NEWSPOINT

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A NATIONAL NEWSLETTER OF FamilyVoice AUSTRALIA

A look at religious freedom bills



New laws planned for this year

The government is preparing to introduce three pieces of legislation for wider consultation this year. These are a Religious Discrimination Bill, a Bill that will amend other Commonwealth legislation where necessary to produce consistency with the Religious Discrimination Bill and the third is a Human Rights Legislation Amendment (Freedom of Religion) Bill.

In brief, these Bills will protect charities which support a traditional view of marriage from losing their charitable status. Also, religious institutions will not be required under law to allow people with incompatible social values to hire their facilities.

The second Bill will amend Australian Law (Cth) to make it clear that a court must give equal weight to all protected attributes in the event of a conflict of rights.

The third Bill includes the appointment of a Freedom of Religion Commissioner and the intent is to provide religion equal value and treatment among the collection of protected attributes when a dispute arises in which protected attributes – such as when sexual orientation and religion are in conflict. It will also initiate an inquiry into freedom of religion at the community level.

Issues to be considered next year

The government has referred some issues to the Australian Law Reform Commission for reporting by April 2020.

They include the exemption currently allowing faith-based schools and colleges to discriminate in the appointment of staff and students on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity.

They seek a recommendation about what reforms should be made to any Australian law "in order to limit or remove altogether (if practicable) religious exemptions to prohibitions on discrimination, while also guaranteeing the right of religious institutions to conduct their affairs in a way consistent with their religious ethos."

It has also been asked to look at legal impediments to the expression of the traditional view about marriage.

Other issues that need attention

There is some consensus among faith-based groups urging the government "to give effect to its international obligations to protect religious freedom by passing a Religious Freedom Act. The effect would be to limit state and territories from encroaching legally upon religious freedom."

Freedom of speech on religious or moral matters including traditional marriage has been put under pressure recently and needs protection which a Religious Freedom Act may provide.

Freedom of conscience is protected in only a few situations, such as in the Defence Act and in abortion (in some states) and even then not adequately.

Questions remain on protections for schools regarding gender dysphoria. If the government removed the right of schools to discriminate in the case of children on the basis of gender identification, the school would be liable upon disallowing a student to dress as another gender or use gendered facilities, since no clinical diagnosis of gender dysphoria is required.

FamilyVoice is also concerned for people of faith in non-faith contexts. Parents should have the right to decide if something in the school curriculum is not appropriate for their children.

Business owners and executives should have protection from discrimination on grounds of free speech, conscience or religion.

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A look at freedom bills

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Religions and ideologies should not be protected from public criticism that is in the interest of truth and not to insult, offend or vilify.

Moving carefully at the right pace

There is value in not rushing this, in being consultative and doing the less contentious things first. It is important to consider the diversity of religious opinion that needs to be considered. It is helpful to remember politics is the art of the possible. Once a country has committed to a pathway such as anti-Discrimination Legislation it is not easy to back the truck up and take another approach.

Managed carefully, this will be a very helpful process of building understanding and mutual respect. It is certainly something to pray over.



National Director Charles Newington and SA State Director David d'Lima at a recent prostitution forum

Editor's note: I acknowledge the influence of Professor Patrick Parkinson for this article and any unreferenced quotes come from his briefing paper of July 2019. However, he is not responsible for the opinions expressed herein. With thanks, C.N.

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

Vic gender bill is far-left lunacy

A big concern in Victoria is the government's Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Amendment Bill 2019. According to Victorian Director Peter Stevens, the bill is expected to be debated from August 13th. He said it proposes that adult Victorians be able to legally change gender without undergoing any sex-change treatment – with just a statutory declaration and 'friend's' supporting statement.

"Victorian children would also be permitted to change gender but would need permission from parents and a doctor or psychologist," Mr Stevens said.

"FamilyVoice had a significant part to play in the defeat of an identical bill in the Victorian upper house in December 2016, by the slenderest of margins – 19 to 19. Other states and territories have passed similar laws.

Serious consequences arise from such drastic legal changes. Women's toilets and changerooms in shopping centers would be accessible by biological males claiming to be female. Around the world, and in Australia, stories of stalking, predatorial behavior, sexual assault and rape by such people abound."



***Therese Hungerford-Morgan of* VoiceforChange**

FamilyVoice young adult ministry, *VoiceforChange*, will soon launch a pro-life campaign, *365Life* and will screen the 'Unplanned' movie. The new campaign centres around 'pass-it-on' cards and a Voice4Life website. One card carries pictures of an ultrasound - 'me' - and a newborn baby in a parent's arms – 'still me.' The other features Dr Seuss's famous quote "A Person is a Person, No Matter How Small" and shows baby feet at 12 weeks.

365Life will launch on Saturday August 24th at Melbourne's Life Coalition Dinner with Therese Hungerford-Morgan of Voiceforchange as the night's keynote speaker.

SA MPs unite against prostitution

Legislative Councillors from opposing political parties strongly rejected a bill to decriminalise the prostitution trade when they addressed a FamilyVoice Australia briefing on sex-work legislation in Adelaide on 17 July. ALP Upper House MP Clare Scriven slammed the prostitution bill in her address to church representatives at the meeting.

"This proposal would affect the status of every woman in society, as it would normalise violence against women," she said. Liberal MLC Dennis Hood said he would "never vote for such a bill."

FamilyVoice State Director David d'Lima is encouraging our supporters to contact their local MP and urge rejection of the prostitution bill. He has broadcast about the issue locally on radio Life FM and nationally on Vision Radio addressing concerns about the proposed legislation. Additionally South Australia's Sunday Mail newspaper published his concerns as follows:

Endorsement of the sex trade in the Editorial (*Sunday Mail* 7/7/19) is doubtless motivated by concern for the safety and security of sex workers. But, according to the front page report ("Bikie sex trade bid"), the possibility of decriminalising prostitution is already arousing the interest of outlaws. Offenders linked to prostitution will not suddenly become law-abiding citizens if the state commends sex work.

The proposed change would simply create legal and illegal prostitution, utterly undermining the ability of police to minimise every illegality associated with the trade. A better change would require more sensitive policing along with curtailing the purchase of sex.

Debate on the prostitution bill is scheduled soon in the Lower House, where it will receive strong rejection by local MPs if enough good-hearted people take time to raise their concerns.

Queensland and WA debate euthanasia

By now we are aware of the pattern of permissiveness that has been sweeping the Western Political Hemisphere. Almost identical socially liberal legislation is proposed in one country or state after another like the fall of dominoes. What differs is the timing and how quickly the state or nation can be prepared for social and political change.

Having passed arguably the most extreme abortion legislation in the world in 2018, Queensland Labor are now preparing to pass euthanasia legislation.

What is compassionate end of life care?

Euthanasia is misrepresented as a compassionate and dignified way to assist a person in death. If compassion was the driver state and federal governments would invest more seriously in palliative care. Everyone dies but only a few would choose doctor assisted suicide.

Currently, the investment in palliative care is well below standard in all states and territories, especially outside of major urban centres. Palliative care is not just for the last three weeks of life. It is a much broader way of preparing and supporting not only the patient, but their family as well. Palliative care is the compassionate way to assist not only the patient but all who are deeply affected.

Why people choose euthanasia

Professor Kathy Eagar, who does not have an opinion either way on euthanasia, said that her studies of euthanasia overseas showed that when it comes to choosing euthanasia, pain does not even make it into the top five reasons.

Professor Eagar said, "It's a feeling that you're becoming a burden on other people, you're finding life less enjoyable, you're finding you can no longer do the things you loved to do, (and) you believe you're starting to lose your dignity. (These are) the major reasons people are electing euthanasia internationally. Concerns about pain are only ever raised by about one in four people electing euthanasia internationally."

People with these reasons do not qualify for euthanasia in Victoria, or perhaps in any other state or territory considering euthanasia, but this is the demographic who want it.

Once euthanasia is permitted and the public have accepted it, these supporters will campaign to liberalise it in order to accommodate the people who have reasons other than imminent painful terminal conditions.

Wrongful deaths

Former AMA vice president Stephen Parnis said that "the fact 68 so-called safeguards were seen as a necessary part of Victoria's new voluntary assisted dying laws demonstrates the risk they pose of inflicting wrongful death… In order to satisfy the needs or demands of a number of people to be able to take their own life when they choose, we are putting many more frail, vulnerable, dying people at risk, by inaccurate diagnosis or prognosis."

Dying with dignity?

Dr Parnis finds it offensive that euthanasia should be promoted as the only assurance a person has about dying with dignity. It is worse than offensive. Vulnerable people might latch on to these words and choose a path from which there is no return.

If you are reading this and have an aged or frail relative, please make room for them in your life – not just for the occasional visit but for some activity. Hear and record all their stories, scrapbook with them, involve them in the family, give them something to look forward to, give them a responsibility even if it's just keeping an eye on the baby.

WA MPs to debate bill that is more dangerous than Victoria

In early August, WA Health Minister Roger Cook introduced a bill to legalise self-administered euthanasia and doctor-assisted suicide.

Wrongful deaths are guaranteed by this bill, which has even less safeguards than Victoria, according to WA State Director Darryl Budge.

Mr Budge said, "Unlike Victoria, no permit will be required to ensure a legal and robust process. There is no requirement for expert assessment of patient capacity. Evidence from WA's chief psychiatrist on the importance of psychiatric assessments was ignored. Patients will be able to 'doctor-shop' for any two doctors, who do not need to be financially independent, nor have expertise in palliative care or in the patient's condition. The doctors can hide the true cause of death on the death certificate.

"In a state with dire statistics relating to elder abuse, mental health and youth suicide, the WA government must instead fix chronic underfunding of palliative care, especially as regional and rural WA are being denied equal access to specialists.

"WA has under one third of the palliative care specialists required by national benchmarks and the state needs more than $100 million in annual spending on palliative care for staffing and education, in addition to funding for infrastructure such as palliative care wards and beds."

WA ACTION: Urge WA MPs to vote against this dangerous bill at ***FamilyVoice.org.au/say-no-to-euthanasia***

PERTH RALLY: Come affirm ***"Care: Not Killing"*** at the steps of Parliament House on Wednesday, September 4, from 12-1pm. You will hear from legal and medical experts. Other events featuring *Fatal Flaws filmmaker* Kevin Dunn are also on that week - details at the above website.

A dangerous NSW abortion bill

A NSW bill thats legalises abortion up to birth reveals legal and ethical ignorance by the15 pro-abortion MPs who sponsored the bill, according to FamilyVoice NSW Director Greg Bondar.

"Parliament must recognise the medical advancements that have reduced the age of surviving premature birth to about 22 weeks which is a clear indication of the child's full humanity," said Mr Bondar.

"In reading this bill, I note that Clause 6 permits the abortion of any child from 22 weeks through to full term. Scientific evidence shows that babies feel the excruciating pain of abortion and mothers frequently report physical harm and mental anguish following the procedure. There is strong evidence that a functioning cortex is not necessary to experience pain. Fetal surgeons have found it necessary to sedate the unborn child with anesthesia to prevent the unborn child from engaging in vigorous movement in reaction to invasive surgery.

"Clause 5 grants complete immunity for any medical practitioner who performs an abortion on any woman or girl who is less than 22 weeks pregnant regardless of whether or not he has the informed consent of the woman or girl to perform the abortion. There is no requirement for a request from the pregnant woman or girl let alone her fully informed consent.

"Clause 6 would permit abortions for sex selection right up to full term. Clause 5 and 6 would permit abortion for eugenic reasons in contravention of the rights of persons with disabilities to be treated with equal respect both before and after birth."

"Clause 6 fails to provide any minimum requirement of investigation that the doctor must do in order to understand a woman's present or future physical, psychological and social circumstances, nor is there a requirement to keep records.

"The bill compels all NSW doctors to refer a patient who is not seeking a medical, life-preserving treatment. This contravenes international human rights convenents that upbold religious and conscientious belief. A doctor who opposes abortion may feel a duty of care is owed to the pregnant woman or girl and her unborn child. This doctor may consider medical research that has revealed negative impacts on maternal mental health and mortality. In addition, in more than 10% of cases late term abortion resulted in the delivery of a live born baby. In Victoria from 2009 to 2017 some 332 babies were born alive after a late term abortion and simply left to die. This Bill fails to provide legal barrier to this occurring in NSW."

ACTION: Urge NSW MPs to defend unborn life via our website **FamilyVoice.org.au/StandForLife**. NSW Director Greg Bondar has been involved in the NSW Parliament pro-life rallies and daily vigils. Contact us for more information.



FamilyVoice Australia is pleased to announce its 2019 NSW Annual Conference, featuring author Greg Sheridan.

When: September 14th, 2019 - 8:30 AM to 3:30 PM

Where: Alphacrucis College - 30 Cowper St, Parramatta, NSW.

With a diverse cross-section of religious, political and church leaders as keynote speakers, this year's Church & State Conference is one not to be missed.

Please put this date in your diary NOW!

SPEAKERS INCLUDE:

- **Greg Sheridan**, Foreign Editor *The Australian* & Author of *'God is Good for You: A Defence of Christianity in Troubled Times'*
- **Charles Newington**, National Director of FamilyVoice
- **Hon Concetta Fierravanti-Wells**, Senator for NSW
- **Dr Brendan Long**, Strategic Adviser – Policy, Australian Catholic Bishops Conference
- **David Furse-Roberts**, Research Fellow Menzies Research Centre, Adjunct Research Fellow Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture at St Mark's National Theological Centre.
- **Rev Dr Ross Clifford AM**, Principal Morling Theological College & Author

Morning & afternoon tea and catered lunch supplied. Interstate guests welcome.

Bookings at **FamilyVoice.org.au/ChurchAndState**, or call the national office 1300 365 965.

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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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