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Forums get folk thinking

Talks by Peter Abetz MP and former homosexual James Parker stimulated thoughtful discussion at recent Perth marriage forums organised by FamilyVoice.

Attendees at Woodvale, Kalamunda and South Perth totalled several hundred. They included same-sex-attracted people drawn by advertising and a story on OutinPerth.com.

Woodvale Baptist Church Pastor Colin Lituri said: "The presentations were fantastic and I'm so glad we hosted."

Peter Abetz explained the clear link between cultural Marxist ideology and the "Safe Schools" program. He encouraged parents and those with professional qualifications to make a difference by joining independent state school boards.

Mr Parker said his masculinity had been damaged by abuse during his childhood and teen years. He said abuse and dysfunctional family relationships are factors that may lead to same-sex attraction.

Many attendees greatly appreciated advice on practical steps and resources – including a preview of FamilyVoice's second video released on 1 December on the website MarriageReality.org.au.

FamilyVoice WA director David Lowe, who is stepping down to continue his PhD research on marriage full time, was encouraged by the feedback.



Peter Abetz MP, James Parker, Darryl Budge and David Lowe answering questions at the Kalamunda Forum on 24 November

Acting WA director Darryl Budge paid tribute to his predecessor and his five years of dedicated service to the FamilyVoice ministry.

Senate porn inquiry details harm

A Senate inquiry on internet porn has detailed its harms, but failed to recommend 'clean feed' internet – unlike a bill given initial approval by the Israeli parliament.

The inquiry report was tabled on 23 November. It detailed the growing problem of children's exposure to online pornography – and porn harms, including child-on-child sex abuse. It recommended more Australian research, and advice for parents on how to keep their children safe. But although many submissions backed a clean feed internet service to block harmful websites, the report did not recommend this option.

By contrast, the Israeli bill, co-sponsored by lawmakers from across the political spectrum in late October, would require clean feed internet by default. Customers would need to contact their internet providers to have the block removed. "The damaging influence of watching … 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 greater protection for children.

FamilyVoice WA acting director Darryl Budge praised the Senate for investigating the issue. "The evidence of porn harm, detailed in our FamilyVoice submission and those of many other groups, is a red flag governments cannot ignore," he said.

"While more research is always worthwhile, I believe the time has come for action. The Israeli bill is a positive step, and I commend it to our country's leaders."



How do we best protect young minds from harm?

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 that resulted in pro-life majorities in both houses.

President Trump will be sworn in on 20 January and is expected to mark the annual Washington March for Life on 27 January with a message of support.

Trump has put Mike Pence, his pro-life, pro-family running mate, in charge of the transition team to help choose his new cabinet. Trump also promised to nominate a new incoming Supreme Court judge (and future 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.

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?"

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.



Edward Santow (centre) with Ros and David Phillips

MPs vote for 'Life'

MPs in the SA House of Assembly defeated a bill to legalise euthanasia on 17 November – and there is hope that WA MPs may do the same next year.

Greens MLC Robin Chapple said he will introduce a euthanasia bill after the March election. WA author and pastor Andrew Lansdown says many people who support euthanasia are confused about what it really is.

Euthanasia is not refusing futile or extreme treatment, or turning off life support to allow natural death. "The man who rejects a heart transplant or declines a second course of chemotherapy is not committing suicide," Andrew Lansdown says. "Giving pain inhibiting drugs that inadvertently hasten death is not euthanasia either, because the aim is to relieve suffering – not to kill."

An SA MP pointed out on 16 November: "… 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."

'Safe Schools' election issue

The controversial Safe Schools program marks a big divide between the Liberals and Labor/Greens in the lead up to the WA state election on 11 March 2017.

Colin Barnett's Liberals have declined to endorse the program, which teaches that gender is "fluid" and promotes the premature sexualisation of children. By contrast, WA Labor leader Mark McGowan is promising to roll out "Safe Schools" across the state to the tune of $350,000 each year.

A Mandurah parent, upset at lack of consultation about the program at her local state school, said Safe Schools is "indoctrination … contrary to what we'd expect students to learn in biology".

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.

Acting FamilyVoice WA director Darryl Budge said this kind of behaviour – bullying people with different opinions – has increased in some schools using the so-called Safe Schools program. "Fortunately, few WA schools are using these counter-productive and misleading materials," he said. "But that could change if WA has a Labor government next March."

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Dr David and Mrs Roslyn Phillips

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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

Same-sex 'marriage': what happens next?

Here are some incidents that have occurred after same-sex marriage was legalised overseas – you can verify them with a quick Google search.

In Massachusetts, children are required to attend sex education classes that teach homosexual relations and marriage as equally safe and acceptable as heterosexual. Parents are not given the option of withdrawing their children.

One father spent a night in jail after he objected to the new requirement. The situation is similar in Canada and other US states like California.

Bakers who have refused to prepare a cake for a same sex "marriage" ceremony because of their Christian beliefs have been punished with huge fines.

The same goes for marriage celebrants who decline to conduct such "weddings" for the similar reasons.

Some churches are saying they may not "do" weddings anymore if same-sex "marriages" are legalised here.

Apparently they would urge their parishioners to have a civil ceremony and then to have a service in the church to join in holy matrimony before God.

Florists, hotels, caterers, churches and function centres would be liable for prosecution under anti-discrimination laws if they do not, for reasons of conscience, want to participate in a same-sex "marriage".

Wayne Crow
Yoongarillup, WA

The US election

The forgotten conservatives who worked so hard for a Trump-Pence victory want a return to order that will make America great. More importantly, they want to build that moral America that God will bless.

It makes no sense that a nation built on Christian principles and one that defeated atheist Nazism and Communism, finds itself in a situation where Ten Commandments monuments, crosses, nativity scenes and Christmas carols are targeted by secular rage.

May God grant wisdom, prudence, temperance, justice and fortitude to President-elect Trump and all our elected leaders.

Moira Kirkwood
Attadale, WA

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 would 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.

Youngest candidate

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.

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.

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

"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."

Christian home

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.

Law practice

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."

Father and Alderman

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.

Pastoral ministry

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.

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.



Ashley and Lindsay Saunders

Call to leave law

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."

Call to FamilyVoice

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.

Family, faith and freedom

"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."