ONPOINT

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NATIONAL NEWS & CURRENT AFFAIRS FROM FamilyVoice AUSTRALIA

Will some remain more free than others?



2020 is expected to see the Morrison government finalise its attempt to improve freedom of faith - that has been steadily eroded by anti-discrimination law and the quasi-judicial tribunal approach to solving the challenges of social diversity.

FamilyVoice Australia has long-opposed anti-discrimination laws as they contradict freedom of faith, speech, contract and association. We also vigorously decry the semi-juridical nature of tribunals that omit such settled principles of justice as the presumption of innocence, the impartiality of proceedings and the necessity of tangible harm (not just allegedly hurt feelings) as the basis for any complaint.

Taken together, those highly problematic approaches have brought a massive contraction to the very diversity their proponents sought to guarantee.

The 2004 finding against Daniel Scot and Danny Nalliah forced them to press their innocence all the way to the Victorian Supreme Court, so as to clear their names and uphold the right of religious expression in a process that took five years of bitter legal wrangling, much anxiety and untold expense. Who today would follow their example and make a firm critique of Islam?

When a Brethren Christian campsite in 2014 didn't want same-sex young people using its facilities, and found itself guilty of discrimination, the matter sent a powerful reminder that freedom of contract under the new paradigm makes some people more free than others.

Tennis champion Margaret Court could only have expected a point-for-point match with her opponents in the contest to define marriage. However, vigorous dissent was also accompanied by personal attacks from those who think her grand-slam achievement is no longer worthy of honour.

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But when the personal religious views of sporting champion Israel Folau led to his sacking by Rugby Australia, the outcry from mainstream Australia finally roused federal politicians to take action.

Time will tell how successful will be the modest reforms of fundamentally-flawed approaches to the inevitable clash of worldviews within the diversity of modern Australia, and whether some will remain 'more free' than others (vis a vis: George Orwell's prescient Animal Farm).

Asserting the common good

Missing in the debate on faith and freedom is the clash between the individual and the common good, and the management of competing claims between communities. While the rights of the individual must be valued, they cannot eclipse the common good. Nor should one group have rights greater than another. In the 2004 dispute concerning the Brethren campsite in Victoria, freedom for all should have prevailed: the freedom of young homosexual people to associate is one they can surely enjoy without having to name and shame the Brethren who want a similar freedom to associate on their own terms and in their own premises.

Interestingly, "the common good" may be discerned underlying the attempted reform of faith and freedom, though that phrase is rarely mentioned in our highly individualistic world. Indeed, the social good expressed by the people is the hallmark of Australian politics.



On this issue, the Morrison government's proposals may face little opposition from the ALP. The latter found itself seriously out of step with mainstream voters at the 2019 federal election and is consequently moving towards a centre of community position. For all its difficulties, compulsory voting forces politicians towards mainstream community opinion.

This issue has brought into focus the difficulty of our federal system, as states legislate one way on social issues and the federal government seeks to use external affairs powers to restrain extremes.

Nevertheless, having taken up the challenge to improve a fundamentally-flawed system, the Morrison government may be commended for at least seeking to defend freedom in its recently released draft religious freedom proposal.

- The bill seeks to defend the rights of religious groups (but it should be re-worked to protect the religious rights of all workers and not just some key professionals).
- The draft acknowledges freedom of conscience by treating religious charities (registered as public benevolent institutions) as religious bodies, regardless of their involvement in commercial activities. Why not grant such freedom to all charities and in fact to all groups?
- As a further reform, reference to "hatred' in any definition of vilification should be removed as a largely subjective sentiment.

While cautiously welcoming the proposed bill, it would be better if federal MPs cooperated in a bi-partisan manner, encouraging voters to urge State governments towards dismantling the failed tribunal system (in which the process is the punishment via repeated vexatious claims), and the flawed anti-discrimination response to social differences. That, at least, is our voice crying in the wilderness, for the common good.



State Roundup

NSW: Zoe's law postponed till 2020

Zoe's Law, a bill introduced by Rev Nile (Christian Democratic Party) has been adjourned to a future date early in 2020, to allow all MPs to put their positions on the record before the final vote. "Zoe's Law" is a proposal to create a new offence of grievous bodily harm to a foetus.

In other news, Mark Latham MLC and Rev Fred Nile MLC are jointly looking at religious freedom in NSW. On 17th October a Motion calling on the Parliament to affirm "its support for religious freedom and religious liberty throughout New South Wales" was passed unanimously in the Upper House (even the Greens voting in support).

This proposed NSW bill will supplement the federal bill but in addition the bill aims to fill any gaps left by the federal legislation making it stronger for the protection of Christian based organisation.

WA passes world's most dangerous euthanasia bill

The Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill 2019 represents the world's most serious threat to dying people, according to FamilyVoice WA Director Darryl Budge.

The Premier's self-proclaimed "safe" Bill had 55 amendments, including 12 from the Labor party. "Mr Budge said that the bill still has manifestly unsafe provisions, and that it is less safe than both the Victorian legislation and the inoperative NT legislation, citing the following points:

- A patient can self-administer the poison without any medical supervision, which means if there are any complications or foul play then no-one can intervene;
- Doctors are compelled to falsify the death certificate, which must not list euthanasia or doctor-assisted suicide as cause of death (a vote to change this clause was narrowly lost 17-18);

The WA government will fund an eight-person specialist team to supply on-demand suicide of dying patients in regional areas, but has refused to fund one on-demand palliative care specialist or nurse to go anywhere in WA. For this reason, FamilyVoice will pressure the government to establish a parliamentary standing committee into euthanasia and assisted suicide.

SA: Defending the foundations

State Director David d'Lima is clocking up the country miles, including recently speaking at Quorn Uniting Church on the 140th anniversary of the laying of its foundation stone. David d'Lima highlighted a deeper foundational theme - in Australia's Constitution that declares the people "humbly relying on the blessing of Almighty God".

"To preserve the culture requires a firm reliance on God's grace and wisdom, as noted by Australia's founding document," he told OnPoint. "Wisdom for family and community derives from giving God his right place in our lives, laws and institutions."

VIC: Ministering in churches

Australia's biggest youth gender clinic located at the Royal Children's Hospital in Melbourne is preparing to surgically remove breasts from girls aged under 17 who believe themselves to be boys.

"This tragic outcome of the Andrews' government's socialist push to overturn traditional and conservative values follows nine years of sexual and gender fluidity indoctrination in schools," said Victorian FamilyVoice Director Peter Stevens.

"In August the Parliament legislated to allow gender changes on birth certificates for adults and children, and now MPs are debating the Gender Equality Bill aiming for 'equality' targets in public sector organisations," he said.

"I'm busy raising these issues in churches across the State, exposing ideologically-driven madness and challenging it firmly with the life-changing gospel message."

Euthanasia – the good death hoped for in Queensland?

I listened closely at a Queensland Government Inquiry recently to expert witness Professor Luc Deliens of Belgium reporting on his professional knowledge, experience and opinion on Euthanasia in Belgium.

I noted the gap between the ideal circumstances he hoped for and the reality of what was happening. He hoped that a patient would be in the care of his or her own family doctor at the end of life, so that the patient had sufficient confidence in the doctor to have discussed euthanasia with them, to know they would be there in the end and that they would administer the final injection.

Professor Deliens acknowledged that some doctors might accept euthanasia but did not want to be involved. Some abstained on the grounds of conscience.

Consequently, hospitals were increasingly busy dealing with people scheduled for euthanasia. Also, the busyness of hospitals did not generally permit the personal, patient bedside support hoped for. Is this the good death hoped for?

MPs disturbed by 'unsavoury' porn evidence

A parliamentary Committee sat through disturbing testimony during the public hearing of its inquiry into age verification restrictions on accessing pornography online, in Canberra on 5th-6th December 2019.

Witnesses included anti-porn campaigner Melinda Tankard-Reist, well-known for her work with Collective Shout that helps young people affected by pornography.

Her presentation unsettled Committee chairperson Andrew Wallace (a Queensland Nationals MP in the federal seat of Fisher).

"This is very unsavoury to be talking about," he said.

"Welcome to our life!" said Ms Tankard-Reist.

"No, thank you," Mr Wallace replied.

"We haven't even read you out the worst content that we've found," Melinda said at a later point in the hearing, as her testimony continued.

The inquiry follows action by child-protection groups including Collective Shout and FamilyVoice Australia that has called on MPs to safeguard children from accidental and deliberate exposure to pornography.

About 18,000 FamilyVoice supporters and others signed a petition last year, urging the government to protect young people, by applying age-verification technology and ISP filtering, as is planned in the UK.

The House of Representatives inquiry is considering the bipartisan proposal in Britain to require age verification before online porn can be accessed. It would create civil penalties for suppliers of online pornography who do not verify the customer's age and mandate ISP-level blocking of non-compliant sites.

Hence the inquiry invited testimony from the British Board of Film Classification - a group designated as the Age-verification Regulator under legislation that remains stalled in the UK, partly owing to its European Union entanglement.



Melinda Tankard-Reist

BBFC representative Amelia Erratt told the committee 1.4 million UK children see pornography every month.

"First exposure is often accidental, and children as young as seven years old stumble across pornography online," she explained.

"It is vital to have age verification which is both robust and easy for consumers to use … as a child protection measure."

The Committee recommendations are expected in early 2020.

Leaving a legacy



Building a legacy involves living intentionally and aiming to build into the success and integrity of the next generations. It is about more than a material inheritance. It is about faith and values as a reliable guiding voice to live by.

This is our purpose at FamilyVoice and we invite you to partner with us by leaving a bequest to the FamilyVoice Guiding Voice Legacy giving program.

For more information, please contact our Bequest Director Greg Bondar on 0411 854 115 or greg.bondar@familyvoice.org.au

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We seek to proclaim the goodness and truth of the Triune God as revealed in His Holy Word the Bible, in the person of Jesus Christ, God the Son, and in creation. We promote God's wise ways for a healthy society where marriage is honoured, human life is respected, families can flourish and fundamental freedoms are enjoyed.

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