



A PROGRESSIVE CHRISTIAN VOICE AUSTRALIA

August 2017
Www.progressivechristians.org.au

Marriage Equality— Let's Make it Happen!

While a postal plebiscite isn't ideal, it is the situation that we find ourselves in. We might be lamenting that the government could make these changes themselves, but this is the reality of the situation. We are urging people to vote 'yes' not just from a civil rights perspective, but as Christians who believe in the equality and validity of all in the eyes of God. St. Paul reminds us in Galatians that it is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male or female, all are equal in the eyes of God. This is a profound truth that we are called to live in. The vote for marriage equality should reflect that truth.

A Progressive Christian Voice president Rev Dr Peter Catt has been vocal on the issue of marriage equality for years. APCVA in the lead up to the election have joined with other like minded groups under the umbrella of 'Australian Christians for Marriage Equality' (ACME) who publically launched on the 29th of August in Brisbane and Sydney. Sky news reported on the Sydney launch with The Rev. Keith Mascord and activist Julie McCrossin amongst others speaking at the launch. To find out more about Australian Christians for Marriage Equality check out their website

<http://www.christiansforequality.com.au/>

This website contains articles and information for Christians around Australia who are in support of marriage equality. People are encouraged to show their support by sharing on facebook, donating their image for the ACME backdrop, publicly declaring their support in writing and encouraging entire organizations to lend their support. If your church is a rainbow community, we encourage you to pledge your congregations support.

Over the last 48 hours we have seen the beginning of the campaigns to say 'no' to marriage equality. This makes it even more important to get our voices out there. The advertisement sponsored by ACL

depicted a mother who was concerned when her son was allegedly told that he could wear a dress to school. Followed by concern about alleged 'role-plays' of teenagers acting out same sex marriages. Rev Dr Peter Catt responded to the ACL campaign by saying that 'Gender debates in schools, and all those other issues are simply being introduced to muddy the water', going on to say 'this is a very simple concept that we extend the marriage act so that it extends to the equality to all persons.' Rev Keith Mascord responded by saying 'It is not looking at the substance of the debate but fear-mongering. It is irresponsible, wrong and we abhor it.'

APCVA encourages Christians who believe in marriage equality to be active advocates on the issue by not only posting to social media, but by using your voices in public and private conversations and to vote 'yes' in the postal plebiscite. Bill Shorten claimed that peoples religious beliefs were one of the biggest hindrances to the change of the marriage act, well let's help him out with this problem using our voices and our actions.

APCVA is a lobby group based on volunteers who are passionate about issues of justice and equality. We don't have big investors or employees, just people donating their time and enthusiasm to make change. We hope that with the support of the people of God, we can see real change happen.

- APCVA Team.



Australian Christians
for
Marriage Equality

Kristina Keneally for Cardinal

This month Kristina Keneally addressed the annual dinner of the Christians for an Ethical Society in Canberra. She gave an outstanding speech entitled "The Getting of Wisdom: A Private Faith. A Public Christian". It was a wonderful speech, strong and yet vulnerable, intelligent but heart felt, both idealistic and realistic. Her long term and passionate commitment to Christ was palpable. So too, was her feeling of being let down by the hierarchy of the Catholic Church. My heart went out to her.

Like Kristina, I had my formative Christian years in the spring following the second Vatican Council. At that time, all things seemed possible. The worship services changed from being held in Latin to English and ordinary people were encouraged to become involved directly in the life of the church. It was a time of continuous change, and the catch cry was "We are the church."

Unfortunately, the spring did not last long: summer never came and a long autumn followed. Popes and Bishops panicked. They had a crisis of faith and chose instead a medieval certainty. Around the world conservatives were encouraged, reforms were rolled back, and progressive Christians both priests and ordinary Catholic folk were ignored and in many cases persecuted. Kristina is to be commended for staying within the Catholic church for as long as she has.

At this time, the Catholic Church in Australia really needs Kristina Keneally. She is one of the few Catholic leaders with any moral authority. The current Catholic Bishops are failing to lead. They have kept up with neither current biblical theology nor with science. They are living in a cultural bubble that is out

of touch with current realities. Their manner is arrogant and the image they project is callous and uncaring. At a time when the country is moving toward recognising marriage equality, the chair of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, Denis Hart, [threatens](#) to sack employees who become married. At a time when the community is still aghast at the horrors of clerical child sexual abuse, the Bishops [publicly defend](#) their outdated mode of confession, not realising they have somehow missed the point of the sacrament of reconciliation.

Which leads to my modest proposal: Kristina Keneally for Cardinal. This may not be as crazy as it first sounds. There is an anomaly within the Catholic church which meant that until the late 19th century it was possible to be appointed a Cardinal without being a priest. The last non-clerical cardinal was appointed in 1858. He was a lawyer. Rules excluding ordinary people becoming cardinals were only brought in during the 20th century. Now, if Pope Francis is really concerned about reform, this seems to me to be a good place to start. It is a much easier area for reform than many others in the Catholic church and there is no theological reason for the role of Cardinal not to be made more inclusive.

Progressive Catholics need our support. What better support than to start a popular campaign which we can all join in, and which might even be successful. Kristina Keneally has not been consulted on this campaign and I would expect her to say that she was not interested in the position. This is exactly the type of person who should be a Cardinal!

- Len Baglow, Executive Member APCVA

#BringThemHere #Sanctuary.

Remember last year's Sanctuary movement? In 2016 a huge outpouring of support and solidarity came from Christian Churches around Australia in the Sanctuary movement. During which Churches opened themselves as refuges to those who are seeking Asylum from war, terror and violence. The 28th of August 2017 saw a resurgence of this concept in response to Immigration Minister Peter Dutton's stance of removing welfare and assistance from 100 on shore asylum seekers who have needed medical aid. Rev Dr Peter Catt has offered St. John's Cathedral for those who need shelter and support because of these harsh measures. The Dean describes the cut in welfare as 'cruel' and 'heartless' encouraging and trusting in the kindness and compassion of other religious leaders in having a similar response to those seeking asylum. 'When this government can be cruel, the community will be kind'. Amongst these 100 seekers are people who are pregnant, and some have been sexually abused while on Nauru. The trauma of living in fear of being returned to these offshore detention centres is a very real, and is a persistent threat with real health, wellbeing psychological and social impacts. To read more go to: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-08-29/aust-church-sanctuary-offer-asylum-seekers-welfare-crackdown/8852172>

PLANTING HOLY SEEDS OF ECONOMIC EQUALITY

Amongst the policies to be debated at the next federal election is the multi-faceted phenomenon called *economic inequality*. What the federal politicians may not be aware of is that the seeds for envisioning forms of economic equality were sown in the pages of the Christian Bible.

Possibly the earliest reference in ancient writings urging a practical form of economic equality is that found in St Paul's second letter to the Corinthian Christians. In *2 Corinthians* 8:13-14 the Greek word for *equality* occurs twice, and it is used in a decidedly economic context.

Paul was encouraging his readers to continue in their endeavour to share from their abundance with their fellows who were in need. He wrote:

I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, but that as a matter of equality your abundance at the present time should supply their want, so that their abundance may supply your want, that there may be equality.

One could sum up the apostle Paul's appeal here with the slogan: *From each according to their abundance, to each according to their need.* These words of Paul have possibly had a leavening effect in regard to some economic practices in Australia. For example, the graduated

taxation rates that have been in place for many years give expression, imperfectly but yet institutionally, to the vision that those with an abundance of income have a responsibility for such abundance to be partially dispersed to those in need of adequate income. The Australian community has an ongoing commitment to welfare – that is, to provide funds from the public purse to the economically struggling elderly, unemployed and others in need of economic support.

Australia even calls itself a Commonwealth. That notion – *commonwealth* – contains within it a vision of shared abundance. And the practice of a community sharing common wealth goes back to another person mentioned in the Christian Bible, namely Jesus himself. In the fourth gospel, we read that Jesus and his band of disciples had a *common purse* (*John* 13:29). It is not stretching imagination to believe that Jesus himself, as the leader of that band, initiated the commitment to that practice.

And in the anecdotes that Luke gathers about the early apostolic church, there is the account of how in the very earliest Christian community “*no one claimed ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common*” (*Acts* 4:32).



Ah, that was a long, long time ago. But yet there are in our federal Parliament adherents of that community initiated by Jesus. Such adherents now profess to be Christians. And whatever public position they hold – whether Treasurer or Finance Minister, just to note the economic portfolios – doubtless they will be conscious of these seeds sown in the Christian scriptures.

These seeds still produce fruit. From little seeds fruitful trees grow. There are communities, even in modern times, with the vision that abundance needs to be shared with those in need. Even refugees.

Will those seeds find fertile soil in the next federal election?

-Reverend Dr Ray Barraclough
Executive Member of APCVA

What is Your Story?

Sharing stories of our own life experiences are important not just for internal self-reflection, but for the community. Your story could change someone's life and help to guide them in hard situations and decisions.

APCVA is currently looking at including some members' stories on the website. What is your story of Faith? Many of our members have powerful stories to share of encounters in life, theology and the Church that lead them to progressive Christianity or to be instigators of change. Please email

tiffany.sparks@stpaulsashgrove.org.au your story if you would like to share your experiences

Promoting public awareness of the politically progressive dimensions of Christian opinion

- A Progressive Christian Voice (Australia): understands Christian opinion to be more diverse and broader than that portrayed by the media
- is dedicated to contributing insights from progressive streams of the Christian faith and community
- seeks to minimise the effect that powerful lobby groups have on public discourse
- is therefore concerned with promoting public awareness of the diversity of Christian opinion
- welcomes fresh and challenging contemporary insights into the interpretation of the Christian scriptures and tradition
- does not speak on behalf of any Christian denomination, congregation, community or organisation
- Our members come from a variety of backgrounds and traditions.



Like us on
Facebook

Our presence continues to grow on Facebook and Twitter. These platforms are important for letting the press know that we exist. If you haven't done so already please like Facebook or follow on Twitter. Also don't forget to share material that you like or think is important. You can link onto our Facebook or Twitter accounts from the of the webpage. <http://www.progressivechristians.org.au/>

Membership

This year we are hoping to build our membership to 500. We currently have about 158 members. You will shortly get an email suggesting ways you can help in building membership. In the meantime, if you have not renewed your membership below are details about how you can do it. Renewal fee, and any other contribution, can best be processed either by: Direct Debit to: *A Progressive Christian Voice (Australia) Inc.*
BSB: 633000 Account No: 146392212
or posting a cheque made out to: *A Progressive Christian Voice (Australia) Inc.* To Ray Barraclough, 25 Buderim Street, Currimundi, Qld 4551

EQUALVOICES.ORG.AU/CONFERENCE

OCTOBER 21, 2017
UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY, SYDNEY

BEING HEARD

For 2000 years the church has silenced, shamed & harmed LGBTIQ+ Christians. It's time for this to end. It's time for the voices of all God's children to be heard.

Keynote Speakers:
Julie McCrossin
Matt Glover

Workshops include:
Orientation change: myths, harms & realities
The rise of affirming evangelicals
Discrimination, justice & inclusion



EQUAL VOICES

'Being Heard': Equal Voices Conference - Saturday 21st October, University of Technology Sydney

Join Equal Voices for our first national conference on Saturday 21st October. We'll unpack and explore the impact of discrimination and exclusion, wrestle with what true inclusion looks like, and listen to voices that have been silenced for too long. Why are a growing number of evangelicals becoming affirming? What is the harm done by the message of orientation change? Would you appreciate a session at which you can ask those burning questions you haven't been able to ask anywhere else?

Early bird tickets (\$50) are on sale until **Friday 22nd September** - don't miss out.

<https://equalvoices.org.au/conference/>