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'Respectful Relationships' to begin in unnamed WA schools

The McGowan Labor government will roll out a $1 million feminist anti-family primary-to-secondary program into undisclosed schools from 2018.

Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence Minister Simone McGurk said in November that the program was "on track" to start next year in an unnamed "initial set of schools" but did not reveal further details.

Ms McGurk has proposed using curriculum materials from interstate programs and Our Watch – a national pro-feminist organisation that aims to address domestic violence.

The WA program is expected to borrow from Victorian materials which instruct year 1 students to challenge traditional fairytales, gender-based roles and labels. Primary school students are given the feminist narrative that domestic violence is gender-based, taught the risks of "sexting", and are introduced to same-sex attraction and gender fluidity.

Australia's former sex discrimination commissioner Elizabeth Broderick has praised gender neutral preschool-level storybooks used in Finland, Norway and Sweden. The impact of this is uncertain as 'gender gap' analysis in 2014 by the World Economic Forum showed that Nordic women experienced the worst physical or sexual violence in the EU.

FamilyVoice WA State Director Darryl Budge said, "Banning masculine or feminine books is not what parents want, and goes against the natural preferences of boys and girls."

Social commentator Bettina Arndt said that Our Watch attracts up to $2 million of public funds annually, yet its policy documents do not give proper attention to "other proven, evidence-based risk factors such as alcohol and drug abuse, poverty and mental illness," according a 20 August 2016 opinion article.

She said that one woman is killed by her partner or ex-partner every nine days. One man is killed by his partner every 30 days. Male victims represent 23 percent of intimate partner homicides. Men and women share a near 50-50 split of child murders in recent years. A recent national ABS Personal Safety Survey found 1.06 per cent of women are physically assaulted by their partner or ex-partner each year in Australia. Male partner violence against women dropped from 2.5% in 1996 to 0.8% in 2012 (ex-partner violence fell from 3.3% to 0.7%).



A new program introduces primary school students to gay and transgender ideals

The 2001 Young People and Domestic Violence study of 5000 Australians aged 12-20 found 14.4 per cent witnessed two-way "couple violence", nine per cent witnesed male to female violence only and 7.8 per cent witnessed female to male violence only.

AMA warns WA against kill bill

Better palliative care needed to relieve long painful deaths, according to AMA President.

Two days before Victoria legalised euthanasia on November 29, Australian Medical Assocation President Michael Gannon warned Western Australians that dying patients need better palliative care, not legalised killing just 10 days after a request.

WA Premier Mark McGowan has called the Victorian legalisation "a template WA could follow".

FamilyVoice WA State Director Darryl Budge said, "I echo Dr Gannon's warning on the inevitably of Victorian MPs deliberating whether to open the door to dementia, other forms of chronic disease, and mental illness – steps that other nations have legalised."

Dr Gannon further warned, "If you have a situation like the Victorian law, where you can be dead within 10 days of telling a doctor you want to go down that path, there's obviously no opportunity to address that (symptoms)."

The AMA President also corrected a wrong assertion from Victorian Premier Daniel Andrews that doctors were already euthanizing patients. Dr Gannon said euthanasia is "ethically and legally distinct" from medicating to relieve symptoms which secondarily hastens death in the terminally ill.

The WA End of Life Choices parlimentary committee has received over 700 submissions and is due to report in August 2018.

7000 await babies inquiry

FamilyVoice has called on MPs in the West to respond to a 7243-signature petition tabled by Nick Goiran MP on November 1, calling for an inquiry into premature infant deaths.

"The WA upper house committee and the public need to respond swiftly to the horrifying reality that, between July 1999 and December 2016, 27 Western Australians were born alive following abortions, were not given medical care, and subsequently died prematurely," FamilyVoice WA State Director Darryl Budge said.

"The Department of Health is not reporting these deaths to the Coroner, the Ombudsman said he has no jurisdiction and the Department of Child Protection was not alerted about these children who were abandoned by what some call a world-class health care system," Mr Budge said.

"We hope an inquiry will lead to much-needed reforms and tightening of policy to protect the unborn. The inquiry should also investigate disability discrimination, so that unborn babies with a non-lethal condition such as Down Syndrome and Spina Bifida are fully protected from harm."

School atheist case: punishment by process

In 1838 through one of his characters, Charles Dickens penned a quote that has become immortal. Mr Bumble, the unhappy spouse of a domineering wife, was informed in court, "...the law supposes that your wife acts under your direction". He replied: "If the law supposes that, the law is... a[n] idiot".

With the ever-increasing abundance of Statutes, the same might easily have been said of some of the provisions of the Equal Opportunity Act (1984) (WA) ("the Act") and its myriad cousins across the nation.

Mercifully, in a May 2017 case deserving consideration, (Jason Camp on behalf of Charlotte Camp and Director General, Department Of Education), we find that Mr Camp's claim was dismissed.

The Act invites people to 'bother' the courts, it might be argued, with claims that in the Dickensian era might not only have been thrown out, but also included an order for costs due to the litigant's folly (De minimis non curat lex—the law is not concerned with trifles). Frivolous claims like these are typically intended to punish people by court process (and its costs) rather than by the law.

In the above case, the long-suffering taxpayers had to fund the Education Department's legal representatives, the cost, time and inconvenience associated with responding to the complaint, the unsuccessful mediation process and the sitting expenses of the Tribunal.

The unrepresented applicant declared that his six-year-old daughter told him that she was an atheist and was being discriminated against because at the school assembly the children could recite these lines among others: "…Love of mankind, love of life itself, and love of God." Students who opted out of the 'God thing' as did this child, could substitute another less 'theistic' word.

A few years ago, the journalist and blogger Mark Steyn succeeded in a similar tribunal in Canada, a ruling that led to that country's 18C equivalent being amended. But this was not before Steyn expended squillions in legal fees to defend an opinion piece and received no compensation from the initiators. He has repeated many times, in lockstep with the QUT students in Brisbane, that the process was the punishment.

Similarly, a letter from Bishop Porteous and the Catholic Diocese in Tasmania led to an anti-discrimination case initiated a transgender Greens candidate. That person enlivened the statutory discriminatory blanket by complaining about a pastoral letter he sent out to parents of children attending Catholic schools. The letter explained the Christian belief underpinning the sanctity of marriage between a man and a woman. Eventually the complaint fizzled (possibility due the near threat of electoral loss), though not before the respondent incurred many tens of thousands of dollars in legal fees.

The concern for any religious institution, whose pockets are small, is that legislation like that in Western Australia, replicated across the nation at a State and a Federal level, may be utilised to effect like-minded applications in the future.

This is especially so if, as seems inevitable, Australia descends down the pathway of altering the time-honoured meaning of the word, 'marriage.'

By Anthony Smith, a former practising barrister and freelance writer

Schools and churches facing pincer move in some states

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

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.

A recent discussion paper from the NT Attoney-General's Department 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 and churches 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.

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," he wrote.

Mr Gillespie's views reveal the worries of 'No' voters that the agenda of the 'Yes' campaign has undisclosed and far-reaching implications for freedom of conscience.



FamilyVoice WA Director Darryl Budge said, "This goes to show that the more anti-religious the state gets, the more control it seeks by targeting institutions that reject what the state wants to teach, institutions such as schools and churches. Such a state exerts a pincer move to determine who faith groups employ and rolls out sex identity politics material."

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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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‘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.