

# LFL presents foetal models to Toowoomba schools

Joy Wurst

We are thrilled to be able to present this set of foetal models to the Lutheran primary schools in Toowoomba.

As children learn about how humans develop we hope that they will be awed by the beauty of how God has made us. From conception through to old age our bodies, and the incredible way all parts function, are a testament to God’s goodness.

We have always been able to say with the Psalmist “Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! It is amazing to think about. Your workmanship is marvellous – and how well I know it.” (Ps. 139:14 Living Bible).



We hope that the knowledge of how beautiful and how loved by God each person is, will help the children as they learn to respect the lives of all people.

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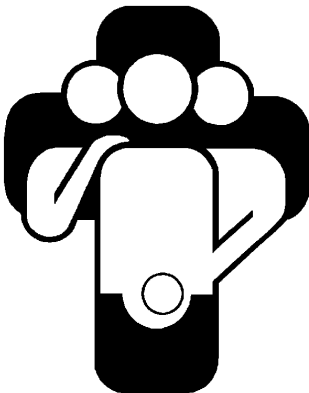
# Life News

## Responding to Australian same-sex marriage proposals

*Andrew Cameron and Rebecca Belzer*

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*This article is a ‘Social Issues Briefing’ issued by the Social Issues Executive of the Anglican Diocese of Sydney.*

It is always difficult to address same-sex issues without being sidelined as homophobic or out-of-date, or without appearing to unfairly single out those people who identify as gay, lesbian or bisexual. In all such conflicts, Christians need to own the glaring failures we carry in ourselves, and the inadequacies we bring to our churches.

But we can accept homosexual people without agreeing with them on everything. As a debate about extending marriage to same-sex relationships gathers pace, we may disagree with the proposal respectfully and carefully. We can continue to work at doing so well, even when the disagreement has been badly handled in the past.

We have never intended for these briefings to become dominated by a limited set of conservative ‘hot button’ issues. We don’t particularly want to keep

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# Editorial

It’s taken some time to get this first issue for 2011 in to your hands. Late last year I was given the gift of ordination after which my wife and I enjoyed a few weeks overseas before moving house and settling in to parish life. With Easter now behind me, I’ve been able to finally give some attention to this newsletter. My apologies for the delay.

This slight pause in the publishing schedule can by no means be equated with a pause in the push to legalise euthanasia or gay marriage in Australia. Regarding the former, South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania all look like having more euthanasia legislation introduced in to their parliaments this year with rumours of others in the remaining states. At the federal level, Greens leader Bob Brown is seeking to introduce a bill which, if passed, would give the two Australian territories the right to legislate in favour of euthanasia, without approval from the federal government. It’s been welcome news to hear that the Northern Territory Chief Minister Paul Henderson has already been quoted as saying he would not be introducing euthanasia legislation. The status of the ACT is less clear, to say the least. We can hope and pray that the lessons the Northern Territory have learnt from their brief period of legalised euthanasia might rub off on their sister territory. Keep your eyes peeled for a typically thorough and winsome article from Dr Rob Pollnitz in an upcoming edition of *The Lutheran*.

Speaking of Dr Pollnitz, when accepting his ‘Servant of Christ’ award last year, he encouraged all Lutherans to celebrate March 25 in their parishes. That particular date is 9 months before the day we celebrate Christ’s birth and so is the day when we celebrate the Annunciation of our Lord to the virgin Mary. By remembering this day in our churches, we celebrate not only Christ the child and Christ the man, but Christ the embryo. Do keep this in mind for your parishes next year!

As for the issue of gay marriage, we have printed an article from the Anglican diocese of Sydney in this issue of *Life News*. The authors put things well and their conclusions are both thoughtful and sobering:

*The good news is that whatever our society decides to do, Christians will continue to inhabit lives either of celibate singleness, or of that lifelong, gender*

*complementary, sexually exclusive, procreative and child-oriented thing we now call ‘marriage’. Given enough decades, others will want it back. But if other relationships are denoted as ‘marriage’, there will be some social friction along the way.*

Our own church is not without a voice on this topic and adopted a statement at the 1975 General Synod which affirmed both the Biblical position on homosexual behaviour and also the need to ‘exhibit understanding and sympathy’, showing love and encouragement to walk the Christian life of repentance, forgiveness and holiness in conduct. In more recent times, the LCA’s Commission on Theology and Inter-Church Relations has been giving some attention to the issue. We will keep you posted on any further statements made by our Church.

Since the last issue went to print, the LFL at a national level has bought a set of foetal models for the Darling Downs branch to use in Toowoomba schools, as reported on the back page. While we’re speaking about Toowoomba, we can announce that it is the destination for this year’s LFL Annual Conference to be held on Saturday 1 October with a Sunday service the following day also. The venue is Good Shepherd Lutheran Church. At this stage the line-up of speakers has not been confirmed but anyone who’s been to an LFL conferences in the past will know it will be a powerful and encouraging day. Watch this space for more details.

Lastly, those in NSW might be interested in attending this year’s ‘Real Choices’ conference from 13-15 May. See [www.realchoices.org.au](http://www.realchoices.org.au) for more details.

*Thomas Pietsch*

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New Zealand Branch (Established in June 1991)  
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Sunshine Coast Branch (Serving the Sunshine Coast area of QLD; established in Aug 1992)  
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Darling Downs Branch (Serving the Darling Downs area of Queensland; re-established in Oct 2005)  
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legislate for same-sex marriage);

- expressing opposition to same-sex marriage being legalised in Australia; and
- explaining why marriage, as currently understood, needs to be upheld and protected in Australia.

Also, the Australian Christian Lobby has launched a campaign called **man+wife4life!**, calling on politicians to respect and defend the current definition of marriage in the Marriage Act. You may like to sign their petition in support of marriage being defined as between one man and one woman ([www.makeastand.org.au/campaign/index.php?campaign\\_id=39](http://www.makeastand.org.au/campaign/index.php?campaign_id=39)). We have also listed some recommended reading relating to marriage in general, rather than specifically about same-sex marriage. It will help you engage by promoting and praising the positive framework for marriage, rather than simply by opposing the proposals we disagree with.

***Sources and Further Reading***

*Social Issues Executive briefings and booklet:*

#011: ‘The dreams and realities of marriage’, [http://www.sie.org.au/briefings/the\\_dreams\\_and\\_realities\\_of\\_marriage](http://www.sie.org.au/briefings/the_dreams_and_realities_of_marriage)

#012: ‘What makes a marriage’, [http://www.sie.org.au/briefings/what\\_makes\\_a\\_marriage](http://www.sie.org.au/briefings/what_makes_a_marriage)

#070: ‘The Queen and the humanity of marriage’, [http://www.sie.org.au/briefings/the\\_queen\\_and\\_the\\_humanity\\_of\\_marriage](http://www.sie.org.au/briefings/the_queen_and_the_humanity_of_marriage)

#072: ‘The churches and sexual wholeness together’, [http://www.sie.org.au/briefings/the\\_churches\\_and\\_sexual\\_wholeness\\_together](http://www.sie.org.au/briefings/the_churches_and_sexual_wholeness_together)

#075: ‘Living together: conservative Christians and same sex relationships’, [http://www.sie.org.au/briefings/living\\_together\\_conservative\\_christians\\_and\\_same\\_sex\\_relationships](http://www.sie.org.au/briefings/living_together_conservative_christians_and_same_sex_relationships)

#076: ‘Beyond homophobia, toward new terms of debate’, SIE briefing, [http://www.sie.org.au/briefings/beyond\\_homophobia\\_toward\\_new\\_terms\\_of\\_debate](http://www.sie.org.au/briefings/beyond_homophobia_toward_new_terms_of_debate)

*Family: A Christian Approach*, [http://www.sie.org.au/pdf/reports/SIE\\_Familya\\_Christian\\_approach.pdf](http://www.sie.org.au/pdf/reports/SIE_Familya_Christian_approach.pdf).



Ash, Christopher, *Marriage: Sex in the service of God*. Leicester, IVP, 2003.

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Hughes, Selwyn, *Marriage as God intended*. Kingsway Publications Ltd, 1984.

Kostenberger, Andreas J, *God, Marriage and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation*. Crossway, 2004.

Osborne, Paul, ‘Bitar to stay on as ALP national secretary’, *ninemsn* 19 November 2010. Online: <http://news.ninemsn.com.au/national/8144236/bitar-to-stay-on-asalp-national-secretary>.

Roberts, Christopher Chenault. *Creation and covenant: the significance of sexual difference in the moral theology of marriage*. New York: T&T Clark International, 2007.

***Note:*** This paper is intended to assist discussion and may be corrected or revised in future. Short responses to [social.issues@moore.edu.au](mailto:social.issues@moore.edu.au) are very welcome, but the SIE cannot guarantee a reply. To access this occasional free briefing, use RSS at [www.sie.org.au](http://www.sie.org.au); or to receive it by email, ask us at [social.issues@moore.edu.au](mailto:social.issues@moore.edu.au) or do it yourself at: <http://lists.moore.edu.au/mailman/listinfo/social-issues>.



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exclude ‘marriage’ for minors, or between groups of friends, or for any combination where consent can be demonstrated.

The point here is simply to observe the inevitable logic of post-Christian society. Christians should not be too shocked by each of these erosions. In a way, they are to be expected. Christians don’t have any radical new arguments other than to continue to praise this particular and special relationship – that lifelong, opposite sex, faithful, procreative adventure we currently call ‘marriage’.

It follows that we will also continue to ask our neighbours: ‘are you so sure that each element of marriage – lifelong sexually exclusivity, child-oriented procreativity and gender complementarity – is unimportant?’ The environmental movement has helpfully reminded us of how foolish it is to evade our relationship to the natural environment. Likewise, Christians regard these elements of marriage as naturally inherent to our humanity, so that a society only fools itself when it attempts to pretend them away.

Interestingly, a French decision in January 2011 seems to echo some of this thinking. The French Constitutional Council (often considered to act as France’s supreme court) upheld the legislature’s refusal to name same-sex relationships as marriage. It held that France’s parliament has the freedom to retain marriage as currently understood. The case was brought by lesbian partners Corinne Cestino and Sophie Hasslauer, who wanted France to follow other EU states. (The European Court of Human Rights had previously said that countries are free to legislate on the issue; and Spain, Belgium, Portugal and Sweden legislated for marriage between same-sex partners after it was legalised in the Netherlands in 2001.)

The Council ruled that a refusal of same-sex marriage does not violate the French constitution. French lawmakers, it said, had agreed that the “difference in situations between same-sex couples and couples made up of a man and a woman can justify a difference in treatment concerning family rights”. In June 2006, the European Court ruled that the region’s human rights convention “did not

oblige a state to grant a same-sex couple access to marriage” as marriage has “deep-rooted social and cultural connotations”.

In other words, this ruling acknowledges that no one is disadvantaged when a society retains a distinctive name for these lifelong, opposite sex, faithful and procreative relationships. In Western history, Christian insights that each element is important have sprung from the Bible, and have been confirmed in social experience by creating (generally) safe zones for extraordinary relationships of care, particularly for children.

Lifelong, gender complementary, sexually exclusive, procreative and childoriented marriage may be difficult, but it remains important. We need more laws that are friendly to it as-is, not laws that will further corrode it. In contrast, ‘marriage equality’ simply demands that all who want to be called ‘married’ should be given what they want. But such a move will effectively destroy marriage as a meaningful element of our common life.



Where to from here?

The good news is that whatever our society decides to do, Christians will continue to inhabit lives either of celibate singleness, or of that lifelong, gender complementary, sexually exclusive, procreative and child-oriented thing we now call ‘marriage’. Given enough decades, others will want it back. But if other relationships are denoted as ‘marriage’, there will be some social friction along the way.

In response to the Parliamentary motion above, the best course of action is to continue to respectfully engage with our political representatives by:

- calmly and thoughtfully responding to the 18 November motion (in a way which does not accuse the Federal government of planning to

Feminism reconsidered

Marlene Pietsch

Gender: Men, Women, Sex, Feminism – Volume 1

by Frederica Mathewes-Green (Conciliar Press, 2002)

I knew what to expect when I picked up this collection of essays. Frederica Mathewes-Green has written extensively for many publications, and her website is on the Favourites list on my computer.

However, knowing what to expect made this no less enjoyable, thought provoking and even challenging in parts. She and I are both baby boomers and have lived through the ground-breaking sixties and seventies. She knows exactly how to find sore spots and weaknesses, and massages them to their logical conclusions. This is done with clear vision, without jargon or judgmentalism, but she is not afraid to nail the sin or cultural bias for what it is, using colourful language and humour. Take this for a punch: *The Baby Boomer crew is still mirror-gazing in fascination, gluttonous with consumerism, blubbering over its fragile self-esteem. We are a cohort of Emperor Babies* (p96). Ouch!

Frederica’s perspective is unique. She was a feminist and outside of the church in the swinging sixties, but is now, together with her clergy husband, a member of the Eastern Orthodox Church. She states that she doesn’t want to change the historic faith to adapt to the times, but rather wants the faith to change her. She then takes this faith to others through dialogue rather than confrontation, *working through misunderstanding so people can arrive at genuine, sincere disagreement* (p169). I like that – her realism mixed with theological idealism.

Though these essays cover a wide range of topics and even styles, and have all been published before for different audiences, common themes emerge and some are hammered relentlessly.

Frederica has little time for feminism, though freely acknowledges some of the benefits for today’s women. She sees the term as divisive, and that men and women both stand on a level playing field at the foot of the cross. *Women bear the same moral responsibility that men do, face the same temptations, and if they die*

*outside the grace of Jesus Christ, go to the same hell* (p23). Men need the respect of women, and their natural instinct to protect women and children is to be applauded even when it’s reduced to common courtesies which are seen by some as unnecessary. There’s an interesting chapter on men and the church, and how our current emphasis on

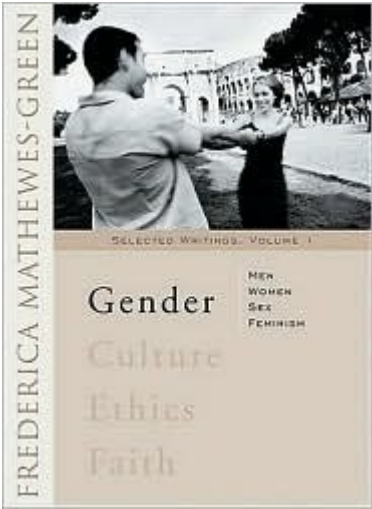
God’s care and ‘open arms’ can leave males feeling emasculated, rather than the challenge to be rescued from sin and living new lives where we strive to be conformed to God’s holiness.

Her most potent theme is that sex has been separated from its natural connection with reproduction. The sexual revolution ushered in ‘free sex’ and three major shifts in thinking to accommodate sex without commitment: the elimination of the commitment of marriage before sex, prevention of pregnancy, and the training of women to support themselves without the help of men. All of these we may now take for granted, but Frederica thinks that women

have been conned. Fun without consequences and commitment is like saying that “*you can eat banana splits all day without gaining weight*”.(p96) After a half-century of free sex, women still prefer to frame sex within the context of relationships, and when unwanted pregnancies occur, abortion may be the logical answer to their dilemma but leaves many women suffering. Couple this with the rise of sexually transmitted diseases, divorce and single-parent poverty, and it’s not clear that anyone is happier. Loneliness is endemic: *Consumer culture relentlessly tells us that we want to wake up next to someone sexy tomorrow morning. In the quiet of our hearts we know: we want to wake up next to someone kind, fifty years from tomorrow morning* (p121).

The challenges she throws us are many. How can we best be pro-life, and fight abortion? Do we suffer from the cult of ‘wanted’ children who are consumer items? Is teen marriage a bad thing? How do we find common ground with homosexuals? Has careerism for women trumped everything else?

This is a personally forthright book, but one which is an enjoyable and compelling read for anyone wrestling with a contemporary ethic of gender and sexuality. As I read it, it at times became my story, and I’m grateful for the fresh insights it gave, and the inspiration it gave to continue on the counter-cultural battlefield.





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addressing them. But a response is in order when someone else proposes to change to the law.

In this case, recent media and political discussion in Australia means that we are compelled to carefully restate our opposition to proposals for same-sex relationships to be given the title ‘marriage’, which is now reserved in Australian law to ‘the union of a man and a woman to the exclusion of all others, voluntarily entered into for life’ (*Marriage Act 1961*, §§ 5, 46).

**The current situation**

Prime Minister Gillard has indicated that her government has no intention to alter these words. Consistent with this undertaking, there doesn’t appear to be any plans by the Government to bring or support a Bill to legalise same-sex unions as marriage. This concurs with current ALP policy, which has been upheld at ALP National Conferences in the past.

However, it has been reported by journalist Paul Osborne that ‘Labor’s national conference had been brought forward six months to December 2011 in order to debate gay marriage and separate it from the election cycle’.

In the meantime, a resolution was recently passed by the House of Representatives requesting parliamentarians to gauge their constituents’ views on the so-called ‘issue of marriage equality’. Here it is:

*Motion resolved by the Commonwealth House of Representatives (18 November 2010):*

‘This house:

(1) notes that there is:

    a) a growing list of countries that allow same-sex couples to marry including the Netherlands, Belgium, Norway, Spain, Canada and South Africa; and

    b) widespread support for equal marriage in the Australian community; and

(2) calls on all parliamentarians to gauge their constituents’ views on the issue of marriage equality.’

Depending on parliamentarians attempts to ‘gauge their constituents’ views’, and on the outcome of the ALP National Conference, it is possible that legislation could be introduced under this Labor Government to change the current definition of ‘marriage’ in the *Marriage Act 1961*.

**The ‘story’ of marriage**

The Parliamentary motion above loads the dice in favour of same-sex marriage by calling it ‘the issue of marriage equality’, because everyone likes ‘equality’. This focus upon equality, and an underlying presumption in favour of personal autonomy, tends to dominate our discussions of marriage. Where a proposal is thought to extend equality and personal autonomy, it is hard for other considerations to seem important.

Same-sex couples currently enjoy equitable treatment in all aspects relevant to de facto couple status. The current ability in NSW, Victoria, Tasmania and the ACT to register same-sex partnerships on a relationships register provides public recognition and affirmation of their relationships.



The push for same-sex marriage is therefore now largely ideological, because same-sex couples are not disadvantaged without it (unless we accept that it is homophobic not to give homosexual people further recognition).

No one is done a real injustice when we positively honour and uphold marriage as currently understood. We currently honour those who are united in lifelong, opposite sex, faithful and procreative relationships by calling them ‘married’. In a liberal democracy, others can form other types of relationships; but ‘marriage’ is a term of honour reserved for a particular kind of relationship.

Until recently, a marriage was understood to be a gender complementary, sexually exclusive, procreative and child-oriented lifelong relationship. The deep story of how it came to be so is complex. On the one hand, some aspects of marriage seemed obvious where societies sought a stable environment in which to raise children. But other aspects of it (such as lifelong, one-to-one faithfulness) arose from, or were at least amplified by, the Judeo-Christian revelation of a faithful God who bound himself to one people – a revolutionary concept in ancient contexts that were much given to polygamy.

But over the years, successive Western societies have seen each element of marriage become open to renegotiation by couples:

- Historically, marriage was regarded as procreative and child-oriented. Marriage was understood as a stable environment for the raising of children in a secure relationship with a mother and a father. But the prevalence of contraception and abortion – and *right and proper* efforts to uphold the children of single parents – have reduced children to a kind of after-market marital option. Child-rearing is no longer regarded as basic to marriage. (This comment should not be taken to reflect badly upon the involuntarily childless. In Christian thought, the absence of children in a marriage does not imply a ‘lesser’ marriage. Christian thinkers have consistently opposed claims for divorce, often levelled by a man against a woman, based on childlessness.)
- Marriage was regarded as lifelong – an expression of the kind of faithfulness God extended to ancient Israel. In this milieu, divorce was reserved for the most severe cases of breakdown and hardship. A general expectation of lifelong faithfulness often had the effect of motivating struggling couples to resolve conflict, and so to heal and grow their relationship. But a progressive expansion in what is regarded as ‘breakdown’ and ‘hardship’ has eroded marriage’s lifelong claim. We often now regard marriage as lasting only ‘as long as it works’ or ‘as long as we love each other’. In short, lifelong faithfulness is no longer seriously regarded as essential to marriage.
- Marriage has generally been regarded as sexually exclusive. This element of it remains somewhat intact, except when those who



propound ‘open’ marriages, or who conduct affairs, often now only receive a snigger. There is no real reason to expect that sexual exclusivity will remain a defining feature of Western marriage.

- Marriage was historically regarded as gender complementary. The logic of this complementarity was partly that men and women actually do ‘complement’ one other in mysterious and difficult to quantify ways; and partly that children do best in the presence of a loving mother *and* a loving father, who bring to the child an ongoing experience of differently gendered adults. But Western society has recently decided that gender difference is unimportant, as reflected (among other things) in adoption law that permits same-sex parenting. The decision to sideline gender difference in marriage will extend this trend, and strip away the final historical distinctive of marriage.

Each time one of these elements of marriage is removed, Western society crosses a kind of Rubicon. When gender difference is also removed, there is no reason to exclude any imagined candidate for ‘marriage’. In the United States, legalisation of gay marriage has led to calls for polygamy to be legalised, since polygamy can also be based on loving, consensual relationships. In December 2010, it was reported in Swiss and British newspapers that the upper house of the Swiss parliament is considering a law decriminalising incest (sex between consenting family members), saying that the laws are now ‘obsolete’ (since procreation is optional). Daniel Vischer, a Green party MP, was reported as saying that there was nothing wrong with two consenting adults having sex, even if they are related. On this logic, there remains little basis to