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New hope for porn-free internet

A NSW parliamentary report on the sexualisation of children and youth has recommended an opt-in internet service blocking harmful websites.



Liberal MP Melanie Gibbons chaired the inquiry by the Children and Young People Committee. In the report tabled on 17 November she said the committee "heard strong evidence that easy internet access exposes many children and young people to online pornography and websites that provide non-age appropriate sexual information".

The committee has recommended further research in several key areas. It also wants the NSW Attorney-General to "advocate for the adoption of opt-in internet filtering through the Council of Australian Governments Law, Crime and Community Safety Council".

FamilyVoice NSW director Aaron Wright has welcomed the report, which cites a FamilyVoice submission numerous times. "We have argued for default internet filters rather than 'opt-in', in order to protect children" Aaron Wright said. "But 'opt-in' is a big improvement on no ISP filters at all. The report's recommendation is a big step forward."

Good news on 'Safe Schools'

Aaron Wright also praised the report's recommendation that schools be required to *consult with parents prior to any implementation of the Safe Schools program, and require that parents choose whether to opt in to this program. At any time parents may elect to have their child opt out of the program.*

"This is good news," Mr Wright said. "We have long urged the NSW government to protect children from the controversial 'Safe Schools' program. Its misleading and inappropriate messages about sexuality and gender have the potential to cause significant harm and confusion.

"I commend this report, and urge the Baird government to implement its important recommendations." ■

Senate porn inquiry disappoints

A Senate inquiry into harm to children from online porn has failed to recommend 'clean feed' internet – unlike a bill given initial approval by the Israeli parliament.

The inquiry report by the Senate Environment and Communications References Committee was tabled on 23 November. It summarised submissions detailing the growing problem of children's exposure to online pornography – and harms such as child-on-child sex abuse. It recommended more Australian research, and help for parents to keep their children safe. But although many submissions backed a clean feed internet service blocking 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 than there is now. ■

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.

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.

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.



Mike Pence

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. ■

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.



Edward Santow (centre) with Ros and David Phillips

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.

Scripture teachers praised

FamilyVoice NSW director Aaron Wright attended a Parliament House reception on 15 November for Special Religious Education (SRE) providers.

Education minister Adrian Piccoli and opposition education spokesman Jihad Dib both affirmed the great value of SRE in the NSW public school system. Outstanding volunteer SRE teachers, along with two school principals, won 15 awards for excellence.

"The NSW Government supports the good work done by providers of Special Religious Education. It is an important way in which children can learn about the values that are at the heart of the world's religions," Mr Piccoli said.



Aaron Wright (left) with former deputy PM John Anderson at the SRE reception

"I was delighted to be part of this event, praising the vital work done largely by Christian volunteers across NSW," Aaron Wright said.

"At a time when other states like SA and Victoria no longer allow special religious education in school hours, it is encouraging to see both sides of the NSW parliament affirming its value."

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.

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 NSW director Aaron Wright said this kind of behaviour – bullying people with different opinions – has increased in some schools using the so-called Safe Schools program.



Wardenclyffe Photography

Roz Ward tries to remove a Trump supporter's hat

"Many parents are relieved that the federal government will not fund these counter-productive and misleading materials next year," he said. "I urge the NSW government to withdraw them completely from NSW schools."

Education Department secretary Mark Scott is said to be continuing his review of the controversial *Crossroads* relationships education program used in several NSW schools. Crossroads, like Safe Schools, teaches students that gender is "fluid" and is not linked to biological sex.

Sydney University law professor Patrick Parkinson has criticised the gender ideology underlying these programs. He said it is not based on evidence and has no place in primary or secondary school curriculums (*The Australian*, 19/9/16).

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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

US presidential election

It is wrong to assume that US voters did not come to a rational and carefully considered conclusion in the recent presidential election.

According to a survey by Rassmussen that was more accurate than most national polls, a very important issue for voters was that US Supreme Court and other judges be appointed who would respect and observe the US Constitution. Voters knew that Clinton would nominate more left-wing activists, determined that the Constitution mean what they want it to mean.

David Flint
Bondi, NSW

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

There is an unspoken consensus in the secular media to bury major reasons for Hillary Clinton's presidential defeat which they feel uncomfortable exposing.

She failed in part because of the Benghazi scandal and her chronic dishonesty. Other reasons include her extreme feminism; her disrespect for ordinary, natural women whose primary devotion is not to careers but to their husbands and children; her public abortion advocacy, including of partial-birth abortions; and her declaration that laws banning discrimination against homosexuals should always trump religious freedom.

Dr Colin Jory
Narrabundah, ACT

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

'Safe Schools' hypocrisy

When schools that have adopted the Safe Schools Coalition program have declared special days to promote the rainbow agenda, students who didn't participate have been bullied.

For example, if students are asked to wear rainbow or purple-coloured clothing and some students feel more comfortable in school uniforms, the students who wear uniforms are given a hard time. Yet transgender boys are encouraged to wear school uniform dresses if they feel more comfortable in a dress!

(Mrs) Herminie Swainston
Palm Beach 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."