ON POINT

THE NATIONAL NEWSLETTER OF Family Voice AUSTRALIA

JULY 2019

Freedom at the crossroads



British social reformer Charles Bradlaugh said, "Without free speech no search for truth is possible… no discovery of truth is useful … Better a thousandfold abuse of free speech than denial of free speech. The abuse dies in a day, but the denial slays the life of the people, and entombs the hope of the race."

According to Sir Winston Churchill, "Some people's idea of free speech is that they are free to say what they like, but if anyone says anything back that is an outrage." The emotional attacks on Israel Folau highlight this.

Australia is at a crossroads. Defending free speech is now an expensive exercise more available to the most wealthy, high-profile and highly educated in Australian society.

Israel Folau has been vilified, sacked and attacked by the media and public personalities, simply for paraphrasing 1 Corinthians chapter six and the orthodox Christian gospel on Instagram. His case made religious freedom into an election issue, even though Scott Morrison sidestepped it in the televised leadership debates.

Tasmanian Senator Eric Abetz acknowledged that Folau helped the Liberal party's historic win, which arose out of a 100-year low to the Labor party's primary vote. Senator Abetz has backed Folau by urging the Fair Work Ombudsman and the Australian Human Rights Commission to examine if Rugby Australia's termination action breached any laws.

Folau's legal team has alleged that his termination breached section 772 of the Fair Work Act which makes termination on the basis of religion unlawful, and stated that his social media post was a "religious message" which communicated the word of God.

Folau stated in 2018, "I will not compromise my faith in Jesus Christ, which is the cornerstone of every single thing in my life."

NSW MP Mark Latham believes there is a greater principle at stake, as he tweeted, "We are all Folau... those subject to new workplace Feudalism where bosses think they own employee's private lives, words and opinions."

The importance of religious freedom was highlighted when Folau's legal fighting fund appeal raised over half of the $3 million target in just 24 hours, the day after GoFundMe terminated the first initiative.

continued on page 2 ▶

IN THIS issue

P2 Sex trade gains SA support
P2 A sad day for all Victorians
P3 An Open Letter by WA Palliative Care experts
P3 Resisting death culture in WA
P3 Forced abortion reneged
P4 From the National Director

Freedom at crossroads

◀ *continued from page 1*

Neil Foster, an associate professor of law in Newcastle, told The Gospel Coalition that if Folau wins his unfair dismissal appeal, it will help signal to employers that all people must be granted "freedom to speak in accordance with [one's] faith, even when saying something that offends" and dissuade reliance on "over-broad codes of conduct".

If Folau loses, Foster believes it will "send a message to corporate Australia that they can require uniformity of opinion on controversial topics." A loss may signal to employers that they can write stricter clauses into work contracts, controlling speech outside the workplace and stifling dissent from LGBT ideology.

Pro-freedom groups are urging federal MPs to protect the right of expression and of belief.

Mark Snedden of the Institute for Civil Society argues that the bipartisan response to the Ruddock Report ought to strengthen legal protections for the following:
1) Charities regarding views on man-woman marriage

2) The internationally recognised right of parents to have input into and withdraw their children from classes which contradict the religious and moral framework of the family.

3) Individuals threatened by the low bar (and subjectively defined) "insult or offend" prohibition laws.

4) Religious schools and organisations to employ staff, teach and manage their affairs (including through staff and student conduct policies) to maintain a community and ethos which reflects the values of their religion.

5) Amend the objects clauses in existing Commonwealth, State and Territory anti-discrimination legislation to reflect the equal status in international law of all human rights, including freedom of religion.

John Steenhoff of the Human Rights Law Alliance argues that any existing exemptions should not be surrendered. He proposes the addition of object clauses within anti-discrimination acts that affirm freedom of conscience, expression and religion. These freedoms ought to be recognised as pre-eminent as per the ICCPR Article 18.

ACTION: Go to FamilyVoice.org.au to urge your local Federal MP to act on these freedom issues.

State Round-up

SEX TRADE GAINING SUPPORT IN SA

Upper house members of the South Australin Parliament overwhelmingly supported the Greens' bill for legal brothels, passing the third reading stage on 20 June.

"The proposal, which alarmingly allows street prostitution outside schools, will proceed to the lower house, where we trust it will be rejected," said David d'Lima of FamilyVoice.

Strong arguments against the sex trade came from Liberals Dennis Hood and Rob Lucas, and from ALP MPs Clare Scriven, Tung Ngo and Emily Bourke.

"We will continue to campaign against this appalling proposal," David d'Lima said.

A SAD DAY FOR ALL VICTORIANS

Victoria's Voluntary Assisted Dying Act came into operation on 19th June, 2019, making Victoria the first Australian state to provide doctor-assisted self-killing of vulnerable people. Six-hour workshops have been held to provide guidelines for medical practitioners willing to assist in the suicides – brief training considering the emotional challenges to staff, doctor or patient, and problems that may arise in administering lethal drugs or safeguarding the dying process. Only registered health practitioners have the right to freedom of conscience not to participate in assisted suicide.

A number of matters remain unclear, according to FamilyVoice Victoria State Director Peter Stevens:

- What are the right of refusal by other non-health practitioners and staff involved in the death process?
- Who is responsible for ensuring the patient stops taking laxatives and other medications, fasts the required number of hours prior to ingesting the lethal dose, and turns off an implantable cardioverter defibrillator (ICD) if they have one?
- Who will advise the patient on how to use the suspension and sweet syrup, the lethal substances, and the tools?
- Have aged care services been suitably briefed on storage of the lethal substances in a resident's possession? What measures are being taken for the security of the substances, especially if unused?
- Do our overworked health services, residential aged care providers, health practitioners and other staff have time to properly convene the required planning meetings to discuss the 19 key areas of responsibility like 'staff capacity and willingness to be involved?"

Peter Stevens states, "This is bad, ideology-driven, harmful legislation. Once again, Victoria's legislators have failed to protect the vulnerable and must now live with the consequences of their awful decisions."

An Open Letter by WA Palliative Care experts

The following is an edited version of a open letter by a number of WA palliative care specialists published in May 2019.

The proposal to legalise euthanasia and assisted suicide involves a massive change in the ethics of our society. "Do not kill" is a foundational ethical principle which has been observed by every *civilisation* for thousands of years.

Euthanasia and assisted suicide are not medical treatments, and most emphatically not part of palliative care.

Unlike euthanasia, palliative care aims to provide total care (body, mind and spirit) for patients and support for their families. With modern medications and procedures, we can almost always control symptoms. In extreme cases, at the request of a dying patient and his or her family, we have occasionally used deep sedation to control symptoms that did not respond to the usual treatment.

Rarely, a patient will say to us, "doctor, I just want to end it all". Contrary to popular opinion, the reason for such requests is not pain, but despair and loneliness also called "existential suffering". Euthanasia is not a treatment for despair and existential suffering. Provision of holistic care by a skilled interdisciplinary team of health professionals enables patients and families to acknowledge and attend to distress within themselves and their relationships. The time before death offers unique opportunities for psychospiritual growth and allows for healing even without a cure.

According to the parliamentary records of 3rd April this year, Western Australia has the lowest proportion of specialist palliative care doctors of any state in Australia. We have 15 full-time equivalents for the state, less than one third the number required to meet national benchmarks.

According to the Honourable Jim Chown, whose motion was supported unanimously, WA needs at least another $100 million per year spent on palliative care for staffing and education, in addition to funding for infrastructure such as palliative care wards and beds.

We do not believe euthanasia or assisted suicide are solutions to suffering. We reaffirm our commitment to our patients: we will continue to care for you to the best of our ability, guided by your choices, but we will not kill you.

Signed by Prof Douglas Bridge; Dr Anil Tandon; Dr Derek Eng; Dr Ashwini Davray; and fourteen other doctors, four nurses and a pharmacist. Go to FamilyVoice.org.au *to read the full letter.*

WA GOVERNMENT EXPERT PANEL REPORT RELEASED

The final report by the WA Ministerial Expert Panel on End of Life Choices, chaired by Malcolm McCusker, has recommended a WA assisted suicide bill that has less protections than Victoria.

Unlike in Victoria, their WA model permits doctors to raise the subject of euthanasia with their patients. A patient whose death is "reasonably foreseeable" within 12 months can apply, whereas it is 6 months in Victoria. A doctor and a senior clinical nurse may assess a patient for approval, to determine if they have "decision-making capacity". In Victoria, it is two doctors.

In making the first recommendation, the expert panel made an admission about the lack of patient knowledge on all treatments including palliative care. The report states, "Up to 60 per cent of Australians have low levels of individual health literacy. This means that people may not have the knowledge or confidence to start discussions about specific treatments or options" which their health practitioner may not have raised.

Resisting death culture in WA

At the annual pro-life rally at Parliament House, Perth on May 14, attended by 1900 people, WA pro-life groups including FamilyVoice launched a petition calling for the WA Parliament to reinstate annual reporting into post-20 week abortions, a practice scrapped by Health Minister Roger Cook. The most common reasons, as revealed by his office in Parliamentary debate, included 'fetal chromosomal anomalies,' 'maternal conditions' and cardiac and central nervous system anomalies'. The WA-only paper-only petition is available at ***FamilyVoice.org.au***.



Darryl Budge (right) discussing overseas pro-life efforts with legal counsel William Wager, a former U.S. federal prosecutor

Liberal opposition Leader Liza Harvey has signaled her opposition to an assisted suicide bill expected later this year in WA. She stated that "every person who has a terminal diagnosis or a chronic long-term illness" needs to have access to palliative care first. The former palliative care nurse added that she knew "less than a handful of patients who have begged for an end".

WA State Director Darryl Budge warns that, "In a state with dire statistics relating to elder abuse and youth suicide, euthanasia is a terrible backward step."

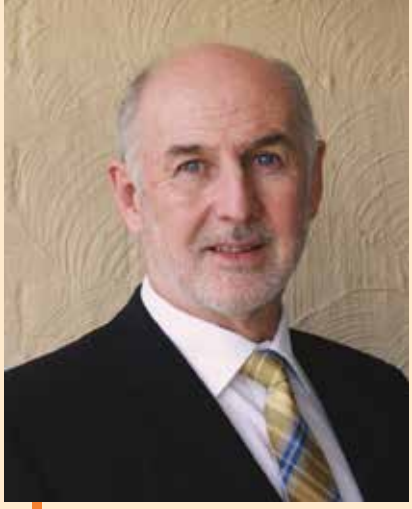
UK court reneges forced abortion ruling

An English court ruling is a powerful object lesson in the dangers of forcing medical professionals to become agents of the state with no right to freedom of conscience.

The initial judgement that an intellectually disabled woman must be forced to abort her 22 week old unborn child was overturned on appeal by three UK Justices.

To try to placate the woman, who did not wish to undergo the procedure, doctors told her that she would be given a new doll to play with after undergoing the abortion.

FROM THE NATIONAL DIRECTOR
Religious freedom matters!



Dear friend,

The outcry over the Israel Folau case highlights the appetite for religious freedom laws in our country. Like Folau, we must speak up clearly as a federal government bill addressing religious discrimination may soon be presented.

The model proposed by Federal Attorney-General Christian Porter is a step in the right direction but is inadequate. His model, like the current situation where religious freedom is treated as an exemption, is problematic because religious groups are perceived to be receiving special treatment. While we wish to keep current exemptions in place for the minimal cover they provide, this cannot be the path for any new protections.

Freedom of religion and conscience are pre-eminent rights that deserve primary recognition and protection. They should not be treated as mere afterthoughts.

Furthermore, statutory exemptions are, as a general principle, narrowly interpreted by the courts. This is unacceptable in light of the principles of our international covenants, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which affirms a positive right to freedom of religion and conscience and permits only the kind of "limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health or morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others."

Religious freedom in the ICCPR is not expressed as a narrow exception to the principle of non-discrimination.

Faith groups respect the right of other faith and non-faith groups to manifest their beliefs and disassociate from non-like-minded people, each according to their own ethos. When each group does this, it is not engaging in detrimental treatment of other beliefs or moral worldviews, but is enjoying freedom to hold and propound conscientiously-held beliefs.

Please pray with us in this battle, and thank you for strengthening our efforts financially to ensure faith groups, schools and churches can bring light and hope to all, and not be attacked for operating conscientiously.

Your brother in Christ,

Charles Newington

Charles Newington, National Director

"Freedom of religion and conscience are pre-eminent rights that deserve primary recognition and protection."

Our state directors are meeting with MPs to discuss the religious freedom bill. NSW State Director Greg Bondar (right) is pictured meeting with Senator Arthur Sinodinos.



EXTRACTS

Articles or extracts from this magazine may be used for other publications, provided that the reprint includes the following notice:

"Reprinted by permission of FamilyVoice Australia, 4th Floor, 68 Grenfell Street, Adelaide SA 5000."

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.

Printed in Australia by Adelaide Business Bureax, 2A George Street, Hindmarsh SA 5000

Donations to FamilyVoice Australia are not tax deductible.

FamilyVoice AUSTRALIA

FamilyVoice Australia Inc

4th Floor, 68 Grenfell St,
Adelaide SA 5000

Phone: 1300 365 965
Fax: 08 8223 5850
Email: office@familyvoice.org.au

familyvoice.org.au

/familyvoiceaustralia
@familyvoiceaust