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Kill bill to strike 2018 election

The ALP in Victoria resorted to all-night sittings to pass the euthanasia bill so it would be forgotten before next year's election, according to FamilyVoice Australia.



Labor Victoria told voters in 2014 it had "no plans" regarding assisted dying. Yet in November it forced three all-night sessions to pass the bill.

"The deferral of the bill's effect to June 2019 and three consecutive all-night debates look suspiciously like Labor is rightly afraid that this kill bill is unpopular with voters and is unsafe for all Victorians," FamilyVoice Victoria State Director Peter Stevens said.

"We ask Victorian voters to elect pro-life candidates in November 2018 so this bill can be repealed before anyone is killed."

A forceful case was put by several Coalition MPs in the lower house that the dangerously flawed bill would bring the Victorian parliament into international disrepute and should be deferred indefinitely.

"The Government refused this defferal, disregarding the plight of vulnerable frail people who will be collateral damage in the new 'assisted suicide regime'," Mr Stevens said.

"Robert Clark MLA pointed out that the Government has spectacularly failed to fund the shortfall in palliative care, leaving about 10,000 Victorians dying each year without proper palliative care and pain relief.

"The rush to make suicide pills for the terminally ill available at chemists is a disgraceful substitute for palliative care.

"The amendments rushed through the Legislative Council in an all-night sitting does nothing to prevent the establishment of death clinics staffed by doctor advocates who will give the so-called safeguards scant regard," Mr Stevens said.

Requests will be open to terminally ill Victorian residents over 18 with less than six months to live, plus those with motor neurone disease or multiple sclerosis with life expectancy of less than one year. On approval by any two doctors, applicants will be given a lethal drug within 10 days of asking to die.

"No doubt this law will teach elderly frail people that this so-called 'right to die' is ultimately a 'duty to die', as many already feel they are a burden to their family and carers," Mr Stevens added.

"There is no doubt that the Government has opened the door to the killing of people who may die because of mistakes or pressure from others.

"FamilyVoice urges MPs in other states and territories considering euthanasia proposals to read Mr Clark's speech which catalogues the shortcomings of euthanasia legislation."

Schools religious freedoms under threat

The ALP Governments in the Northern Territory and Western Australia are investigating the removal of religious exemptions from faith-based schools.

As Victorian public schools are ordered to teach Safe Schools from 2018, Northern Territory 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 recent government discussion paper raises possible changes to anti-vilification laws pertaining to race, religious belief, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity and inter-sex status. This would effectively weaken parental rights to ensure children are educated in accord with parental values and beliefs, undermine the freedom of faith-based schools to employ faith-based staff (including non-teaching personnel), and 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. We've responded to the discussion paper by making a comprehensive critique of the possible changes," said FamilyVoice policy officer Dr Sarah Dingle.

In Western Australia lobbying by homosexual activists has led Premier Mark McGowan to seek a review of the Equal Opportunity Act.

Mr McGowan subsequently questioned the legal right of a Waikiki Christian school to dismiss a relief teacher who publicly shared his same-sex relationship online.

"I think most people would think it should be possible to work in a school and your sexual orientation is irrelevant," Mr McGowan said.

South Coast Baptist College principal Des Mitchell said that when the former employee posted a photo of his gay partner on social media there was "an adversarial engagement with the kids" which conflicted with the school's Christian values.

David Gillespie, a lawyer writing for Brisbane's *Courier Mail*, stated in November, "The nation's attention is now firmly focused on the rights of same-sex couples, so let's use that opportunity to remove the ridiculous protections afforded to the taxpayer funded businesses we call private schools. That is where 'religious freedom' can really bite, not at the local cake-shop or florist."

Mr Gillespie's views reveal what many who voted 'No' worried about: that the agenda of the 'Yes' campaign has undisclosed and far-reaching implications for freedom of conscience.

New euthanasia push in ACT, QLD, TAS

The deliberate killing of terminally ill people in Victoria is set to become legal from June 2019 under legislation passed by the State Parliament after a marathon debate in November 2017.

Meanwhile, ACT Chief Minister Andrew Barr is calling for a select committee to investigate establishing a similar euthanasia scheme in the ACT. 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 any Greens candidates are 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 envisaged 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.

Hobart worldview academy seeks new reformation

A Biblical Worldview Academy hosted by King's Covenant Church in Huon Valley on 4 November focussed on celebrating the 500th anniversary of the Reformation and its widespread impact.

Speakers included Samuel Green who contrasted the Biblically-shaped worldview that has shaped Western nations with societies that operate under Sharia law.

Tasmania State Director Jim Collins delivered a keynote address.

"The challenges we face today are nothing less than an anti-Reformation," Mr Collins said.

"We are seeing a social-sexual, pagan revolution. Christians need to recapture the Biblical passion, purpose and power that the Reformers carried as they lived out God's Word. We need a new Reformation for the Western church!"

Victorian schools push sex education

A startling new sex-ed resource dubbed *Catching on Early: Sexuality Education for Victorian Primary Schools* – includes grade two lessons with drawings of male and female genitalia, and grade three lessons featuring circumcised and uncircumcised penises and more detailed drawings of the clitoris and prostate.

Opposition education spokesman Tim Smith has questioned the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, after it allowed Victorian Certificate of Education students to identify as neither exclusively male nor female.

"This is further evidence of the Andrews Labor government's obsession with radical sexuality and gender theory within our schools and education systems," he said, and asked how the change improved standards. Fifty three Victorian students have registered as Gender X so far.

Victorian opposition leader Matthew Guy has campaigned vigorously against the Safe Schools Coalition program, which the Liberal Party has promised to scrap if it wins government in 2018.

Changing lives

FamilyVoice's young adult group, Voice4Change (V4C), began on 4 April 2013, when 22 young adults met to discuss the formation of an activist group. From that meeting, leaders developed and implemented 'Truth' events for young people in churches, discussing key subjects like abortion, homosexuality, pornography and Total Fertility Rates, as well as activities like prayer vigils, visits to parliament, letterboxing, distributing 'drop cards', and a campaign for 'clean-feed' internet. V4C has just reformed with new members and will relaunch in 2018 with fresh vision, and a revitalised passion to empower young adults to be a clear Christian voice.

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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)
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- Islam and women - stories from behind the veil
- Education: are we losing the war?
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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.

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.



Taking away conscientious action violates a person’s soul

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 report due in March

Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull said in November that a review into Australia’s religious protections will be undertaken by an ‘expert panel,’ headed by former Attorney General Philip Ruddock.

The move leaves traditional marriage supporters in legal limbo until the panel reports in March 2018.

The panel includes Human Rights Commission president Rosalind Croucher, former Federal Court judge Annabelle Bennett and Australian Jesuit priest and human rights lawyer Frank Brennan. Mr Brennan said he agreed with a United Nations Human Rights Committee report in November 2017 “saying that Australia’s protection of religious freedom was deficient”, according to an ABC Drive radio interview on November 22. He said that this view is shared by Australia’s Human Rights and Law Reform Commissions, and in this legal framework “bearing in mind that Australia doesn’t have a human rights act, there is a deficieny” of protection.