NEWSPOINT

NOVEMBER 2019

A NATIONAL NEWSLETTER OF Family Voice AUSTRALIA



Hope despite persecution

It is sadly becoming far too common to see the two words "Christian" and "sacked" in the same sentence. However, it's not all doom - Christians that are tired of being sidelined are fighting back.

UK Actress Seyi Omooba was sacked from an acting role due to her Christian views on human sexuality.

She had secured the lead role in a stage version of The Color Purple. But one day later, Omooba received a tweet with a screenshot of her Facebook post from five years earlier asking if she still stood by her comments.

In September 2014 she wrote on social media: "It is clearly evident in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 what the Bible says on this matter. I do not believe you can be born gay and I do not believe homosexuality is right…"This five-year-old post was used to sack her.

"I'm heartbroken," she said. 'If I'm unable to get back to the stage, then I feel there is no point."

"It's the only thing I have ever wanted since I was a young girl."

But Omooba is fighting back, taking legal action over her dismissal.

Meanwhile, a Christian doctor who refused to refer to a biological man as a woman has lost his court case, with a British court ruling that belief in the Bible is "incompatible with human dignity".

Dr David Mackereth, a doctor with over two decades experience with the National Health Service, was dismissed by the Department for Work and Pensions on the grounds that refusing to call a patient by their preferred pronoun was "harassment" under the UK's Equality Act.

Dr Mackareth has previously said that "Christians must be able to hold and express their faith in private and public and to uphold Biblical and scientific truths without fear of losing their livelihoods".

But a British court ruled against the doctor.

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Hope despite persecution

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"Belief in Genesis 1:27, lack of belief in transgenderism and conscientious objection to transgenderism in our judgment are incompatible with human dignity and conflict with the fundamental rights of others, specifically here, transgender individuals", said the court.

The court expressed its opinion, by quoting precedent, that faith-based assertions must be "worthy of respect in a democratic society, be not incompatible with human dignity and not conflict with the fundamental rights of others".

Dr Mackereth says he will appeal the decision to fight for the freedom of Christians – and any other NHS member of staff – to speak the truth.

Christian florist Barronelle Stutzman is another example of courage. She refused to participate in a same-sex "wedding" and has been targeted by the US state of Washington for exercising her Christian conscience.

Stutzman said she had served customer Robert Ingersoll for almost ten years.

"When he came in to talk to me about his [same-sex] wedding, I just simply put my hands on his and told him I could not do it because of my relationship with Jesus Christ," Stutzman said.

"Without any complaint from Rob ... the attorney general from the state of Washington sued me personally and corporately simply because I have a different viewpoint on marriage".



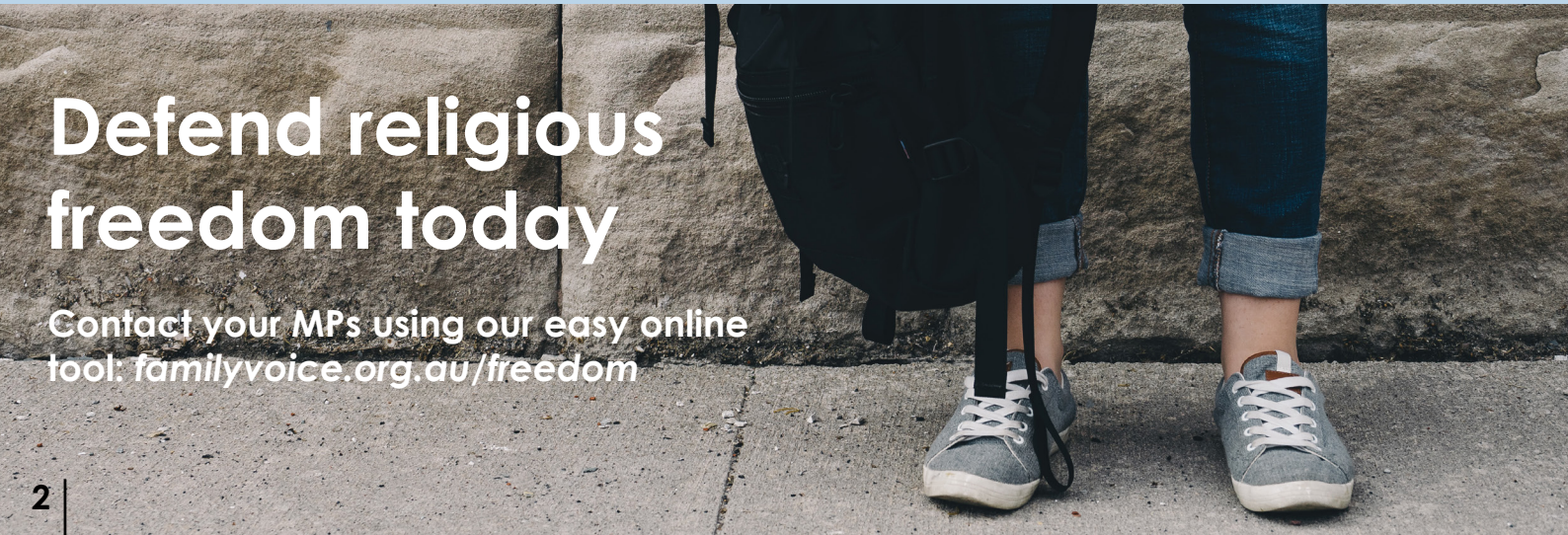
Stutzman faces losing everything if the Supreme Court does not intervene into her religious freedom case, says her lawyer Kristen Waggoner from Alliance Defending Freedom.

Appearing alongside her client on "FOX & Friends" recently, Waggoner said that a similar case involving a bakery called Masterpiece Cakeshop, the U.S. Supreme Court said the government can't express hostility toward people of faith.

"We now need it to weigh in on the broader principle to say it can't force creative professionals to create art or to have to participate in religious ceremonies", said Waggoner

"We have clients right now that are facing jail time. Jack Phillips [Christian baker] is in his third round of litigation and Baronelle is basically faced with losing all she owns unless the Supreme Court weighs in in this case."

Waggoner said that a win for Baronelle is a win for everyone.



Defend religious freedom today

Contact your MPs using our easy online tool: *familyvoice.org.au/freedom*

State Roundup

NSW: Latham moves to protect religious freedom

Upper House MP Mark Latham has released his draft Religious Freedom and Equality Bill 2019 aimed at protecting religious freedom in NSW.

"There are many things changing about Australia heading in the wrong direction and one of them has been that so many people, mainly of a Christian background, say they are scared to talk about their religion ... in the workplace. [They] worry about being sacked. Even among their friends they can't talk openly about the Bible," said Latham.

Introducing the bill, Mark Latham said that the protections are needed to ensure people can talk about their religion and not be discriminated against.

"I've run across a lot of people who've come to Australia in recent times and they say 'we thought we were getting away from religious persecution – that's why we came to this land of freedom'. What's happened when the persecution has followed them to Australia?".

He said people are getting into trouble for quoting the Bible, though it is "the most popular book ever," and "guides a lot of the things that we believe". Noting that people can no longer speak freely in the workplace, Mark Latham said the religious freedom issue requires "labour protection" for workers.

WA: Standing for life

The parliamentary debate on euthanasia and assisted suicide in Western Australia has progressed chiefly on party lines, reports WA Director Darryl Budge.

At the time of writing, the Second Reading debate was anticipated to pass easily, at which point there will be several weeks of "consideration in detail" debate on all 184 clauses.

"Around eight of the 25 expected yes votes have expressed concerns with the Bill in its current form. Seventeen MPs support the Bill in its current form, despite it being verifiably more dangerous than the Victorian legislation and the now inoperative Northern Territory legislation," Mr Budge said. He encouraged supporters to continue to write and call MPs, by visiting **familyvoice.org.au/say-no-to-euthanasia**. Mr Budge has spoken at over a dozen public 'Momentum' events around WA on the euthanasia legislation. Two events, one in Albany and one in Denmark, will be held on Saturday, November 25. See **familyvoice.org.au/events** for more information.

SA: Prostitution update

South Australian MPs continue to debate the prostitution bill in the House of Assembly (the lower house of State Parliament). But communications from concerned Christians are expected to dissuade MPs from supporting the so-called sex trade.

Regarding abortion, Parliament is still awaiting recommendations from the Law Reform Institute which are expected to urge widening access to the killing of the unborn.

VIC: Ministering in churches

Victorian Director Peter Stevens has conducted a highly successful seminar called 'Transgenderism: origins and impact' at Trinity Methodist Church, Doveton. Approximately forty people attended with 15 families signing up for regular FamilyVoice information and many taking home our paper 'The truth about transgenderism: what every parent needs to know.' Peter would love to conduct this seminar at your church!

QLD: Gender ideology push

FamilyVoice is concerned that following the launch of Queensland's first ever Sexual Violence Prevention Framework program, students will be taught that the biological reality of male and female is a myth.

Child Safety Minister, Di Farmer told Parliament: "I am pleased to say that this framework includes several significant new actions that we will start working on right away. They include making respectful relationships education compulsory in all state schools via implementation of the Australian curriculum."

The program refers to radical gender fluidity ideology.

As an example, a related online quiz states: "People are born as either male or female, and that's how they should stay." Kids are then forced to choose between answers 'Myth' or 'Fact'. The 'Fact' answer reprimands the chid:– "Hmm, it looks like you might need to think a bit more about how we can be respectful of diversity in our society." On the other hand, the 'Myth' answer praises the child: "Great job! You really understand the principles of diversity, and how to respect diversity."

Call 1300 365 965 or email office@familyvoice.org.au to book a speaking engagement with any of our State Directors.

Positive Christian alternatives to climate anxiety

As climate activists have brought capital cities to a standstill in recent weeks, a conservative Christian response is needed to help young people respond lawfully and sensibly to the ecological challenges facing the globe.



Christians everywhere need to be more conscious of stewarding the Creation entrusted to our care.

Young people are right to be concerned about the management of creation, but they are not entitled to break the law while disrupting the peaceful running of major cities.

Recent research by the Barna Group found young people aged between 18 and 35 years are generally anxious about life and the future, with concerns about the climate as their number one issue.

Strangely, they seem unaware of the massive efforts happening in Australia designed to minimise carbon emissions. According to Professors Andrew Blakers and Matt Stocks at the Australian National University, our nation has spent 11 times the global average on renewable power.

Between 2018 and 2020 Australia will install more than 16 gigawatts of wind and solar power generators which is a rate more than four times faster that China, the EU, Japan or the US. As a result, Australia's greenhouse gas emissions will peak at about 540 megatons of CO_2 equivalent a year and then start to decline by about 3% from 2020 to 2022.

While this will have very little impact on the earth's climate, it comes at a huge cost to the economy in electricity prices.



Young people are increasingly being driven to anxiety over climate alarmism.

And seems to be making no difference to the political ideology of those disrupting our cities. As a stand-alone technical response it is not suffient to win the hearts and minds of a disaffected generation. Indeed only the Gospel of Christ can do that. And only the Gospel of Christ can adequately inform legitimate concerns about wise ecological management and remediation of some of the ecological disasters we've inflicted upon God's world.

While concern for wise management of creation should certainly exercise the minds of all citizens and especially Christian people, the way forward is not disruption but dialogue, civil debate and the application of Christian wisdom. If our churches can enunciate a wise theology of stewardship and the prudential management of the earth's resources, we will go a long way to re-engaging with a youth generation that regards Christianity as either irrelevant or down-right dangerous. We will help young people become good stewards not only of the planet but of their own souls, hearts, minds, bodies, relationships, families and communities.

Our challenge is to express the Gospel of Christ in its fullness, as it applies not only to personal salvation but to the roll-out of Christ's Kingdom (both now and in the future). To 'seek the shalom of the city' (Jeremiah 29:7) involves imparting goodness and blessing in every way, including we ensure access to clean water, unpolluted air, and all manner of good things, to enrich all creatures great and small.

If the nation's children and grandchildren are deeply anxious about their future because of the climate change narrative we cannot not ignore it, but must seize the ministry opportunity.

The placards used at recent Climate Crisis rallies involving school children suggest there are influences in society and some schools that are amplifying anxiety and emotion. It will take the wisdom of Solomon to accurately teach the science without increasing the emotional loading especially in this highly polarised public debate.

We are called to exercise responsible stewardship and to love all people, as a witness to the Creator and his offer of reconciliation and hope for the future.



Euthanasia: *a law like no other*

Belgian pro-euthanasia advocate Professor Luc Deliens appeared as an expert witness before the Queensland Parliament's end of life enquiry held in Brisbane on 21 October.

In a spirited defence of euthanasia, Professor Deliens revealed that the mainstream political landscape in Belgium now lacks any significant pro-life voice. He said the leadership of Belgium's former Christian Democratic Party no longer defends a pro-life position.

"There is not one Christian Democratic leader who is against the law on euthanasia anymore because it is fully integrated into our healthcare system," he told the inquiry.

Professor Deliens also noted that Catholic hospitals in Belgium came to offer euthanasia within two years of its legalisation.

As part of his testimony to the parliamentary enquiry, Professor Deliens spoke of how much euthanasia changes society noting that it is a law like no other.

Many doctors are torn between loyalty to patients and conscientious objection, leading them to discontinue their service to a patient, if that includes euthanasia. "Then you feel very badly as a doctor," Luc Deliens conceded. "Some of these doctors have known these patients for 30 or 40 years. If it is your GP, he knows your family.

"Doctors massively, I would say, are confronted with a request for euthanasia. They are pulled into the system, so you cannot deny it."

Professor Deliens noted that some doctors who are ideologically in favour of euthanasia sometimes struggle when deliberately ending patients' lives. "They could not deal with it personally - not for an ideological reason. They are entirely in favour of it, but it is very difficult sometimes ... It might be too burdensome psychologically."

Professor Deliens also said Belgium's associations for palliative care have gradually moved from a total rejection of euthanasia (in 2002) to full integration of euthanasia in palliative care today.

FamilyVoice National Director Charles Newington, who attended the parliamentary hearing in Brisbane, said the pro-life cause in Australia must maintain a steadfast position. "Once the line is crossed the grounds for euthanasia shift, the meaning of unbearable pain widens and society becomes conditioned to accept much looser conditions for assisted suicide," he said.

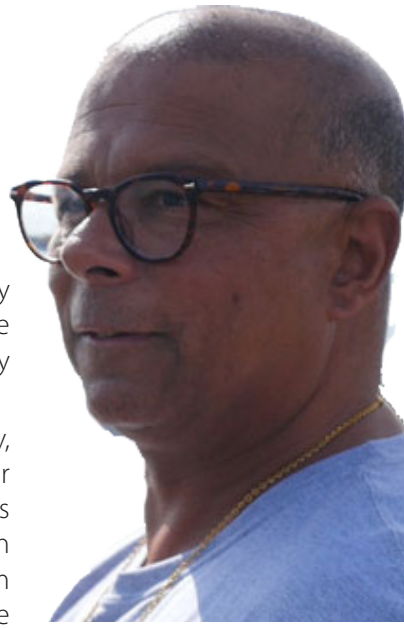
"People of faith must never forget to actively defend the inherent worth of each person, and especially the vulnerable elderly and dying. Sanctioning assisted suicide is not just another treatment option. It is an act like no other."

"We should also vigorously defend the historic role of the medical profession to always 'do no harm', and the right of doctors and other medical personnel to not participate in euthanasia."

The inquiry conducted by the Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee of the Queensland Parliament is due to report its findings by 31 March 2020.

Meanwhile, debate on euthanasia continues in the West Australian Parliament and may arise in South Australia next.

Former trans: "I found God. I found freedom"



The story of Pete Benjamin gives hope for all people who have suffered from gender confusion.

On Good Friday this year, Pete Benjamin handed out flyers for a church event. He'd been attending for a few months, having sought support after his nervous breakdown.

But the people at church didn't know him as Pete. They knew him as Viccy.

Pete had a long and complicated history of cross-dressing, mental health problems and relationship breakdown. Three years earlier, Pete had been through irreversible gender reassignment surgery. But that day, Pete came to know and follow God's call to be who he really was – a man.

Now, Pete questions how doctors ever encouraged his path into transgenderism.

"I never thought cross-dressing would lead me to having an operation to become a woman. I had addictions, I was drinking heavily, and I was having suicidal thoughts, but at every appointment, whether with the NHS, privately, or at transgender support groups, I was encouraged to carry on the path to gender reassignment surgery and to become 'Victoria'. There was no caution or restraint, I was simply told, for example: 'Yes, you are definitely transgender, I'm prescribing you hormones.' It cost the NHS and myself thousands of pounds for me to go through this process."

After losing his wife to cancer in 2012, Pete approached a doctor in a highly vulnerable state, declaring that he wanted to become a woman. He was told to 'live as a woman for a month', which led Pete to dressing in women's clothing and ordering hormones from online pharmacies.

From there he saw various doctors who fast-tracked him for prescribed hormones, injections and eventually full gender re-assignment surgery.

"Now I have freedom"

Pete says: "When I had the operation, at first I was euphoric as I felt I could finally escape my depressed self. But very soon, alone in my flat with my dresses, I felt only deeper regret and unhappiness.

On 19 April 2019, Good Friday, Pete was helping to advertise their Easter service by handing out flyers in town. A woman from church who knew him as Viccy passed him on the street and, compelled by the Spirit, asked him, "Who is Peter?" Taken aback, he answered, "I am Peter." She then continued to explain: "God told me that a man called Pete should not live as a woman anymore."

That very day, Pete threw away all his female clothing. He joined a church prayer meeting all Saturday. And supported by his church he's lived ever since as the man that he truly is.

"When I was a woman, I wasn't free, … now I can just come out and be me. I've got God, I've got freedom and I am happy."

Pete's fascination with cross-dressing, which led to his addiction, began as a ten-year-old boy, when he was taken to a drag queen show at a cabaret club while on holiday with his family.

"When I was 5 or 6, I had no thought of becoming a girl. It wasn't until I was exposed to men in dresses at cabaret shows that my mind went that way. My message from my experience is that the transgender life, even surgery itself, did not solve my problem and led me to misery, suicidal thoughts and depression."

Time for truth – before it's too late

It is tragic that such a vulnerable man was given a life-changing, irreversible and ultimately devastating operation.

Yet for Pete, despite his depression, anxiety and irreversible physical harm, his story is one of hope. Out of his despair he has found his identity through his faith in Jesus Christ.

Editor's note: *Reproduced from Christian Concern UK.*

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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.

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

Donations to FamilyVoice Australia are not tax deductible.

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