

Catholic schools and hospitals may close, warns Anthony Fisher

The Catholic Archbishop of Sydney has raised the prospect of closing religious schools, like the 1962 Goulburn school strike, in response to government infringement of religious liberties.

Archbishop Anthony Fisher has suggested that the closure of Catholic schools should be considered “if we were told we were not allowed to take religion into account in who we employ, or in the ethos of our schools, which is quite a push at the moment”.

“There’s an example of, I think, a crunch point that would force us to consider withdrawal from a ministry,” the Archbishop said.

In a recent address to the Sydney Catholic Business Network, Fisher said, “Some have suggested we should ‘do another Goulburn’ [like six Catholic schools in 1962] and close our ministries in protest against cultural, legal and governmental interference,” he said. “But you don’t get to play that card too often, and the strategy can easily backfire. It would also rob the community of needed services.”

The National Catholic Education Commission calculates that 800,000 students are being taught in 1750 Catholic schools, representing about one in five students nationally.

“I am not in favour of fleeing to the caves, at least not yet,” he said, and added that “sometimes strategic withdrawal is in order, especially to repair and regroup”.

He cautioned that a conventional defence of religious protections in the best interests of individuals and society would need to be exhausted first. “Australia has never incorporated the provisions of religious freedom into federal domestic law,” he said.

He suggested that Catholic hospitals might be forced to consider closure if required to provide abortions, and cited the example of Catholic adoption agencies withdrawing services from countries that have banned placing children with only married couples.

In early May, Archbishop Fisher and two other Catholic leaders Peter Comensoli and Jacinta Collins sent proposed amendments to the draft religious discrimination laws to the government and opposition, which would remove Section 38 of the Sex Discrimination Act, and replace it with more precise protections.

“If the (government’s) amendments to the SDA and the proposed Religious Discrimination Bill were enacted as currently drafted, there would be a very real and substantial reduction in existing legal and operational freedoms for religious education institutions,” their letter states.

“In essence, we would go a long way backwards. The current proposals would not provide sufficient legal and operational freedoms for religious educational institutions to maintain their religious ethos and fidelity to religious beliefs and practice.”

The proposals are broadly identical to the Morrison government religious discrimination bill proposal, and require religious schools to have acted “in good faith” by issuing written policies on its position on its beliefs and activities to families, employees and job applicants.

Their suggested amendments grant religious schools the right to “appropriately manage” student behaviour “to preserve the institutions’ religious ethos”, while removing existing protections to discriminate against students on the basis of sexuality or pregnancy.

The amendments grant exceptions to religious schools to preference employees who share the schools’ religious teaching and do not undermine that teaching, and require that all staff “adheres to” or conducts themselves “consistently” with “the genuinely held religious beliefs and practices” of the school.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4



FamilyVoice has joined Sarah Game MLC to demand that vulgar 'trans' artworks are moved to an adult-only space at the SA State Art Gallery

Cumberland councillors uphold community standards

Two councillors from Cumberland Council in Sydney have been praised for their stance on community standards, according to FamilyVoice NSW Director Greme Mitchell.

"FamilyVoice commends Councillors Christou and Sarkis for supporting a ban on drag queen story-time events in council facilities in the face of enormous opposition," Mr. Mitchell said.

The motion, introduced on February 28, was spearheaded by Councillor Paul Garrard and seconded by Councillor Christou, both members of the Our Local Community group. Councillor Garrard defended the motion, stating, "We do not support exposing children to diverse expressions of gender identity, nor do we believe in any way that it supports their natural development of inclusiveness."

The debate continued on May 1, when Councillor Christou introduced another amendment, calling for the removal of same-sex parents' books from the council's library services. This motion passed, six votes to five.

The backlash was swift. On May 9, four councillors moved to rescind the earlier book-related decision. Ultimately, only councillors Christou and Sarkis voted against the rescission motion.

"The dispute at Cumberland Council is yet another example of the continuing advance of the LGBTQ+ juggernaut, which tolerates no opposition," Mr. Mitchell said.

"If you dare hold a different opinion on matters of human sexuality, every effort will be made to undermine you or even to destroy you, despite Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that upholds freedom of opinion and expression without interference."

Premier must clean up SA Art Gallery

FamilyVoice urges Premier Malinauskas to protect children from perverse exhibits in South Australia's Art Gallery.

InDaily quoted FamilyVoice spokesman David d'Lima on 23/5, petitioning the Premier to take action so children will not be exposed to highly offensive art installations.

"Families with young children should enjoy the freedom to move around the Art Gallery without fear," *InDaily* reported David d'Lima as saying.

"We urge the government to demand the Art Gallery clean up its exhibits, if necessary with the threat of cutting its public funding.

"The same Premier who is rightly worried about damage done to young people by the content on mobile phones must also be concerned about the payment of taxpayer dollars on perversity in the Art Gallery.

"The public outcry against promoting deviant behaviour earlier this year at Renmark High School makes it very clear that ordinary voters are sick of the mistreatment of young people by incompetent governments," David d'Lima said.

Adelaide radio stations Faith FM and Life FM also reported concerns about the exhibits.

Life FM broadcaster Pastor Paul Newsham said he and his wife Lauren were disturbed when seeing the perverse statues recently, and especially as they observed groups of school children viewing the exhibits that are placed very close to the gallery's entrance.

The Art Gallery has said it will not move the works.

In other developments, FamilyVoice continues to work with a mother who raised concerns in the media about the removal of outer doors from school toilets to create gender-neutral facilities. She is also upset about a number of incidents relating to student welfare, but she is gaining no satisfaction from government departments.

"Children are suffering from mental health issue, physical/sexual assaults and are attempting/committing suicide because of unaddressed issues and cultures within the education system," she told FamilyVoice.

She has commenced an online petition entitled: 'Help save the students from toxic culture and abusive education system' that has gained more than 17,000 signatures.

Senator Fawcett critiques religious freedom failures

South Australian Liberal senator David Fawcett chastised the Australian Labor Party for its failure to guarantee freedom of faith, when he addressed a FamilyVoice briefing in Adelaide on 17 May.

Senator David Fawcett critiqued the ALP government for drafting religious freedom legislation that remains hidden, although the Parliament, the public, the stakeholders and the expert bodies should be able to scrutinise the document. Government has shown the draft to roughly eight groups, on the condition that no disclosure of its contents may occur, he explained.

“That is completely out of the ordinary and is not how things are done,” Senator Fawcett said.

He also criticised various bodies that have expressed a view on religious freedom in Australia.

“There is a very low level of awareness of how churches and faith communities work, even amongst groups like the Law Society of Australia, the Human Rights Commission and the

Attorney-General’s Department,” he said.

“They don’t realise that faith forms part of the central character and life purpose of the individual; nor do they recognise that organisations such as a school or a theological college have an ethos that is driven by the belief system.”

Senator Fawcett noted that the previous Law Reform Commission president Justice Derrington said under international human rights law, religious schools or faith-based bodies do not discriminate if they act in accordance with their ethos.

“That is consistent with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,” he said.



Damian Wyld, SA Director David d’Lima, Senator David Fawcett and Policy Officer Jerome Appleby

Justice Derrington has persistently highlighted the restrictions imposed by the terms of reference, and NSW Justice Stephen Rothman who finalised the Australian Law Reform Commission report to government said the Commission was not allowed to advise the government on the possible provision of a positive right to freedom of religion.

Shadow Attorney General Michaelia Cash has urged the government to release the draft for public scrutiny, and she has accused the government of “gagging stakeholders from discussing” the draft proposal.



Perth’s annual Rally for Life on May 15, featuring a gripping speech by a man born without arms, proclaimed the gift of life and the horror of parents being told to abort children with differing abilities.

Rally co-host Darryl Budge thanked keynote speaker Josiah Kappert for reminding the two-thousand strong crowd that every human being is made in the image of God. Mr Budge said, “It has been said, if you want to change the world, go home and love your family. We must remember that without being united to Jesus we can do nothing, as John 15 says. If we have strong families, we have strong churches, and a strong church will change our city and even our country. It starts with loving others like Jesus loves us.”

'Outrageous' to reject religious ambience: John Howard

John Howard has defended the right of religious schools to tell staff to "get a job somewhere else" if they actively oppose the school's religion, and has slammed an ABS census proposal that undermines Australia's religious heritage.

"If you send your child to a Catholic school, you expect them to be educated in the ambience of the religion and I think it's outrageous that that's not accepted," Mr Howard told the Catholic Weekly.

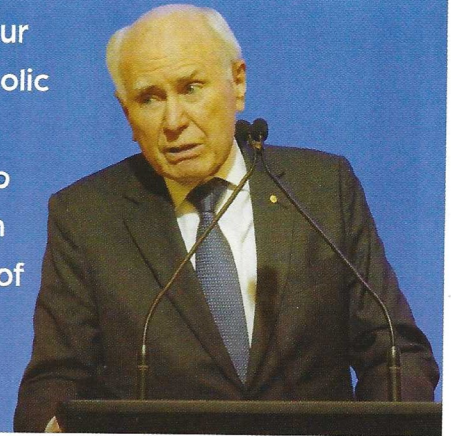
"It's very simple. You have a perfect right, if you are running a Catholic school or an Anglican school, if you've got a teacher who is kicking against the fundamentals of the religion, you've got a perfect right to say, 'Wish you well, God bless you, but get a job somewhere else'," he said.

Mr Howard also slammed an ABS census proposal to delete the list of the eight major religions from the questions, saying, "You've got to worry that the anti-religious lobby in the public service is quite strong."

Catholic Archbishop for Perth Timothy Costello said the ABS appeared to be "seeking to weaken the accuracy of one of these measures by changing the Census question asked of Australians about their faith".

He said, "The proposed new question, 'Does the person

'If you send your child to a Catholic school, you expect them to be educated in the ambience of the religion'
- John Howard



have a religion?', can be answered by a tick box for 'no', but there is no tick box for 'yes'. Instead, the 'no' tick box is followed by a space where a person who has a religious belief can write in their religion."

"Reformulating the question as 'does the person have a religion' effectively destroys the measure of culture and identity as it changes the question to whether a person holds religious beliefs or not.

"This will result in the loss of a sense of religious heritage as the new format attempts to divorce religion from culture and tradition, presuming that this is no longer significant."

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

In his business networking address, Archbishop Fisher warned of the bleak possibility of a future "Greens-teals coalition" aiming to remove faith-based hospitals, charitable deductions for religious welfare providers and faith-based appointments of religious school principals. While admitting that prospect is exaggerated for now, he proposed it was not entirely implausible.

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4 |

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