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South Australia

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SA MPs vote in favour of life

After an all-night sitting on 16-17 November, the SA House of Assembly voted 24:23 to defeat a bill that would have legalised voluntary euthanasia.

FamilyVoice South Australia director David d'Lima was in the public gallery for the entire debate from 7.30 pm to 4.15 am, and welcomed the outcome. He said the bill was so badly drafted that its own author (Liberal MP Dr Duncan McFetridge) had to introduce a raft of amendments at the last minute.

"The bill was substantially amended 'on the fly'," David d'Lima said. "Even in its amended form, the final wording failed to provide adequate protection for elderly, frail or otherwise vulnerable people. It would have sent a dangerous message to young people suffering temporary depression.

"MPs are in no position to properly consider any issue when deprived of sleep. Such a sweeping life-or-death proposition deserved a full inquiry.

"Speaker Michael Atkinson was right to use his casting vote to negate a proposal that did not have majority support on the floor of the House."



Pro-life MPs Vincent Tarzia and Stephan Knoll (centre, rear) with pro-life supporters outside the public gallery during the euthanasia debate in November

US votes for pro-life Congress

Donald Trump won the US presidential election on 8 November, to the amazement of most media 'experts'. Even more astounding were the congressional elections on the same day – resulting in pro-life majorities in both houses.

America's new Senate and House of Representatives will begin sitting on 3 January 2017. In both houses there will be a majority of Republicans – and a majority of pro-life Republicans and Democrats. President Trump will be sworn in on 20 January. He is expected to mark the annual Washington March for Life on 27 January with a message of support.



Vice President-elect Mike Pence: prolife, pro-family

That support will be more than mere words. Donald Trump has put Mike Pence, his pro-life, pro-family running mate, in charge of the transition team to help choose his new cabinet.

The new president will need to replace pro-life US Supreme Court judge Antonin Scalia, who sadly died in February. Barack Obama unsuccessfully nominated a judge with anti-life views. By contrast, Donald Trump has promised to choose a judge who respects both the US Constitution and the right to life of the unborn. He has also promised to appoint future Supreme Court judges who would help overturn the 1973 Roe v Wade and Doe v Bolton decisions that legalised abortion right up to birth across the nation.

New FamilyVoice national director Ashley Saunders said neither the Democrat nor the Republican presidential candidate has been free from serious character flaws. "But there is now some hope for a more pro-life, pro-family culture in the US government," he said.

Israeli 'clean feed' bill

Israel's parliament has given initial approval to a new bill requiring a default 'clean feed' (porn-free) service from internet providers.

The bill was co-sponsored by MPs from across the political spectrum in late October, with only the left-wing Meretz party opposing.

The bill would require internet service providers to block access to pornographic, gambling and violent websites by default. Customers would have to personally contact their internet providers to remove the filter.

The bill points out that 60 per cent of Israeli children between the ages of nine and fifteen have already been exposed to internet pornography. "The damaging influence of watching, and addiction to, pornographic and severe violence has been proven in many studies," said MP Moalem-Refaeli.

Libertarian groups are pressuring the Israeli government to weaken the legislation – but there is hope that the final wording will nevertheless provide much more protection for children than there is now.

New FamilyVoice national director Ashley Saunders has praised the Israeli move. He is calling on the Australian parliament to follow suit.

Rights Commissioner meets FamilyVoice

Edward Santow, recently appointed Australian Human Rights Commissioner, paid a personal visit to the FamilyVoice national office on 9 November.

He said he had read with interest the FamilyVoice submissions on human rights issues. He is seeking to listen to, and hopefully build bridges between, groups with differing views. He visited the Adelaide office of LGBTIQ (Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Intersex Queer) activists on the same day.

National director Dr David Phillips explained the inherent injustice of federal and state anti-discrimination laws. "These laws ban unfavourable treatment of groups with various attributes," he said. "But they allow unfavourable treatment of all other groups. Complaints are 'conciliated' in private. They cost the complainant nothing, but the respondent is often advised to pay compensation even if he or she is innocent, because the cost of proving one's innocence is so great."

Research officer Ros Phillips said FamilyVoice had approached a company earlier this year for help with website development. "They refused, saying they disagreed with our values," she said. "That is their right. They have broken no law.

"But if the boot was on the other foot – if we had been a bakery like Ashers in Northern Ireland, and had refused to decorate a cake with a slogan saying 'Support gay marriage', we could be in big trouble. How fair is that?"



Edward Santow (centre) with Ros and David Phillips

Dr Phillips also explained why the so-called *Marriage Equality* slogan is based on a false premise. "Marriage, ever since the beginning of human history, has been about children," he said. "Only a man-woman union has the potential to produce the next generation together – and that is the reason governments have an interest in regulating and encouraging the man-woman marriage commitment.

"Other couples or groups can legally establish their relationships via wills, deeds and powers of attorney. They are not unfairly treated. Marriage does not discriminate: all Australians have the right to marry if they are 18 or over, and intending to be faithful for life to a spouse of the opposite sex who is not closely related."

Mr Santow thanked FamilyVoice for their hospitality and said he had some new ideas to think about.

Is 'Safe Schools' founder a bully?

A dramatic photograph of 'Safe Schools' co-founder Roz Ward assaulting a male bystander has reinforced parental concerns about the supposedly anti-bullying program.



Wardenclyffe Photography

Roz Ward tries to remove a Trump supporter's hat

Ms Ward was holding copies of the Marxist newspaper *The Red Flag* while taking part in a Melbourne protest on 11 November against Donald Trump's US election win. A peaceful bystander was wearing a Trump campaign hat with the words, *Make America Great Again* – and Roz Ward assaulted him, trying to pull it off his head.

FamilyVoice SA director David d'Lima said this kind of behaviour – bullying people with different opinions – has increased in some schools using the so-called *Safe Schools* program. "Many parents are relieved that the federal government will not fund these counter-productive and misleading materials next year," he said. "I urge SA education minister Susan Close to withdraw them completely from SA schools," he said.

Bad laws pass SA lower house

Several potentially harmful bills were debated in the SA House of Assembly in November and are expected to pass the Legislative Council by the year's end.

The Legislative Council Voting Bill would eliminate preference voting above the line and bring in what is effectively "first past the post" voting.

Unlike the new Senate system which allows people to number six parties in order of preference above the line, the proposed SA upper house system would allow voters to number just one box. If they wanted to indicate preferences, they would have to number every box below the line – but few would do so.

"The bill would make it very difficult for minor party candidates to gain seats. This would deprive parliament of significant minority views," David d'Lima said.

Other bills of concern include a new Gender Identity Bill, passed with more safeguards but still allowing sex on birth certificates to be changed merely after some undefined "treatment". This bill would trivialise what it means to be a man or woman. It could weaken protections for women in public restrooms and refuges.

Another bill allowing singles and same-sex couples to adopt SA babies passed, as did a bill to allow singles and same-sex couples to use surrogacy to acquire a child, and a bill to allow same-sex couples to register their relationship in the Register of Births, Deaths and Marriages.

"These bills have been rushed through with little media reporting or public debate," David d'Lima said. "South Australians deserve better – from both major parties!"

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Editorial

How did US opinion polls get it so wrong?

US opinion polls predicted that Hillary Clinton would be elected US president, possibly by a landslide, on 8 November 2016.

But they were wrong – very wrong. Billionaire businessman Donald Trump won more votes than Hillary Clinton in 30 of the 50 US states. He won an expected 306 electoral college votes: she gained only 232.

The mainstream media wrote off Trump as an unelectable, egotistical bigot. They failed to note his secret weapon – running mate and now US Vice President-elect, Mike Pence. Pence's name was linked with Trump on placards at every campaign rally. Pence stood at Trump's side on every major podium. Donald Trump has chosen Mike Pence to lead his transition team in the lead-up to the presidential inauguration on 20 January – a key role.

Mike Pence is the opposite of Donald Trump in many ways. The former congressman and Governor of Indiana speaks quietly and rationally. He is widely respected for his political wisdom and experience, and his careful management of Indiana's finances. In a YouTube video that went viral on 4 November, Mike Pence said he is "a Christian, a Conservative and a Republican – in that order".

The morning after the US election, Australia's Deputy Prime Minister Barnaby Joyce told journalists he had just phoned the US to congratulate the man behind Trump's unexpected victory: Mike Pence. Mr Joyce said voters were attracted to Pence's Christian values.

But what about those flawed opinion polls? Former Australian PM Tony Abbott says one reason the polls were so wrong is that "people aren't always upfront with the pollsters". After seeing the abuse poured on those who are not "politically correct", many people don't want to say what they really think (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 11/11/16).

There is a message here for those who have ears to hear. Opinion polls claim that up to 70% of Australians support same-sex "marriage". But since the media vilify anyone who says marriage should remain man-woman, many people who hold this view are reluctant to reveal it.

Labor and others voted against the Turnbull government's plebiscite bill last month. Their real reason may have been fear – that in the privacy of the polling booth, a majority of Australians could vote to keep our Marriage Act the way it is.

Letters

Courage in a hostile world

I have been re-reading the book, *Courage in a hostile world: the story of FamilyVoice Australia*. It has given me greater admiration and thanksgiving for the example David and Ros Phillips have set in devotion to Jesus and obedience to His leading.

I am very glad I decided on a "second helping".

Margaret Moyse
Marryatville, SA

Thank you

Thank you, David and Ros, for allowing God to use you in so many ways. We have always been keen to learn of your exploits in your magazines and letters. We have been able to use your examples when talking to others.

Our generation has been brought up "not to talk about religion and politics", but FamilyVoice has given us a door to use – to talk about things we have learned. You have been the only place we could hear from good authority, a truthful opposite view to the one promoted by the media.

Vonnie and Tony Ackland
Lobethal, SA

Rights of children

Giving preference rights to adopt children by homosexual and lesbian couples overlooks the rights and best interests of the most vulnerable orphaned or relinquished children.

The real issue is not about same-sex couple families, but should be about children and finding mothers and fathers for children tragically denied them and not children for adults, heterosexual or homosexual. One would hope that children's rights would take preference.

Bruce Hambour
North Haven, SA

Euthanasia bill defeat

I congratulate the 24 SA House of Assembly MPs who voted to defeat the Death With Dignity Bill last month.

Labor MP Jennifer Rankine summed up the situation in her speech. She said: "… no matter how carefully or thoughtfully these (euthanasia) bills are drafted, they cannot ensure vulnerable people will not be pressured or coerced into choosing euthanasia and, importantly, neither the independence nor the quality of the medical profession involved in the process of approving someone's death can be guaranteed."

Lindsay Dent
Campbelltown, SA

US election

Feelings and fears are running high since the election of Donald Trump as US President-elect, in Australia as well as his own country, and no less among Christians.

When I hear hateful rants attacking either Trump or Clinton, extravagant praises and glowing expectations or dire predictions of disaster, I reflect on our hubris as humans. We just don't know how the challenges and pressures of office will affect this man, who like us all is sinful, fallible and in need of forgiveness.

I'd rather wait and see and pray for Donald Trump – that God will work out his purposes in and through him, just as we pray for our own Australian leaders whether we admire them or not.

In doing so, we are obeying the Bible's injunction to pray "for kings and all in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness …" (1 Timothy 2: 2).

Lesley Hicks
Chatswood, NSW



- Passing on the baton
- Haters, rocks and Bill Shorten
- Plebiscite block allows more time

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Who is Ashley Saunders?

The new national director of FamilyVoice Australia was not your average child – he loved reading Hansard!

By the age of ten, Ashley Saunders was an avid reader of federal parliament's Hansard – the printed record of all debates. By then he had already settled on his life ambitions: to be a father, a lawyer and a politician.

So it was, at the age of 20, he became Australia's youngest candidate for a seat in federal parliament. *The Australian* newspaper ran a feature article under the heading: *Old Hat? Not on the Hustings* – noting Ashley's remarkably young age to have formed an interest in politics.

> **"My life has been shaped by the Good News of Jesus Christ, and by the gospel values of service and hospitality."**

His candidacy was all the more extraordinary since, to Ashley's knowledge, no one from either side of his family going back many generations had ever finished high school, and there had never been any active political involvement.

"We didn't have a television, and I'd never met a lawyer," he says. "But even at that tender age, I sensed that this was something of a direction for my life."

There was never much money in the Saunders family home, but there was faith, hope and love. "My life has been shaped by the Good News of Jesus Christ, and by the gospel values of service and hospitality – values I learned as part of a family of six living in a one-bedroom home," Ashley says.

His father Fred was the Australian Secretary of Merchant Navy Christian Fellowship, a ministry that extended hospitality to Christian seamen. "We only had six chairs in the house, and a small eat-in kitchen," Ashley recalls. "But that didn't stop us having sailors or missionaries home for a meal.

"We'd move the table into the living room that served as Mum and Dad's bedroom, and the children would sit along the edge of the bed so that the adults could sit on chairs to eat their meals. Then, when I was eight years old, Mum and Dad prayerfully agonised over their decision to borrow what was for them the enormous sum of $6,000 to extend the house."

They added two bedrooms and a sunroom – and a bathroom, which the children thought was really special. Before then they had used a bath in a corner of the laundry. The sunroom soon became a bedroom for a young girl whom the Saunders adopted.

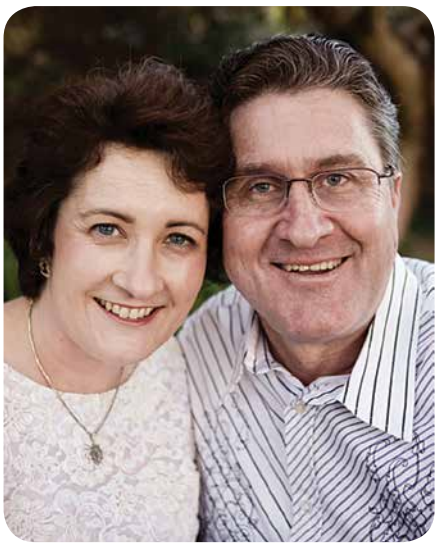
Ashley was offered a place to study law at the University of Sydney after he completed high school, but was unable to accept because his parents could not financially support him. He thought he would not be able to achieve his ambition.

"But I was then offered employment as a law clerk by the solicitor of a friend of a family friend," Ashley says. "I started with that firm as an enthusiastic 17-year-old, studied law by correspondence, was asked to stay on as a solicitor, and then invited to buy into the practice."

In the meantime, he also welcomed the first of his four children into the world – fulfilling another of his life ambitions.

At the age of 26, Ashley was elected as an Alderman of Newcastle City Council, and was later re-elected for a second term. He became involved with politics at an organisational level.

He also became an active lay preacher, mentored by Milton Morris, the long-serving NSW Minister for Transport – known for his committed Christian faith, and a strong supporter of the Australian Festival of Light as FamilyVoice Australia was then known. Later, after relocating to Port Macquarie on the state's mid north coast, Ashley began preaching regularly at churches in the region.



Ashley and Lindsay Saunders

He also commenced theological studies by correspondence – repeating the pattern by which he had studied law many years earlier. Then, at the age of 40, Ashley and his family moved to Sydney to complete his theological studies on a full-time basis. He accepted an invitation to join the pastoral team of a local Baptist Church.

Many people he knew found his decision to leave his successful law practice hard to understand, but Ashley believes it made perfect sense. "I was clearly led into law and I was clearly led out of it," he says. "What's more, my motivation was the same: to serve the Lord by serving people in whatever ways He chooses."

That brings us to the further crossroads where Ashley found himself earlier this year, after serving as Senior Pastor of a Queensland Baptist Church for over seven years. Reflecting on that journey, Ashley muses, "Lindsay and I sensed that my ministry with the Church was coming to an end. Then, as I was prayerfully considering what the Lord would have me do in the next chapter of my life, the possibility of serving with FamilyVoice Australia came across my desk.

"As I prepare to step into this new challenge, I am extremely conscious of our nation's vital need for a Christian voice in the civic arena for family, faith and freedom.

"To borrow from the Apostle Paul, our nation desperately needs the enduring qualities of faith, hope and love – the godly, selfless and true kind of love taught and modelled by our Lord Jesus Christ."

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