A state newsletter of

FamilyVoice AUSTRALIA

VoxLink

New South Wales

March 2016

PM calls for review of 'Safe Schools' program

Less than a week after FamilyVoice supporter Nathan Harding handed Malcolm Turnbull an open letter opposing the Safe Schools Coalition program, signed by 14,100 Australians, the PM called for a review of the program.



Nathan Harding (left) handed Malcolm Turnbull our open letter

The open letter and signatory details were presented to the PM at an afternoon tea organised by federal Liberal MP Luke Howarth in his Petrie electorate north of Brisbane on 17 February.

"The Prime Minister was happy to shake my hand and pose for a photo," Mr Harding said.

Former Deputy PM Warren Truss was also happy to receive and be photographed with the open letter, presented by FamilyVoice staffer Jerome Appleby on 27 January.

Four weeks later, new Deputy PM Barnaby Joyce spoke out against the Safe Schools Coalition (SSCA) program. He said Australia's mums and dads would not be happy with its "social entrepreneurship" (*The Australian*, 22/2/16).

Mr Joyce's concerns echoed those of SA Senator Cory Bernardi and Qld MP George Christensen. "I support anti-bullying programs," Mr Christensen said. "But I cannot understand how lining kids up in a classroom and asking them to imagine they have no genitalia would help anyone." Like FamilyVoice Australia, he is calling for the program to be defunded.

Finally, after several Coalition MPs raised concerns at a party room meeting on 23 February, the PM announced a review of the program – to be arranged by education minister Senator Simon Birmingham.

"I hope the review will be unbiased," said FamilyVoice Australia national director Dr David Phillips. "Senator Birmingham has already expressed some support for the program, and last year declined our request to discuss parental concerns. They include the program's pressure on confused young teens to 'come out' as homosexual, bisexual or transgender, even though sexual orientation is fluid at this age.

"The SSCA is promoting a book, *The Gender Fairy*, which tells children as young as four that they can decide whether they are a boy or a girl, regardless of their biological sex," Dr Phillips said. "This program is supposed to be about bullying. In reality, it is about ideology."

Frankston mum withdraws children

A Victorian mother has withdrawn her children from Frankston High School, citing concerns about the Safe Schools Coalition program. Her son had been told in science class that boys could wear dresses to school if they identified as female, and to refer to transgender people by their preferred pronoun.

"He's struggling with his times tables. He doesn't need to deal with this," she said. "You are either born a boy or a girl. I want my kids to value their body. " (*Herald Sun*, 7/2/16).

Copies of the fully documented FamilyVoice open letter can be downloaded from www.fava.org.au

Tony Abbott calls for common sense on marriage



Tony Abbott MP

On 28 January, former PM Tony Abbott addressed a New York dinner sponsored by a group of lawyers who defend Christians unjustly charged under anti-discrimination laws.

Mr Abbott called for common sense and less ideology over same-sex marriage.

He told the Alliance Defending Freedom dinner that it was his "distinguished predecessor John Howard who pointed out that the traditional family was the best social welfare system mankind has ever devised".

He also defended the natural family, saying: "We shouldn't try to change something without understanding it, without grasping why it is that one man and one woman open to children, until just a very few years ago has always been considered the essence of marriage and the heart of family…

"Let's respect and appreciate values and institutions that have stood the test of time, and pass them on undamaged," Mr Abbott said.

"Not long ago, most gay activists rejected marriage as an oppressive institution," he said. "Now, they demand as their right what they recently scorned.

"It [same-sex "marriage"] is a massive ask," he said. "For me, an ask too far."

New transgender rule 'wrong'

Australian tennis champion Margaret Court has slammed the new Olympic rule allowing some male athletes to compete with biological women.

Mrs Court, now senior pastor of the Victory Life Centre in Perth, told *VoxLink* that the change is a sad reflection of what is happening in society today.

"I believe a man is born a man and a woman is born a woman," she said. "But now we are playing by the wrong rules."

Until recently, male Olympic athletes could only compete as "women" after undergoing "gender reassignment" surgery. However, in late January this year, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) announced a major change to its transgender policy. Men can now compete in the women's competition simply by declaring they are female, and by maintaining low testosterone levels for at least 12 months beforehand through hormone therapy.

The IOC claims the new rules will guarantee "fair competition". But in 2014, martial arts fighter Tamikka Brents found otherwise.

She was soundly beaten by Fallon Fox, a transgender fighter who had undergone surgery to look like a woman eight years earlier. Fox gave Brents concussion and a broken eye socket, even though Brents was widely regarded as an abnormally strong female fighter. Tamikka Brents said she had "never felt so overpowered".

Women's records could tumble

Under the new Olympic guidelines, transgender competitors are allowed to be far less "transitioned" than Fallon Fox. Mainstream media and feminist groups have been largely silent about this significant rule change.



Margaret Court: God created men and women to be complementary

Margaret Court says sporting records are unfairly set to tumble in the future.

"God created men and women to be complementary, not competitive," she said. "The LGBT community are demanding rights that are not theirs to take." ■

'Porn Harms Kids' symposium success

The 'Porn Harms Kids' symposium on 9 February gained widespread media coverage, and was the largest of its kind ever held in Australia.

More than 240 people who packed into the University of NSW auditorium heard clear evidence of the disturbing impact of pornography on developing brains.

Outgoing FamilyVoice NSW director Dr David Sandifer was one of the speakers. He said the symposium's success exceeded even the most optimistic expectations.



Dr David Sandifer

"The overwhelming message from the symposium was very clear," he said. "Online pornography has become a public health crisis, and we must take steps to protect our children from its destructive influence."

Another speaker, child psychologist Dr Joe Tucci, said it has become impossible for children not to see porn. "There has been a dramatic increase in the numbers of children sexually assaulting other children," he said.

Dr Sandifer said our society must explore better ways to protect Aussie kids from the long-term harms of pornography.

See page 4 for Dr Sandifer's insightful article entitled: *Why online porn is damaging kids' health.* ■

Senate voting may change

The Turnbull government is proposing to change the way Australians vote for the Senate – by allowing optional preferential voting for parties above the line on the ballot paper.

The current system is undemocratic, since writing a "1" in a box for one party above the line means preferences flow where the party, not the voter, has chosen. But the democratic solution would require voters to number *every party above the line* in order of preference – or number candidates individually below the line if preferred.



Senator Bob Day

The government's proposal, supported by the Greens and Senator Nick Xenophon, would allow voters to number just one box above the line, without indicating any preferences. That could eliminate all smaller parties. It would consolidate the power of the Coalition, the Greens and Senator Xenophon – who usually votes with the Greens, and ironically was first elected in SA with just 2.86% of the primary vote.

Family First Senator Bob Day spoke out against the change on 22 February. He said the government had done a "deal with the devil", and predicted it would spell the death of minor parties.

"Contrary to what the government is saying, this radical change seriously disadvantages voters," he said. "The Greens and Nick Xenophon have been advocating for this change as it will permanently entrench them with the Senate balance of power."

Senator Day said Australians are familiar with the 'best and fairest' voting system and it should be kept. He has moved for a six-month delay to the proposed change so its implications can be properly investigated. ■

PUBLISHER:

FamilyVoice Australia
GPO Box 9894, Sydney NSW 2001
phone: 1300 365 965 fax: 08 8223 5850
email: office@fava.org.au www.fava.org.au

PUBLISHED:

March, June, September, December

EDITORS:

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PRINTER:

Openbook Howden, St Marys SA 5042

EXTRACTS:

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Editorial

Making schools safe – for all

VoxPoint and *VoxLink* have long been warning readers about Safe Schools Coalition Australia's (SSCA) so-called anti-bullying program that focuses on and celebrates students who are LGBTIQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex or Queer).

In Victoria, our state director Peter Stevens reported parental concerns back in 2010, soon after the state Labor government implemented it as a voluntary program devised by homosexual activists.

Three years later, the program moved beyond Victoria. A few weeks before the 2013 federal election, Labor Senator Penny Wong, an open lesbian, established $8 million in funding for the SSCA program. Tony Abbott's new government told us the contract must be honoured.

In 2014, we issued our open letter to the Prime Minister. We explained that the SSCA fails miserably as an anti-bullying program, since it ignores the most common forms of bullying – based on appearance, ability or ethnicity. A large Canadian survey has found that bullying based on sexual orientation or gender identity is not even among the top seven reasons for bullying.

We pointed out that the SSCA program has created *more* bullying – of students unwilling to support its political agenda that includes same-sex "marriage". We asked the PM to defund it.

More than 14,000 Australians signed and returned the open letters, which still flow into our national office. Finally, on 17 February this year, the Prime Minister received them – and a week later announced a review of the program, following pressure from a significant group of government MPs.

This is a great step in the right direction. But if the review merely recommends a rewrite of the most offensive parts of the program, its underlying political thrust will remain.

Some Queensland parents who tried to raise the issue at a school council meeting were told by the principal that discussion was not appropriate – the decision to join the SSCA was entirely hers. An SA parent who discussed it with her school principal found he did not understand the program's true nature.

At present the program is voluntary – but Victoria's Labor Premier Dan Andrews will make it compulsory for all state high schools by 2018.

After same-sex marriage became law in Massachusetts in 2003, school programs promoting the LGBTIQ agenda became compulsory. Could this happen here?

The SSCA must be replaced by a proven program addressing all forms of bullying.

Letters

Community effort required

From all I heard at the recent *Porn Harms Kids* symposium, one phrase rings in my mind: "Children don't have to look for porn on the net; it comes looking for them". The menace implied is chilling. As the use of pornography becomes routine from an early age, devastating consequences often result. Clearly, it suits the multi-billion dollar porn industry to target the young.

First, we must recognise that porn is everywhere and our children are in grave danger. Then we must devise ways of cutting back its availability and of repairing the damage already done. Much research has been undertaken and many suggestions were presented at the symposium. These involve parents, children, teachers and the wider community as well as the IT industry and government. We all must get to work. Fortunately, some strong leadership is already there!

Pat Gartlan
Battery Point, Tas

Freedom erosion

During 1924-1926, Adolf Hitler wrote "Mein Kampf". Here's what Adolf Hitler wrote, among other things:

The *best* way to take control over a people and control them utterly, is to take a little of their freedom at a time, to erode rights by a thousand tiny and almost imperceptible reductions. In this way, the people will not see those rights and freedoms being removed – until past the point of reversal.

Is history repeating itself innocuously? It reminds me of the frog in the cool water. It remains there and adjusts to the ever-so-slight increases in temperature of the water – until it's boiling ...

Alan Owen
Katoomba, NSW

Thank you Tony

Thank you, Mr Abbott, for sharing on the value of marriage: one man with one wife as a lifelong commitment. I'm so disappointed that you had to go overseas to do it!

Judith Bond
Campbelltown, NSW

Unsafe schools program

The media exposure of the so called Safe Schools Coalition is long overdue. This taxpayer-funded school program for 10/11 year olds is fundamentally a propaganda manual promoting homosexuality and transgenderism to children who have barely reached the stage of sexual consciousness. It claims to be anti-bullying, but fails to mention the six most frequent forms of bullying – which do not include homosexual/transgender bullying.

It is well known that young teenagers sometimes experience homosexual feelings but these generally disappear as they grow older. This dangerous school program could lead to sexual confusion and premature depression. It is hard to believe that any school principal who understood its contents could support its use. It should be banned from schools and replaced by an existing program that targets all forms of bullying.

Dr Ian Holford
Tamworth, NSW

Marriage plebiscite

The people who want same-sex "marriage" should realise that they are only alive today because a man and a woman joined together in sexual union to conceive a child to be loved and cared for until adulthood.

Keith Chester
Fairview Park, SA



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Why online porn is damaging kids' health



Dr David Sandifer was a speaker at the Porn Harms Kids conference at the University of NSW on 9 February. His article below explains why the huge number of children viewing internet pornography is creating a long-term public health crisis.

Last April, the UK *Telegraph* ran a story on the way that porn exposure is impacting adolescents. The article quoted a GP who is now seeing young girls presenting with serious internal damage and sometimes incontinence. The reason? Rough treatment from their sexual partners – especially anal sex, which is now "standard among teenagers".[1] Boys are mimicking the porn they watch, and girls feel pressured to go along. In the words of the GP, "These girls are very young and slight and their bodies are simply not designed for that."

These girls did not come from socially disadvantaged backgrounds. They were not abducted by strangers, or date raped. They were middle-class girls living the normal lives of teenagers today. Welcome to the new reality: it's a porn world, and we all live in it.

If you need further convincing, consider these statistics: according to one study, porn accounts for 37% of internet traffic, and in any given month porn sites get more users than Netflix, Amazon and Twitter combined. In a survey of 11-16 year old boys, *Pornhub* was named one of the 'top 5' most popular online destinations.

In an analysis of the most popular porn scenes, 88% of them contained physical aggression and 94% of it was directed toward women.

Porn rewires young brains

In addition, we now know that exposure to pornography rewires the brain to alter sexual responses, and teenagers' brains are especially malleable. In a world where the average teenage boy will see thousands of sex acts before his first kiss, porn is increasingly shaping sexual expectations and desires. Sex researcher Gail Dines describes the ubiquity of porn today as "the largest unregulated social experiment ever". The Chief Superintendent of London's Metropolitan Police, John Sutherland, has described the sexualisation of young people as "catastrophic". In his words, those who try to "brush off the risks of allowing boys unrestricted access to hardcore footage are either wilfully ignorant or wilfully stupid".[2]

Where is the outrage?

Perhaps the only thing more shocking than this crisis is that we are not more shocked by it. Sure, an occasional article will draw attention to the epidemic – but the conversation typically ends with anaemic calls for more resources for parents and better education for kids. Appallingly, our society has accepted the present situation as more or less unavoidable – *if the "right" of adults to view what they please online sacrifices the innocence of children, well, so be it.*

And why have *Christians* been so silent on this issue? Surely we, of all people, know the power of thoughts to shape behaviour (Mark 7:23)? Surely we, of all people, feel the call to protect the most vulnerable in our society (Matt. 18:6)? Perhaps our fear of wowserism means we have surrendered any voice on sex related matters, however shocking the harm. Or perhaps we have been swayed by bogus libertarian arguments into believing that any regulation of adult content on the internet amounts to an attack on free speech – despite our regulation of every other form of media. Or perhaps the truth cuts more deeply: since surveys show that over half of Christian men look at porn monthly, could it be that the topic simply hits too close to home?



Early exposure to porn can lead to sexual violence: symposium speaker Dr Michael Flood

If there were no obvious solution to this crisis, still we would have a moral duty to find one. But that is not the case. The UK has introduced by-default filtering of adult content which is effective, affordable, and imposes minimal inconvenience on adults who want to access porn – they can simply opt out if they choose. The UK system (voluntary at this time, but with legislation planned) involves each internet service provider (ISP) setting up porn blocks. This removes concerns about government involvement and provides more robust protection than device-level software. While no system is perfect, ISP-level filters have been shown to be effective and have been welcomed by many internet users.

In early December, a Senate inquiry into child sexualisation was launched. This is a hopeful first step, but much work remains for a cultural shift to take place.

Where will Christians be in this battle?

In 1785, a young Cambridge student named Thomas Clarkson had an epiphany. Slavery, he realised, was not a nuisance to be tolerated but a great moral evil which stained Britain and shamed Christians. Little by little, other Christians were recruited to the cause – most famously William Wilberforce – and what started as an idealistic crusade became a topic of national debate. The status quo was challenged, and eventually, in 1807, the slave trade was abolished. Christians had their conscience awakened, and they awakened the conscience of a nation.

When it comes to children and porn, will 2016 be our 1785 in Australia?

1. "Pornography has changed the landscape of adolescence beyond all recognition", Allison Pearson, *The Telegraph*, 22 April, 2015
2. "Porn's effect on youth 'is catastrophic'", Chris Greenwood, *The Daily Mail*, 16 Sep 2016.

⋆ This article was published in longer form online on 4 January by Bible Society Australia.