view of marriage as designed only for a man and a woman will be attacked as "hate speech":

"Here we don't need to speculate," he writes, "as the notorious example of the action against Archbishop Porteous in Tasmania, for distributing to Roman Catholic schools a booklet explaining the Roman Catholic view of marriage, demonstrates.If Parliament enacts same sex marriage into law, then it must act to ensure that the 38% of Australians who were not in favour of the change in the recent survey are protected from this sort of litigation.

"At the moment it is only Tasmania that has such an over-broad provision as s 17 of its Anti-Discrimination Act 1998, prohibiting the causing of "offence" or 'humiliation. But similar legislation has been mooted in the Northern Territory. The Commonwealth Parliament ought to act to ensure that advocating for the traditional view of marriage alone is not caught by a law forbidding 'offensive' or 'humiliating' speech."

Mr Foster concluded, "A provision protecting the rights of small business owners to decline to apply their artistic talents to the celebration of a same sex wedding, if they have a genuine religious objection to doing so, would seem to be a sensible provision reflecting what has already been accepted in the Smith Bill."

We are stirred, but not shaken!

Following the result of the marriage postal survey, the Senate has passed the Dean Smith Bill to redefine marriage – without a single substantive amendment to better protect the freedoms same-sex marriage advocates have repeatedly said are not threatened. By the time this edition of VoxLink is received, it is likely the Bill will also have passed the Lower House, again, without amendment.

Meanwhile, in Victoria, the Government's euthanasia legislation has passed both Houses of Parliament, sending mixed signals about suicide, and failing both medical professionals and the vulnerable citizens in their care.

Having invested so much prayer, time, energy and financial support in standing for life and marriage, it is understandable that so many faithful Christians are now grieving the direction our nation is taking. In a sense, it is right and proper to do so: but remember that we do not grieve as those without hope.

Our hope lies not in our Western culture, nor in its institutions with which we have become familiar – indeed, not even in the institution of marriage as established by God in the beginning and affirmed by Jesus of Nazareth. Rather, our hope is, and always will be in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Perhaps like no other time in Australia's history, our nation needs strong advocacy that is Christ-centred, Biblically-shaped and Research-based – and FamilyVoice can only continue advocating with your prayerful and financial support. We remain thoroughly convinced that God's loving truth is not only good for Christians, but is good for all society.

Recent events have stirred our hearts and quickened our actions in defence of God's loving truth – and may our commitment to the Lord's cause not falter. Stirred, yes; but our faith in God's purposes is not shaken!

"You are the salt of the earth… You are the light of the world…" (from Matthew 5:13-14)

Ashley Saunders (Rev)
National Director
FamilyVoice Australia



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'For we are Dumb and Policed'



"For we are Young and Free." What a lovely line. I think of swimming at the beach, a cheering crowd at a concert, a happy family eating Christmas lunch.

By Campbell Markham

Or we might think of the freedom to live where we want, to study what we want, to work where we want, and to buy what we want.

Below these delightful tip-of-the-iceberg freedoms, lie the four foundational freedoms of conscience, assembly, religion, and expression.

Freedom of conscience is your freedom not to be coerced to act against your convictions about what is good and what is evil. Mel Gibson's 2016 movie Hacksaw Ridge, for example, celebrated the freedom of U.S. Marine Desmond Doss to bravely serve his country while not being forced to bear arms, something morally objectionable to him.

Freedom of assembly is your freedom to link arms with likeminded people, with people who share a common cause, and the freedom not to be forced to join a body whose convictions you don't share. In Australia, forced university student union membership is a blight, a gross contravention of this freedom.

Freedom of religion goes far beyond membership of a mosque, temple, or church. Everyone has a worldview, whether you are an animist, atheist, or agnostic. Everyone has convictions about what a human being is, why we are here, and where we are going. Freedom of religion is your freedom to live out your worldview, and not to be forced to act against it.

Freedom of expression is the freedom to speak your mind, to argue, to agree or disagree. In the French parliament in November Prime Minister Edouard Philippe spoke passionately in defence of Charlie Hebdo, threatened this week with death for its cartoons of a Muslim leader. "You cannot, in our land, challenge with impunity freedom of thought, freedom of expression, and even the freedom to caricature!" France is pretty proud of its liberté.

These freedoms are interlaced, integral to our humanity, and delicate. An attack on one freedom is an attack on them all. To make laws that muzzle a person, or force them to act against their conscience, is to violate their soul. And these freedoms cannot endure undefended. They can vanish in a moment, in a puff of mal-conceived legislation.

As our nation faces the possibility of legislation to redefine marriage in federal law, our freedoms are especially endangered.

In November, LGBT activist Rodney Croome's announced that "The politicians who supported the 'No' case should not be drafting the legislation."

Try looking past the imperious tone of this, and let Mr Croome's statement sink in.

In his opinion, a hundred dissenting men and women that the Australian public has chosen to represent them, specifically to write laws on their behalf, "should not" fulfil their sworn representative responsibilities.

This is thinly veiled totalitarianism. This is to say, "The people who write Australian laws should not be the people who have been democratically elected, but the people who serve my special interests."

Here is a man whose head is down, whose eyes are laser-focussed on the LGBT agenda, and who has lost sight of our democratic freedoms.

What makes this worse is what impels Mr Croome to make such statements. It is the appalling prospect, for him, that marriage redefinition legislation may include protections for Australians' freedom of conscience, religion, and expression.

Right now, anti-discrimination legislation hangs above the head of every Australian like the sword of Damocles. At any moment someone can isolate something that you have said or written or blogged or even just 'liked' and accuse you of causing offense or ridicule to a person who belongs to any number of protected classes.

If marriage is redefined, then the sword becomes a whole lot heavier for anyone associated with wedding services, and the thread a whole lot finer. If their conscience finds homosexual conduct to be immoral, and if their conscience forbids them from participating—with their goods or services or talents—in a ceremony that celebrates homosexual conduct, then they will have to change their minds, get out of business, or be prosecuted.

It doesn't matter that the rules of the game have changed around them, long after they opened their business. It doesn't matter that they can distinguish the obvious difference between refusing to serve a person for who they are, and refusing to facilitate an activity for what it represents. It doesn't matter that we already recognise and respect this distinction.

Freedoms will be crushed.

Many will shrug their shoulders at Mr Croome's statement. "An attack on freedom and democracy? Meh." But I hope for something better. I hope that we will wake up to our precious freedoms.

I don't want my grandkids singing "For we are dumb and policed." "Young and free" has a much better ring to it.

Freedoms report due in March

Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull said in November that a review into Australia's religious protections will be undertaken by an 'expert panel,' headed by former Attorney General Philip Ruddock.

The move leaves traditional marriage supporters in legal limbo until the panel reports in March 2018.

The panel includes Human Rights Commission president Rosalind Croucher, former Federal Court judge Annabelle Bennett and Australian Jesuit priest and human rights lawyer Frank Brennan.

Mr Brennan agreed with a United Nations Human Rights Committee report in November 2017 "saying that Australia's protection of religious freedom was deficient", according to an ABC Drive radio interview on November 22. He said that this view is shared by Australia's Human Rights and Law Reform Commissions, and in this legal framework "bearing in mind that Australia doesn't have a human rights act, there is a deficieny" of protection.

