

AP

REFORMED
THOUGHT
FOR
CHRISTIAN
LIVING

Seeking the Answer You Want

By Mark Powell

Here's an interesting insight into how the game of politics is played. Regarding the Victorian 'Suppression (Conversion) Bill' where the MP's stated the "...government (had) also led 21 face-to-face discussions, including with faith groups" a ministry mate of mine—under a freedom of information request—asked for the list of religious groups the government consulted with in the first and second round of consultations. And this is the response he received...

In the first round held over October-November 2019, nine faith-based groups were consulted:

- Anglican Diocese of Melbourne
- Faith Communities Council of Victoria
- Jewish Community Council of Victoria
- Presbyterian Church of Victoria
- Reformed Presbyterian Church of Australia
- Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne
- Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of Victoria and Tasmania
- Victorian Council of Churches
- Victorian Multi-faith Advisory Committee

So far so good. That's a pretty diverse group of people who might present a differing view to the progressive consensus. But then during the second round of face to face meetings in October-November 2020, a measly six faith-based organisations were consulted:

- Acceptance Melbourne
- Aleph Melbourne
- Australian Christian Lobby
- Melbourne Inclusive Church
- Victorian Multi-faith Advisory Committee.
- Victorian Council of Churches.

Can you see the difference? With the notable exception of the Australian Christian Lobby—who especially under the leadership of Martyn Iles have been outspoken in promoting the

conservative Biblical position—almost all the various groups are of a theologically liberal disposition. And it's probably fair to say most on that list would not have provided much push back on the issue at all. Indeed, I wouldn't be surprised if many of them had probably even thrown in their support!

But I guess this is how the game of politics is played when you're simply seeking affirmation, not information. Meanwhile in NSW, it has fallen almost solely to Mark Latham to champion the defending of liberal values against the Berejiklian government's failure to defend a parent's right to oversee the values that their child is taught at school. The long title of Latham's bill is as **follows**:

An Act to amend the Education Act 1990, the Education Standards Authority Act 2013 and the Teacher Accreditation Act 2004 to provide that schools must recognise that parents are primarily responsible for the development and formation of moral and ethical standards and social and political values in their children, including an understanding of personal identity and questions of gender and sexuality and to prohibit schools, teachers, and training courses from teaching gender fluidity, and for other purposes.

The object of Latham's bill is spelled out under nine key points:

(a) to clarify that parents and not schools are primarily responsible for the development and formation of their children in relation to core values such as ethical and moral standards, social and political values and an understanding of personal identity, including in relation to gender and sexuality;

(b) to prohibit the teaching of the ideology of gender fluidity to children in schools;

(c) to provide that schools should not usurp the role of parents – that teaching in relation to core values is to be strictly non-ideological and should not advocate or promote dogmatic or polemical ideology that is inconsistent with the values held by parents of students;

(d) to ensure that curriculum, syllabuses, and courses of instruction at all levels of schooling do not include the teaching of gender fluidity and recognise parental primacy in relation to core values;

(e) to ensure that all school staff - including non-teaching staff, counsellors, advisors and consultants - do not teach gender fluidity and that such staff undertake their duties and engage with students in schools in a way that recognises parental primacy in relation to core values;

(f) to require schools at the beginning of each academic year to consult with parents about courses of study that will include teaching on core values;

(g) to allow parents to withdraw students from instruction on core values where parents object to the particular teaching on these matters of parental primacy;

(h) to require the NSW Education Standards Authority to monitor the compliance by government schools with the requirements to not teach gender fluidity and to recognise parental primacy in relation to core values;

(i) to provide for a review after two years of the compliance of schools with these requirements and for that review to be tabled in both Houses of the NSW Parliament.

You know that something deeply unsettling has taken place when Pink Floyd's 1980's dystopian musical masterpiece *The Wall*, starts to prophetically mimic reality. But that's precisely what Mark Latham's Bill—currently before the NSW Parliament—regarding parental rights over their children's education is targeting. It's about preventing progressive ideologues from usurping their own morals and values especially in the areas of gender and sexuality.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8F3YQknTVZ4>

As Carl Trueman in his book, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self: Cultural Amnesia, Expressive Individualism, and the Road to Sexual Revolution* (Crossway, 2020) writes:

'This sexualisation of children is, of course, something with which we today are very familiar as it lies behind debates about, for example, the nature and timing of sex education, the treatment of children with gender dysphoria, and the respective rights of children and parents when it comes to doctors prescribing birth control. It also informs tastes in fashion: the sight of even prepubescent girls dressed in a manner that is apparently designed to indicate their sexuality is an unexceptional commonplace today, albeit a somewhat vexing one in a world in which paedophilia is one of the few remaining sexual taboos and something that generates considerable public outrage. But as routine and as common an assumption as childhood sexuality now is, this sexualisation of childhood and even infancy is a relatively recent—and profoundly revolutionary—phenomenon and owes more to Freud than to any other individual thinker.'

Sadly, if it wasn't for Mark Latham then the general public would be none the wiser. But thankfully, there is still time to act as with responses to the following government [questionnaire](#) due by February 28, 2021. At least in NSW we're still being broadly consulted. But as Christians we have a responsibility before God to seeking the flourishing of our society by being involved in the democratic process. Thus, it is beholden upon us all to speak up and become involved for the glory of God and the good of our neighbour.

**Mark Powell is associate pastor at
Cornerstone Presbyterian Church, Sydney.**