

Resources to help you prepare for the 2017 postal survey on marriage redefinition

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The Gospel, Society and Culture Committee of the PCNSW has prepared a list of resources to help you make a wise decision in the upcoming ABS survey on Australian views about whether or not the Marriage Act should be changed to permit same-sex couples to marry.

First, we have several resources available on our website: <http://gsandc.org.au/marriage/>. Included there are links to several statements made by Presbyterian Assemblies, a link to download the Committee's discussion paper, *Engaging with the Marriage Debate*, and information about how to purchase our booklet of Bible studies, *Marriage God's Way*. We still have some hard copies of the Bible studies available, and they can also be purchased in a printable pdf format.

Recently, the Moderator General of Australia, the Right Rev. John Wilson, made a statement about the ABS survey. This can be found on the PCA website: <https://www.presbyterian.org.au/index.php/resources/moderator-s-comments/139-presbyterian-response-to-the-announced-postal-marriage-plebiscite>. In summary, the Moderator General reminds Presbyterian Christians to be earnest, active and prayerful as they participate in the process, and urges them to register and vote to support the "no case". He also wrote an opinion piece for *The Australian* newspaper, highlighting the implications for wider public policy if the Marriage Act is changed to permit same-sex couples to marry: <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/opinion/will-we-still-be-free-to-have-our-own-opinions-of-samesex-marriage/news-story/2e62fb912251f631a54aaccebdb9f60b>.

Freedom for Faith, a Christian think tank that promotes religious freedom in Australia, has a number of resources available in its online library: <https://freedomforfaith.org.au/library>. For an explanation of why it's *not* homophobic to speak against same-sex marriage, we recommend this article which was also published in the Sydney Morning Herald: <https://freedomforfaith.org.au/library/why-marriage-should-be-between-a-man-and-a-woman>. The Freedom for Faith submission to the Senate Inquiry in January 2017 gives a thorough analysis of the impact on free speech of proposed changes in the Marriage Act. It's available to download: <https://freedomforfaith.org.au/library/freedom-for-faith-submission-to-the-select-committee-on-the-exposure-draft>.

Sydney Anglicans have a website, *What God has Joined Together*, which holds written and video resources: <http://sydneyanglicans.net/marriage> . Digital and pdf versions of a booklet that teaches about the Biblical understanding of marriage are available for download (in both English and Chinese translation).

The Coalition for Marriage has a useful website that provides up to date news about the postal survey and the public debate: <https://www.coalitionformarriage.com.au> .

Marriage Alliance offers a wide range of written and video resources on their website: <http://www.marriagealliance.com.au/resources> . We particularly recommend an article, originally published by the Harvard Law Review, in which three American academics (including Ryan T. Anderson) carefully examine the differences between the traditional and revisionist view of marriage, and expose the consequences of society moving away from the traditional view. This is a longer article than others in our list, but we think you will find it helpful for answering questions about the difference between the two views of marriage, as well as in defending the actions of Christians who speak out for the traditional view. <http://www.harvard-jlpp.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/GeorgeFinal.pdf> On the Marriage Alliance website there are also several articles that engage with the question of the well-being of children raised by same-sex parents.

The Witherspoon Institute (in the USA) offers a useful and searchable online journal, *Public Discourse*, that seeks to enhance public understanding of the moral foundations of free societies. We recommend Christopher White's article explaining the connections between legalised same sex-marriage and surrogacy as a way of creating children for same-sex parents. The article is not brief but it makes some helpful points: <http://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2015/07/15362/>.

Several individual Australian Christian commentators have been writing articles about marriage, freedom of speech, and how to engage in a helpful way in the public debate. Below are a few that we think will help you with frequently asked questions.

Lionel Windsor, Anglican minister in Sydney and lecturer at Moore Theological College, has recently written about the meaning of Romans 1:26-27 and the way it been used in the debate about marriage redefinition: <http://www.lionelwindsor.net/2017/08/23/bible-marriage-redefinition-clearing-dust/> . This article is helpful in answering (incorrect) claims that the Bible has nothing to say about homosexuality, such as the claims recently made by Dr Robyn Whittaker in an article published on the ABC news website.

Kevin DeYoung, an American pastor and theologian, has a written a book that deals specifically with the Biblical material about sexuality, *What Does the Bible Really Teach About Homosexuality?* A video recording of a one-hour lecture on the same topic is available on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gxMUJZTixyg> .

Akos Balogh, a former AFES worker and student at Queensland Theological College, is currently writing a series of articles about Christian engagement in the political process of a postal survey. The first deals with the question of whether or not Christians who support a traditional definition of marriage are imposing their views on others, and shows how it's a good thing for Christians to seek fair and just laws. It's available at: <http://akosbalogh.com/2017/08/16/how-should-christians-engage-the-ssm-debate-part-1-political-theology-101/> . In a similar vein, Campbell Markham, a Presbyterian minister in Tasmania, explains how it is an act of Christian love to support a Biblical definition of marriage: <http://thinkingofgod.org/2017/08/love-says-no/> .

Murray Campbell, a Baptist minister in Victoria, puts a case for heterosexual-only marriage, and shows why it's important to have a clear understanding of what marriage is: <https://murraycampbell.net/2017/08/09/a-case-for-heterosexual-only-marriage/> . In another article, he highlights the consequences of changes in the legislation, and emphasises the need for all Australians to have input into the decision. He then gives some helpful advice for speaking publicly about the Christian perspective: <https://murraycampbell.net/2017/08/08/pursuing-public-conversation-on-marriage/> .

Associate Professor Neil Foster looks at the issues from a legal perspective. There are several detailed articles available on his website: <https://lawandreligionaustralia.blog> . We particularly recommend his critiques of the proposed legislation, in which he raises concerns about the impact on freedom of speech and religious expression: <https://lawandreligionaustralia.blog/2017/08/06/religious-freedom-protections-in-new-same-sex-marriage-proposals-too-few-too-narrow/> , and also <https://lawandreligionaustralia.blog/2016/10/22/legal-implications-of-same-sex-marriage-for-christian-life-and-ministry/> . Neil's submission to the Senate Inquiry in January 2017 is also available on his website: <https://lawandreligionaustralia.blog/2017/01/29/why-proposed-same-sex-marriage-balancing-clauses-would-be-constitutional-and-right/> .

Legal Aid NSW has a useful “factsheet” on its website to explain the rights of de facto couples under law, stating clearly that “the sex of the partners is not a relevant consideration. The laws state specifically that a de facto relationship can exist between two people of the same sex, or of the opposite sex.” This information is helpful in rebutting claims that homosexual couples are discriminated against by the current definitions of marriage. See this webpage for more information: <http://www.legalaid.nsw.gov.au/publications/factsheets-and-resources/defacto-relationships-and-family-law-factsheet> .

Finally, The Guardian online newspaper has an article explaining the process of the postal survey, and outlining the general history of the campaign. The Guardian's pro same-sex marriage position is evident in the article, but the record of the process is fair and accurate: <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/aug/23/the-answers-in-the-post-australian-marriage-equality-vote-explainer>

The Gospel, Society and Culture committee aims to provide resources which are faithful to Scripture, relevant to the life and mission of the church, engaged with contemporary Australian culture and informed by careful research. Resource Papers aim to be consistent with the confessional position of the Presbyterian Church of Australia and to reflect positions on social issues expressed by the Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in NSW. They have not been approved by the Assembly and so do not represent the official view of the Presbyterian Church of NSW.

For more information about The Gospel, Society and Culture committee see [www.gsandc.org.au](http://www.gsandc.org.au)

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