A state newsletter of

FamilyVoice AUSTRALIA

# VoxLink

South Australia

*December 2017*

## Police reject 'foolhardy' South Australian brothel bill

***South Australian Police Commissioner Grant Stevens has firmly warned MPs against a proposal to extensively decriminalise the prostitution trade.***

He delivered his warning in a report carried by *The Advertiser* (1/11/17) after Hon Steph Key moved to introduce the 'decriminalisation of sex work' bill into the House of Assembly, with second reading debate commencing on 19 October.

The bill would scrap most of the current laws against the prostitution trade and shift the burden of compliance to local councils.

"To simply remove all opportunities for the appropriate authorities to monitor and oversee the industry would be foolhardy in my view," Commissioner Stevens stated.

Those remarks reinforced the letter he wrote to MPs earlier this year, indicating police opposition to the bill.

FamilyVoice State Director David d'Lima urged Lower House MPs to heed the Police Commissioner's warning - unlike the majority of Upper House members who approved the bill on 5 July.

"It is completely unacceptable to ignore the highest policing executive," Mr d'Lima said.



***Prostitution is not only harmful to women but also to the broader community.***

"Instead, the Parliament should adopt the Nordic model which effectively dries up the market for this inherently damaging and degrading treatment of women."

## Freedom under threat in Northern Territory

***Faith-based groups would lose key freedoms under possible changes raised in a Northern Territory government discussion paper.***

Churches and faith-based schools may lose their freedom to operate in a distinctively Christian manner, under changes flagged in the Northern Territory by the Attorney-General's Department.

A discussion paper released in September describes a range of possible changes to anti-discrimination law that could severely undermine faith and freedom.

"We've responded to the discussion paper by making a comprehensive critique of the possible changes and alerting Territorians about those threats to freedom," said FamilyVoice policy officer Dr Sarah Dingle.

"Disturbingly, the possible changes would weaken the freedom enjoyed by faith-based schools to employ staff (including non-teaching personnel) who uphold a faith-based worldview."

The discussion paper raises possible changes to anti-vilification laws pertaining to race, religious belief, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity and inter-sex status that would effectively weaken parental rights to ensure children are educated in accord with parental values and beliefs.





***Dr Sarah Dingle***

In addition, anti-vilification laws could endanger the freedom of individuals to publicly disagree with accepted views on sexual identity, or to oppose beliefs around gender identity.

"The document also asks whether anti-discrimination laws should be amended to avoid using such terms as man, woman, parenthood and marital status," Dr Dingle explained.

"The ambition towards politically-correct language is a great concern as it flags a move towards gender fluidity that defies creation and common sense," she said.

In a submission responding to the discussion paper, FamilyVoice has pointed out the problem of elevating individual rights above the common good.

"Alleged rights to be free from discrimination are competing with other privileges that are found in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and associated agreements, such as freedom of speech, religion and association.

"Australia is a signatory to the ICCPR, and needs to meet its obligations when considering changes to legislation," Dr Dingle explained.

Some of the suggestions put forward in the discussion paper focus on increasing the number of protected attributes such as gender identity, while at the same time suggesting the removal of exception clauses that allow religious bodies to 'discriminate' on some grounds, like freedom of religion. The FamilyVoice submission highlights the failure to balance competing rights.

"We call upon the government to not weaken the right to corporately express freedom of faith or to disadvantage people who hold religious and cultural beliefs that existed long before the politically-correct approach was invented," she said.

"It is crucial that government not weaken or repeal exemptions for religious bodies under Northern Territory anti-discrimination law. Freedom of conscience is for all people."

# New euthanasia push in ACT, QLD, Tas

***The passage of Victoria's euthanasia bill in November 2017, legalising deliberate killing of the terminally ill from mid-2019, has uplifted interstate pro-death activists.***

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

With the formation of a Labor government in Queensland predicted after the state election this month, the likelihood of euthanasia laws being introduced in that state has increased. At its state conference in May 2017 the party adopted a policy platform in favour of introducing euthanasia legislation, preceded by a parliamentary inquiry.

Tasmania's Greens leader, Cassy O'Connor, has also promised to reintroduce euthanasia legislation if it is re-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, has warned WA not to follow Victoria's lead, saying a 2015 survey showed the majority of doctors opposed it.

## Children euthanised in Canada

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 permits voluntary 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.

# Right to lineage for donor kids

The identity of anonymous egg and sperm donors in South Australia could soon be revealed to their biological offspring, under law changes proposed by the Labor Government.

Health Minister Peter Malinauskas said he wants a bill to create a "donor conception register" to be presented to Parliament after the state election in March 2018, as there was no time to draft and consult on a bill beforehand.

He said it would give South Australians the right to information about their genetic parentage, regardless of whether a sperm donor wanted his identity kept secret.

FamilyVoice Australia South Australia director David d'Lima welcomed the plans to give people born from assisted reproductive techniques rights to information about their donor parents.

"FamilyVoice is not supportive of any form of surrogacy and sperm or egg donations, as it exploits women and commodifies children," Mr d'Lima said.

"However, so long as children are born through these donations and assisted reproductive technology they should be granted the same universal rights to information about their genetic heritage that children conceived naturally possess.

"The rights of children, recognised in the Convention of the Rights of the Child, require that their full genetic and social heritage and parentage be declared on their birth certificate.

"Currently the use of donor sperms and eggs is leaving a legacy of hurting people who are unaware of their heritage and denied the rights to know their genetic parents."

# SES units in state of emergency

A leaked report has revealed communities are under threat because the South Australian State Emergency Service lacks sufficient personnel to deal with major natural disasters - according to a November 6 report in *The Advertiser*.



The confidential communication highlights the risk of sustained and re-occurring severe weather and flooding events which could place 'unsustainable and unmanageable pressures on the organisation, in particular its people, both staff and volunteers'.

The problem is closely linked to the decline of civic-minded conviction, according to FamilyVoice SA director David d'Lima.

"In a previous era, concerned citizens would not hesitate to offer themselves in community service," he said.

"Society is increasingly burdening the government to fix every challenge facing the community, whereas local responses by civic-minded volunteers will always do a better job than centralised systems.

"It would be very helpful if families, schools and local businesses would revive the volunteer ethos, to arrest the persistent decline in volunteer numbers," Mr d'Lima suggested.

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**PUBLISHED:**

March, June, September, December

**EDITOR:**

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**PRINTER:**

Openbook Howden, St Marys SA 5042

**EXTRACTS:**

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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.

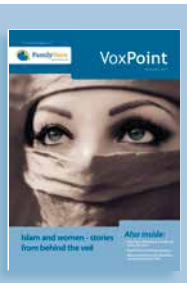
Our hope lies not in our Western culture, nor in its institutions with which we have become familiar – indeed, not even in the institution of marriage as established by God in the beginning and affirmed by Jesus of Nazareth. Rather, our hope is, and always will be in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

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.



*Taking away conscientious action violates a person’s soul*

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 review

Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull has asked an expert panel to review Australia’s religious protections headed by Philip Ruddock. The move leaves traditional marriage supporters in legal limbo until the panel reports in March 2018.

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