

Humanist Viewpoints

NEWSLETTER OF THE HUMANIST SOCIETY OF NSW INC



Volume 46

Number

1

JAN/FEB/MAR 07

**SPECIAL GENERAL MEETING
EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL MEETING: Motions
for CAHS**

Humanist Society of NSW
2pm Humanist House
11 February 2007

Motion for SGM:

That Clause 7 of Section 10 of the Constitution (adopted in the 2006 AGM): "That the Committee may vote by simple resolution to cancel the membership of any member who has publicly expressed views contrary to the aims and objectives of the Society as per Clause 1 and 2 of the Constitution of the Humanist Society of NSW" **be amended to read:**

'That Clause 7 of Section 10 of the Constitution (adopted in the 2006 AGM) be amended to read, "That for a period of two months following acceptance as a new member, the Committee may vote by simple resolution to cancel the membership of any such member who has publicly expressed views contrary to the aims and objectives of the Society as per Clause 1 and 2 of the Constitution of the Humanist Society of NSW"'.

Rationale: this should resolve the "star chamber" objection to the clause as adopted in October 2006. The idea is to give the Committee time to be satisfied that the new member is a bona fides applicant. After the two months period the existing rules for removing a member comes back in. This has all the due process clauses that one expects in a democratic association.

HUVAT/DARWIN DAY

There will be no HUVAT in January. February's HUVAT will be postponed because of the SG and EG Meetings as in the box above. The next HUVAT will be on Sunday 11 March with Victor Bien at 2pm for Darwin Day. See HumSoc website as below for details as they emerge including the Skeptics Darwin Day Dinner in March.

**COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIAN HUMANISTS
CONVENTION 2007**

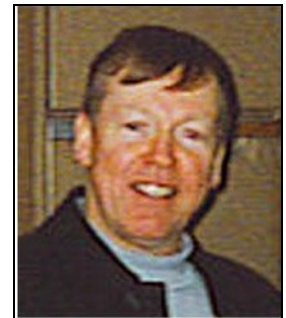
As announced in *Australian Humanist*, Humanist Society Victoria will host the 2007 CAHS Convention in Melbourne 20-22 April. Friday evening will be a social gathering, the AGM will be on Saturday 21 and Sunday will be public/seminar sessions. See next *Viewpoints* for more details.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Richard Howard

As 2006 draws to a close it is opportune to take stock of the Society's achievements and disappointments.

On the positive side, our co-sponsorship of the 'Separating Church and State' conference at the University Melbourne in June was the highlight. Organised by a Committee of our Melbourne colleagues the conference was a great success in highlighting the failure of successive governments to establish constitutional separation of church and state in Australia. It was preceded by a ground breaking Newpoll survey in March funded by secular activists that found widespread support for separation.



Leading humanists including Democrats Leader Senator Lyn Allison; former President of the International Humanist and Ethical Society (IHEU) Roy Brown; constitutional expert Professor Helen Irving of the University of Sydney; Sydney public education activist Jane Caro, and other academics.

HUMANIST SOCIETY of NSW WEBSITE

<http://www.hsnsw.asn.au/>

SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE DUE BY THE 1ST OF JULY EVERY YEAR as follows:

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gave us the benefit of their approach to separation. The keynote address was given by our own new *Viewpoints* Editor, Dr Max Wallace.

A panel discussion including Anglican and Catholic religionists, chaired by Melbourne's Terry Lane, saw some of the typical religionist stereotyping of humanism rebutted with eloquence by Roy Brown.

Subsequent to the conference Max Wallace and I met with leading Democrats in order to argue the need for a constitutional separation of church and state. We provided them with material which has eventually led to the groundbreaking speech by the Hon Dr Chesterfield-Evans which is republished in this newsletter.

The re-emergence of the Humanist Society as a significant player in public debates concerning the role of religion in our society was cemented by a recent book on this issue by Anglican Bishop Tom Frame. In this he attacks the Humanist Society in general and my arguments in particular as "disingenuous" in their plausibility!

What I argue on our website and elsewhere is of course not an expression of hostility to individual religious belief, which as a humanist I respect, but the simple contention that this should not be foisted upon others through law.

The fact that those prominent identities who support a greater role for organized religion in government feel the need to attack us shows that we are once more in the vanguard of public social conscience and the plausibility of our arguments is considered a threat to those who do not share our enlightened view of the human experience!

The one great disappointment of the year has been the decision of our brothers and sisters in the Rationalist Association to defer amalgamation with the Humanist Society. Whilst having resolved to amalgamate with us a year ago, numerous delays have seen this process stall. In December the Rationalist Association decided to defer further action on this matter altogether.

I am still hopeful that issues of concern can be resolved.

It is ironic that just as the Humanist Society is emerging once more into the centre stage of public life, with our membership growing strongly, our financial viability is still a concern.

Closing on a positive note, the election year 2007 promises to be very important. The secular fightback against blatant attempts by religionists to influence government, in the manner of their American counterparts, is up and running. Australians have a healthy scepticism towards all

variations on the theme of wowsersism. Our Society will be on the front line of the resistance to any compromising of Australian secular traditions.

Richard Howard.

EDITOR'S COMMENTS

Max Wallace

This is the first newsletter by me, your new Editor, with expert assistance from the Sub-Editor, my wife, Meg.



We take this opportunity to acknowledge the considerable amount of work performed by Affie Adagio in bringing the Newsletter to our Society over several years. Many thanks for your tireless work Affie and we look forward to your graduating PhD.

Also thanks to the Buddhist Library and Paget Sayers who has applied for membership. Paget has provided a printing contact which will mean we could produce *Viewpoints* in a magazine form and with colour pictures that will cost us half the price of the present one. We will also have *Viewpoints* available electronically for those who prefer it that way.

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Angela Drury

**REMINDER THAT
ALL 2006/07
MEMBERSHIP
RENEWALS were
DUE JULY 1**



**If you haven't renewed
please do so now.**

Welcome to new members: Ben Felden, Kay Haydon, Michael Sutcliffe, John Wright.

Thank you for generous donations to members Mollie Campbell, Joan Vaughan Taylor, Dierk von Behrens, Geoff Stowell .

Who's Who of Australian Women This recently published volume includes NSW Humanist members Affie Adagio (our past president, convener of *Australis2000* retiring editor of *Viewpoints* and now vice president); Vicky Potempa (life member Humanist society, just retired from committee after 40 years of service, instrumental in the womens movement, the pro-abortion lobby, and the welfare of prisoners); Ann Young (long term Humanist member, past president, current Public Officer, active in the arts) and Dorothy Buckland-Fuller (member, politically

involved in anti-discrimination issues, active in women's and ethnic groups, and on radio). Congratulations to these women on achieving this recognition.

**VICKY POTEPA'S
AUTOBIOGRAPHY**

Off my Shoulders. This is the title of Vicky Potempa's autobiography which is being self-published. Vicky is an honorary life member of the Humanist Society of NSW and has worked tirelessly and passionately for over 40 years for Humanism, women's rights, prisoners' rights and access to safe abortion. She tells her life story as a young woman in Egypt, as a "battler" new migrant to Australia, her family responsibilities, the early days of the Humanist Society (which she credits as "life saving") her activism and her travels. Several copies of the book will be donated to the Humanist Society and sold as a fundraiser for \$35 each. The book will be properly reviewed in a following *Viewpoints*.

**RESOLUTIONS PASSED AT AGM
NOVEMBER 2006**

MOTION 1 That the following Clause 7 be added to Section 10 of the Constitution "That the Committee may vote by simple resolution to cancel the membership of any member who has publicly expressed views contrary to the aims and objectives of the Society as per Clause 1 and 2 of the Constitution of the Humanist Society of NSW."

MOTION 2 That the following Clause 7 be added to Section 14 of the Constitution "That members nominating for Committee must have been members of the Society for not less than six months, except in cases where the Committee has resolved to waive this requirement."

MOTION 3 That the front external wall of Humanist House be painted, at the Committee's earliest convenience, one uniform colour sympathetic with the surrounds of Chippendale, and in a graffiti resistant manner.

MOTION 4. That, sensitive of the fact that the last SEVEN Australian Humanists of the Year have been male, in the interests of gender equity and participation of women, this meeting urges CAHS to appoint a worthy woman in 2007.

Election of Office Bearers and Committee:

President: Richard Howard,

Vice Presidents, Affie Adagio, David Duffy,

Treasurer, Victor Bien

Committee: John August, David Blair, Anthony D'Angiolillo, Sturt Duncan, Brian Edwards, Gillian Ellis, Fred Flatow, Harry Gian, Robin Hall, Ian Jones, Wade McInerney, John Markovina, Vicki Potempa, Max Wallace, Ann Young.

**SUPREME COURT ACCEPTS
TAXPAYER CHALLENGE TO BUSH
'FAITH-BASED' OFFICE**

December 1, 2006: The U.S. Supreme Court today agreed to decide whether taxpayers may challenge the Bush administration's use of general appropriations to promote its "faith-based" agenda.

In 2005, the 7th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that three Wisconsin taxpayers had legal standing to challenge President George W. Bush's creation of a White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives and other promotion of his faith-based initiative.

The Bush administration asked the high court to overrule the decision, arguing that under current court precedent, taxpayers may only challenge congressional appropriations of funds if the money goes to religious organizations. The executive branch's use of general appropriations to set up its faith-based office and promote a faith-based agenda are not fit subjects for legal challenge, the administration argued.

The Bush administration asked the high court to overrule the decision, arguing that under current court precedent, taxpayers may only challenge congressional appropriations of funds if the money goes to religious organizations. The executive branch's use of general appropriations to set up its faith-based office and promote a faith-based agenda are not fit subjects for legal challenge, the administration argued.

"This is a relatively narrow question," said Barry W. Lynn, executive director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, "but it's quite important. We believe that no tax money should be spent to advance religion. It's essential that the justices uphold the principle that taxpayers can go to court when their money is being used to advance religion."

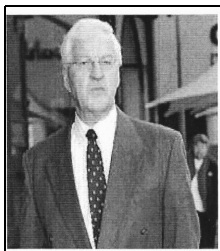
Hein v. Freedom From Religion Foundation will be the first church-state case to come before the high court since two Bush appointees — Chief Justice John Roberts and Associate Justice Samuel Alito — have taken seats there.

Said AU's Lynn, "Both Roberts and Alito expressed general support for church-state separation during their confirmation hearings. This case will be a good opportunity for them to put that viewpoint to good use."

Americans United is a religious liberty watchdog group based in Washington, D.C. Founded in 1947, the organization educates Americans about the importance of church-state separation in safeguarding religious freedom.

FATHER VINCENT KISS TRUMPED BY US PRIESTS

The Australian Catholic priest (pictured) who was gaoled in Melbourne in 1993 for stealing \$1.8M from a charitable trust has been trumped by the similar fact activities of two US priests last September.



In sentencing Kiss in 1993 Judge Mullaly said Father Kiss was 'seduced by the rich life.' With the \$1.8M he stole from a bank's charitable trust, where for many years he was the only signatory to the account, Kiss lived an entertainer's lifestyle in his South Melbourne home, complete with expensive spa. Over \$100,000 of the Trust's money had been used for renovations. The installation of the spa alone cost \$16,745. He ate at the best restaurants and had a well-stocked wine cellar. On one occasion at least, young boys from Vanuatu acted as waiters serving South African champagne. He often hired chauffeur driven limousines. He had also purchased a mansion in the Philippines which he regularly visited among his many overseas trips. Upon arrival in Manila he would be whisked by helicopter to his resort mansion 90 kms away. Philippines police suspected the luxury villa was used for sex offences against local children. An Australian activist living in Manilla drew the many allegations to the attention of the Philippines church hierarchy. Little or no response. Kiss was caught when the bank's personnel changed and a new employee became suspicious about the Trust's account. Sentenced to eight years he spent six in Melbourne's Pentridge Prison before his release.

By comparison, the two US priests have been accused of stealing US\$8M from the Church in Florida. Monsignor John Skehan, 79, and Father Francis Guinan, 63, reportedly spent the money on real estate, travel, gambling trips, rare coins and women.

'Professional Money Launderers'

The two were described as 'professional money launderers' by a Miami detective, Thomas Whatley.

Monsignor Skehan invested heavily in rare coins. He owned a cottage and a pub in Ireland, a penthouse and a condominium, both in Florida.

The cash came from bequests made to the church and the collection plates. The thefts occurred over a period of years. Monsignor Skehan served the church for forty years. Police were only alerted following an anonymous tip-off. The Diocese hired an accounting firm, after the event, to go over the records. They found that \$8,690,593 was misappropriated.

A witness described Father Guinan as a 'gambler and heavy drinker' who often took vacations to Las Vegas and the Bahamas.

Appeal

After he was found guilty Vincent Kiss appealed. One of the grounds of the appeal was that 'the learned sentencing judge took into an account an irrelevant consideration, namely, 'his observation of the prisoner in the dock during the plea.'

The judge had observed Kiss was 'completely disinterested' during the Crown Prosecutor's opening address. He had become 'more interested' during his own counsel's submission. The judge dared to suggest that he had seen similar conduct, in his experience, when other professional criminals were in the dock.

This comment was used as a ground for appeal. Kiss's counsel said that rather than being 'completely disinterested' in the charges being laid out against him, he was in fact 'praying'.

Given his situation, maybe he was. But a full bench of the Supreme Court of Victoria threw out the appeal.

Denouement

Not long after his release from the Melbourne gaol Father Kiss was arrested again, this time on 13 child sex charges.

He pleaded guilty to offences that had occurred between 1966 and 1973 when he was a young priest at Albury, Yass and Sydney. When the offences occurred he was the Catholic Diocesan Director of Youth at Wagga Wagga. He was again sentenced to prison. This time a NSW gaol.

**DEMOCRATS TABLE POLICY
SUPPORTING LEGISLATION TO
SEPARATE CHURCH AND STATE**

The NSW Parliament recently passed the World Youth Day Bill which will establish a statutory corporation, the World Youth Day Co-ordination Authority, to plan, co-ordinate and provide for government services for World Youth Day 2008. World Youth Day is a six-day celebration aimed at young people aged from 16 to 35 years from around the world. Initiated by Pope John Paul II in 1984, it has become the largest single international mobilisation of young people in the world. The NSW Government, along with Cardinal Pell of the Catholic Church bid for the right to hold the event in Sydney.

*In condemning the taxpayers' mandatory contribution to this religious event, the **Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS**, Democrat member of the Legislative Council, set out the Democrats policy on separation of Church and State, which includes enactment of legislation to that end. This is what he had to say in the Legislative Council on 15 November 2006 (edited for length):*

[1.02am] I recognise this bill as one that sets up an authority to co-ordinate World Youth Day and implement quite a number of traffic changes. I understand that the land uses and changes associated with the event will cost about \$20 million. I understand also, from the Government, that this event is expected to bring in revenue of \$146 million, giving us a cool profit of \$126 million. Given our obsession with Mammon, this has to be a wonderful thing.

I am, however, concerned that this is not just World Youth Day; it is effectively a Catholic day. It is a day for Catholic youth and recruitment and the championing of Catholic youth. It is in effect a propaganda exercise by the Catholic Church. Let us be really clear about what this is. When I hear World Youth Day I am reminded of the holy Roman Empire, a concept that has existed from about 600 AD and encompass the whole of Western Europe in effect as the empire of the Pope—until the Reformation, when the Brits got themselves a separate church so that Henry could divorce his wife. Be that as it may, the Pope asked countries to bid for World Youth Day—which really means Catholic Youth Day. The fact that Catholic or Roman Catholic is not mentioned suggests marketing activities of the Catholic Church.

As honourable members know, I am very keen on the separation of church and state. Such separation is extremely important, and we should have it in Australia. I think the Parliament of New South Wales needs to change the New South Wales

Constitution Act 1902 with the object of the Parliament of New South Wales recognising, respecting and guaranteeing freedom of conscience and of religion equally to all individuals; recognising, respecting and guaranteeing the equal freedom of every person to change or relinquish his or her religious beliefs; recognising, respecting and guaranteeing every individual's right to profess, within the framework of respect of the law, the religious belief of his or her preference; and recognising, respecting and guaranteeing every individual's right not to have any religion. We should declare that New South Wales is a secular, democratic State with a separation between temporal government authorities and institutions and religious authorities and institutions.

I think we need to define what a religion is. Religion means a personal commitment to a supernatural or similar entity, expressed within a community of others, realised through observances, practices and rituals; belief means a commitment to a set of principles and ethics for individual or collective moral action; and secular means government non-involvement in the expressions of religious or anti religious organisations.

The separation of church and state should be achieved by the State of New South Wales declaring that there is a separation of church, synagogue, mosque, or any religious organisation and the State in New South Wales. Official religious rituals such as prayers and oaths should not be used in Parliament or at public government functions; and all public religious symbols or signs in Parliament or in government buildings and workplaces, with the exception of displays integral to war memorials, museums and similar displays, should be removed. Of course, this would not preclude individuals from displaying personal religious symbols.

There should be no public moneys for the purpose of worship, teaching or observance of religious beliefs. No public money or property should be appropriated, applied, paid or employed, directly or indirectly, for the use, benefit, or support of any religious organisation, or of any priest, preacher, minister, imam or other religious teacher for the purposes of worship, teaching, practice or observance of religious beliefs. This does not prevent public funding to religious organisations to provide services and programs that are non-religious in nature.

The Education Act of 1990 must be amended to include provision for general religious education, which involves learning about religions, the place of religion in society and the importance of religious beliefs for particular individuals and communities. It is a set curriculum and is taught by teachers. "General religious education" should be

changed to "ethics and philosophy". We need to expand the proposed curriculum for ethics and philosophy to include, in addition to religion, discussions about other philosophies and ethics. We need to include the following clause:

While respecting the need for students to learn about the religious and other belief structures or similar traditions of society as a normal part of the State curriculum, no government school will permit the worship, teaching, practice or observance of any religion or include any religious or other belief instruction undertaken by any priest, minister, imam, other religionist or other belief instructor, or person acting as the agent of a religion or belief system, or similar teacher, in government schools at any time.

The New South Wales Education Act 1990 also allows for special religious education by a religious authority and be determined the content themselves and to the teaching. This provision must be repealed. There must be no public funds for chaplains in State schools. State accountability must be such that services given State funding must be performed without any discrimination based on religion or belief and without a requirement, whether formal or informal, to participate in religious activities.

....The bill of course is effectively facilitating an immense propaganda drive for the Catholic Church, and I am stating guidelines that the State should have in order to clearly separate church and state, a concept that seems to have been muddled almost as a prerequisite of this bill, and as such I believe my remarks are well within the leave and scope of the bill.

(After objection this was irrelevant): The Hon. Tony Kelly: I think we should allow the Democrats to get their policy on the record.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: As I was saying, we must ensure that State funding for services is undertaken without any discrimination based on religion or belief and without a requirement, whether formal or informal, to participate in religious activities. We must ensure transparency and accountability in reporting to relevant government authorities activities where State tax benefits accrue. This is the format for which we should be considering subsidies to the church. Let us be very clear about this: This is a subsidy to the Catholic church, which will run, effectively, a huge propaganda exercise extending around the world.

I recognise that the cost of this may be \$20 million and the benefit to the State—which, admittedly, will not be in terms of State revenue—will be \$146 million. Those costings may be reasonable but,

given the huge propaganda filip at a world level that Catholicism will get from this ceremony, we may indeed have a further religious interference in the running of the State that may have an effect on many aspects of decisions we make regarding stem cell research, abortion, euthanasia, the teaching of creation science, and other things that are very distressing to people who are of secular belief and who believe that the Government should stick to a more scientific approach. We have to recognise that this is a danger in the subsidising of a Catholic festival. While one can look at this as a valuable aspect from a tourism point of view and we should treat it neutrally in the same way that Mardi Gras is treated neutrally. This is a subsidy for a religious ceremony, and we must recognise it as such.

Ms LEE RHIANNON [Greens] [1.12 a.m.]: Imagine 1.2 million young Muslims converging on Sydney for prayer and celebration. And to promote the event a logo is unveiled that combines the Muslim crescent-moon symbol emblazoned on a burning image of the Opera House. Not in your wildest dreams!

...If you are supporting this World Youth Day that is the image that you have just signed off on. With the vilification of young men of Middle Eastern appearance almost a daily occurrence, the suggestion of 1.2 million young Muslims converging on Sydney is ridiculous. But just substitute Muslim for Catholic and change the symbol to the cross and this becomes real. The point is you would not have a burning image of the Opera House with the crescent moon on it.

...I am not talking through my hat. Go to the web site and look at the image of this World Youth Day. It is an image of the burning Opera House with a symbol of the cross on it. I was just making a comparison. When this logo was unveiled in April, Mr Turnbull, the Premier and a number of young people were in attendance. I do not know whether members saw Mr Iemma; he seemed quite embarrassed when asked to comment on the logo. True, it is hard to conclude too much from this—the New South Wales Premier often stumbles his way through interviews—but I certainly felt he was a bit shellshocked by the disturbing images. But, if there was any hesitancy on the part of the Premier it was just momentary.

The Premier is understandably excited by the event, particularly the prospect of millions of visitors coming to Sydney and the hundreds of millions of dollars they will spend in New South Wales. When the last World Youth Day was held in the German town of Cologne in 2005, 1.2 million young Catholics attended the final mass. Again, imagine that number of young Muslims facing Mecca and praying together in Sydney. The headlines, the talkback and the outcry from our mainstream

politicians would be extreme. I could imagine many of the people sitting on the Opposition benches laughing at the moment would be the first to jump up in this House and move motions condemning such an event if it were ever suggested that 1.2 young Muslims come into this country. The hypocrisy is extreme.

.... You can almost hear the pious chatter about incitement to violence and unhealthy outpourings of dangerous emotions. Inevitably, someone would try to make a link between the burning Opera House and 9/11.

The Hon. Tony Kelly: We must make sure that John Johnson, the president of the *Catholic Weekly*, gets a copy of this speech.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Yes, that would be good. We would have a lot to share. I acknowledge religious freedom is a fundamental right. When I heard about this event and went to the web site I reflected back over time.

....Look at all the Catholics in this place. In regard to World Youth Day, Catholics could at least have had an across-faith event to involve young people of all faiths and atheists. However, the narrow project they have launched is very disappointing. This comparison with an equivalent hypothetical Muslim event illustrates the bigotry and prejudice that exists in our society. It is clear that 1.2 million young Muslims would not enjoy the same religious freedom as 1.2 million young Catholics. With the ongoing vilification of young men of Middle Eastern appearance by the media and some members of Parliament—and I do not need to remind members of Mr Debnam's reference to locking up 200 Middle Eastern thugs—I have difficulty imagining that a gathering of young Muslims in Sydney would enjoy the same level of religious freedom and government support. We need to remember that Mel Gibson was originally engaged in this project. I have heard there were two proposals for Mel Gibson: one was to direct a mock crucifixion and the other one was the Stations of the Cross down Macquarie Street.

The Hon. John Della Bosca: You have heard too much corridor gossip, Lee.

Ms LEE RHIANNON ...Do you know where this comes from? Archbishop Pell—your good mate.

... I have obviously read up about this; you can find fascinating things when you read the various Catholic productions around the place. Mel Gibson obviously dropped out of mention when he made his anti-Semitic remarks. It is still not clear whether he is out of the whole game, but he was seriously considered. Over the years I have come into contact with several progressive Catholic organisations,

including the impressive Catholics in Coalition for Social Justice and Peace. They are an important, albeit minority, part of the church.

It was worrying to see that the Cologne World Youth Day did not include in its program, or even provide space for, discussion of contentious issues of religion and lifestyle. Catholics for a Free Choice and a few other groups tried to inject balance into the proceedings, but the enormity of the event and the backing of the mainstream Catholic Church and those with a different message were drowned out. That is why I go back to my earlier comments that this is not an open event at which a diversity of viewpoints will be put. Everything indicates otherwise. Checking out the web site for WYD 2008 suggests that the same conformity will be pushed onto the young Catholics who flock to Sydney. In calling for support for the Sydney event, companies are given a series of guidelines on behaviour to be avoided. At the top of the list are "promiscuity, contraception, abortion, adultery". They are to be avoided. WYD 2008 will lose an important opportunity to send a message about safe sex practices to its young participants. To their credit, the organisers warn their corporate partners against "payment of unjust wages and unethical work conditions".

Mr IAN COHEN [1.21 a.m.]: **[Greens]** I appreciate the words of Ms Lee Rhiannon who led in this debate for the Greens, and I also very much appreciate the points of view put forward by the Hon. Dr Arthur Chesterfield-Evans. In listening to the debate I recognise people's rights to have their particular religious convictions, ideas and ideals. However, I have real concerns when I listen to the positions put forward by what might be a majority of people in this House. I was raised in what probably would be considered a minority position in this society, and I have chosen very much to take a minority position with my lifestyle. But it is disconcerting when I hear ridicule in this House, the majority attitude and the power of church in this State and in this House. It worries me a great deal. In fairness, this is something that is pursued by the dominant paradigm of this society and this House. World Youth Day is a massive festival put on by a certain section of the community. It takes away from what I believe should be a true separation of church and State.

[Interruption]

I have listened to all the other arguments in this House, and for a short time I want to make a statement in support of what some of the members have said in his House.

Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile: They are insults against the Catholic Church.

Mr IAN COHEN: They may be insults, but freedom of speech means that we have the latitude to disagree. If that be taken as an insult, so be it. But I feel it is important in this House to have the opportunity to respectfully disagree, although there would be members of this House who would seek to stop any such disagreement. This is a Chamber for open discussion. I believe it was inappropriate to fund the church spires for St Mary's Cathedral, which was supported by this House. Similarly I believe—

The Hon. Charlie Lynn: What did you want up there, a teepee?

Mr IAN COHEN: Yes. Similarly I believe it is inappropriate that the House supports to the degree it does this particular event. It should be supported as other events in the community would be supported. I ask the Minister in his reply to give details to the House of how much money will go from State Government coffers towards this event.

ANYONE FOR TENNIS – COURT?

The Australian reported 24 October 2006 that Adelaide's Anglican Archbishop, Jeffrey Driver, will have to sell the tennis court at his historic residence to help meet claims for compensation to sex abuse victims of his church. The tennis court is reportedly worth 'up to \$2M.' While the church seems to be doing the honourable thing about settling claims, the question arises: why does an Archbishop need to live in a residence with a \$2M tennis court? As British MP Liberal Democrat Norman Baker pointed out during a 2000 inquiry into the lifestyles of British Bishops, 'It's intolerable that when you have *falling* church rolls you have *rising* Bishop's expenses. It is also intolerable that when you have parishes suffering you have Bishops living in huge palaces with chauffeurs and gardeners. I can't find anywhere in the Bible where it says 'thou shalt live in lavish palaces.'

AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS –(D.O.G.S.) PRESS RELEASE

30 October 2006

John Howard, at the weekend of 28/29 October 2006, pledged \$90 million for school chaplains in government and private church schools over three years.

Bob Carr, the former premier of New South Wales, correctly called this proposal a retrograde and divisive threat to the separation of Church and State. Prime Minister John Howard has denied that

his proposal blurs the line between Church and State. In support of his ignorant comment he stated:

"Those who say this is blurring the distinction (between Church and State) are therefore saying that paying assistance to independent schools is blurring the distinction. Plainly neither is."

He further denied that :

"..the plan changed in any way the secular nature of Australian society! I think we are a secular society in the sense that we don't have an established religion. "

John Howard is wrong on both accounts. The proposal unites Church and State at the Treasury. Taxpayers money to private church schools, now in excess of at least \$5 billion per annum is a definite combining of Church and State at the Public Treasury. It is not even blurring the distinction between the two. It is a binding connection. As for a secular state, John Howard, by proposing to finance religion in every Australian school, is destroying the basis on which the Australian secular society is built, namely a public education system which is open to all and offensive to none. The free, secular and universal system created in the nineteenth century as the result of the secular settlement which separated church and state at the Treasury, has been consistently and constantly undermined by Mr. Howard and the Coalition . It also represents another step in the unwritten agenda for the destruction of our free secular and universal public education systems throughout Australia.

The bad news for Australia is that Howard is also supported by the federal ALP. The Opposition education spokeswoman, Jenny Macklin, said that the Labor Party supported the Chaplaincy program, but said that :

"...any new chaplaincy program must be flexible to take into account the diversity of religious beliefs in our school systems."

However, Mr. Carr is reported in the Sydney Morning Herald of 30 October 2006 as saying that:

"..the chaplain plan should be abandoned, as it breached the church-and-state principle, and would require taxpayers to finance religious activities, and would fuel religious disputes in schools. "

Congratulations are in order for Mr. Carr because one of the reasons for the abandonment of denominational in favour of the free secular and universal public system was to prevent religious disputes within the schools in our education systems. Mr. Carr further pointed out that there

were about 50 Sydney schools with a predominantly Islamic school enrolment. He asked:

"What would happen if a pro-jihad imam was appointed (as chaplain)?" He added " There will be a steady diet of anti-discrimination actions as a result of this piece of federal government policy. "

With the prospect of debates over chaplain appointments between Roman Catholics and Protestants; Islamic and Jewish; etc. etc. Carr correctly stated:

" ..it means plunging parent bodies into disputes over religion. I could not think of a more retrograde policy decision. "

Bob Carr, unlike current Federal Labor Party politicians understands the value of separation of church and state and the secular society which goes with it when he says:

" One of the sunniest facts about modern Australia is the tolerance which arises from living in a secular society".

DOGS calls on the press, the professors, the pastors, and the politicians to preserve our most valuable inheritance.

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***STUDY FINDS THAT RELIGIOUS
FUNDAMENTALISTS ARE IMPEDING
HEALTH CARE AROUND THE
WORLD***

A new study finds that religious fundamentalists in the U.S. and the Vatican are impeding attempts to reduce sexually-transmitted diseases and improve reproductive health around the world.

Prof. Anna Glasier of the University of Edinburgh, one of the authors of the report, said "The bold fact is that the US has such a huge influence around the world. The problem is not so much that conservative forces are growing, but that the countries that have become more conservative are those with huge influence." The Vatican also plays a major part in holding back progress, she said.

340 million new patients became infected with gonorrhoea, syphilis, chlamydia or trichomonas; more than 120 million couples have an unmet need for contraception; 80 million women have unintended pregnancies; and an estimated 19 million women undergo unsafe abortions leading to 70,000 deaths. Cheap, effective measures could overcome these problems if there was a will to implement them.

On his first day in office, President George W. Bush reinstated a policy that meant that no U.S. family-planning assistance could be provided to foreign non-governmental organizations working in or providing abortion.

***SURVEY SHOWS UNCERTAINTY
ABOUT EXISTENCE OF GOD FOR
AMERICANS***

Americans aren't all that fundamentalist after all. A new Harris poll shows that 42 percent of Americans are not "absolutely certain" that there is a God, including 15 percent who are "somewhat certain," 11 percent who think there is probably no God and 16 percent who are not sure.

The reason this poll seems to contradict other polls is that it was conducted online. Researchers believe that those being questioned are more likely to give an honest answer if they are not talking directly to another person.

Not everyone who describes themselves as Christian or Jewish believes in God. Indeed, only 76 percent of Protestants, 64 percent of Catholics, and 30 percent of Jews say they are "absolutely certain" there is a God. However, most Christians who describe themselves as "Born Again" (93 percent) are absolutely certain there is a God.

The above two articles are from Terry Sanderson, vice president of the National Secular Society (U.K.), editor of the weekly [NSS Newslines](#), in which this article first appeared November 3, 2006.

***GOWARD'S HILALY/HUBBY
HORROR***

The Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Pru Goward, who has stood down to contest the state seat of Goulburn for the Liberal Party, was in different states of crankiness last October. When Muslim Sheikh Hilaly made his horror analogy between women's dress and 'uncovered meat' she was furious and considered that maybe he could be deported.

Unfortunately, *The Australian* reported on 23 October 2006 that Pru's husband and John Howard biographer, David Barnett, is the subject of a complaint to the Human Rights Commission. It was reported that he said in his column in the *Canberra Times* that 'Aboriginal women wipe themselves with a rag in the lavatory and hang it up to dry next time. We must ask ourselves whether it's right to condemn Australian children to be brought up by mothers who don't know enough about rearing

children to wipe their noses and where the baby bonus sends a town on a drunken binge.'

The Australian reported that Pru was 'disappointed' by her husband's article but she was 'too cross to yell' at him. She did not call for his deportation. Nevertheless, it must be embarrassing for the Sex Discrimination Commissioner/Liberal candidate to have her husband the subject of a human rights complaint. What *do* they talk about at home? Given she was so cross with him there could be no doubt she will not use her expertise in these matters to assist him in his response to the complaint.

**AMANDA VANSTONE SUPPORTS
VOLUNTARY EUTHANASIA**

Amanda Vanstone sent the following speech as a DVD to the Exit conference which celebrated the 10th Anniversary of the NT Rights of the Terminally Ill Act. An MP read it on her behalf. at the Shirley Nolan Commemoration Day on Tues Nov 14th on Parliament House steps.

I am very sorry that I can't be with you in person this morning. But my message to you is a simple one. I strongly support the development of effective laws to allow people who are approaching the end of their lives to choose to die with dignity.

There are two important elements of my view which I want to explain in more detail.

The first element is my belief that if these laws are to have integrity, they must include effective protection for vulnerable people.

It is a very sad reflection on our society, perhaps a damning indictment, but I believe that not all children look upon aged care expenses as a means of keeping their parents happy in their old age. Sadly, too often we hear of cases where children look on those expenses as a drain on their own resources or as a reduction in what they see as their potential inheritance. For that reason, the elderly are in a vulnerable position.

We often say children are our future, and that's true. But we should never forget who gave them their life and gave them that future.

If we forget what our parents gave us, if we fail to give them in their later years what they gave us in our early years, we can no longer describe ourselves as civilised.

I believe that people in the unenviable position of facing the end of their life should have the dignity to control the manner of that journey.

No greedy relatives should be able to influence their choice. Neither should those who might think they know better.

The second element of my view is related to the temptation that some may face – namely, to assist someone to end their life in contravention of the law.

To oppose a law, to break it and take the consequences, is an honourable course of action. To break the law and seek to hide your actions – to avoid the consequences – is both criminal and shameful.

There is no honour or moral credit in taking the law into your own hands and pretending otherwise. We need laws which combine the protection of the vulnerable with the option of choosing to die with dignity.

**NON-BELIEVER WHO PRISED
APART CHURCH AND STATE
VASHTI McCOLLUM: 1912 – 2006**

VASHTI McCOLLUM'S lawsuit to stop religious instruction on school property led to a landmark ruling by the US Supreme Court in 1948 to protect the separation of church and state in education.

Justice Hugo Black wrote: "The first amendment rests upon the premise that both religion and government can best work to achieve their lofty aims if each is left free from the other in its respective sphere."

McCollum, who called herself an atheist but later preferred the word "humanist", said her son, James, was ostracised by his schoolmates because she refused to let him attend religion classes at his public school in Champaign, Illinois. She contended that the classes were an unconstitutional merger of church and state, a misuse of taxpayers' money and discriminated against minority faiths.

McCollum, who has died at 93, lost in two Illinois courts but won an 8-1 decision by the Supreme Court. Black, who wrote the majority opinion, said the practice in Champaign was "beyond all question" using tax-established and tax-supported schools "to aid religious groups to spread their faith" and that it fell under the first amendment ban.

A critical issue was whether the US constitution's ban meant that all sects must be treated equally, as lawyers argued was the case in the schools, or whether it required strict neutrality between belief and unbelief, McCollum's contention. She won.

Named after the queen of the Persian King Xerxes, who refused to obey her husband's order and was divorced for her spunk, Vashti Ruth Cromwell's

father, Arthur, was an architect who read the works of atheists such as Spinoza and Thomas Paine, then read seven versions of the Bible. After letting the conflicting ideas germinate for years, he had become a vocal atheist by the time his two daughters were in college

Vashti received a scholarship to Cornell but the money ran out during the Depression and she transferred to the University of Illinois, where she majored in political science and took courses in law.

Her son James said that he at first had wanted to attend the religion classes, but that his mother objected. After he was allowed to go he found the classes childish and "silly" and said he did not want to attend.

His mother talked to the school system's superintendent, who said he could do nothing. She sued with the help of a Unitarian minister and a group of Jewish businessmen. Her opponents included church federations.

A dramatic moment in the trial came when McCollum's father said he did not believe in God. The crowd gasped. James said the same thing. Both "affirmed" that they would tell the truth instead of swearing by God. In the three-year legal battle, McCollum received physical threats and was fired from her job as a dance instructor at the university. Halloween trick-or-treaters pelted her family with rotten tomatoes and cabbages. The family cat was killed.

McCollum wrote a book. *One Woman's Fight*, and became president of the American Humanist Association.

She married John Paschal McCollum, a professor of vegetable crops, in 1933. She is survived by her sons, James, Daniel and Errol, her sister, Helen Curtis, six grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

D. Martin, *N Y Times*: November 8, 2006.

VALE! STAN STOKES

Long term member of the Queensland Humanists and the Republican Party of Australia, Stan Stokes, died on 17 October 2006. He had undergone a quadruple bi-pass and seemed to be recovering. Four days after the operation he had a cardiac arrest and could not be resuscitated. He was 77. He is survived by his wife, Elizabeth.

Stan was born in England and served in the British Army from 1947-53. In 1954 he migrated to Canada. He farmed, got involved in amateur theatre and wrote poetry. Later, he moved to Australia. In November 2005 he wrote to me saying 'I agree completely with your prediction as to the religious-political direction Australia will go failing separation of this Federation from religions. ... Beazley is a conservative autocrat. He voted for the Andrews Bill which killed the NT Voluntary Euthanasia Act, despite knowing that over a decade of polls clearly showed at least 70 per cent of Aussies were against the Federal action. Religion again.' He continued: 'Bush, Blair, Beazley and Howard: all divinely-led paternalists! If not also crusaders'!

In later years Stan met the love of his life and in his 2004 self-published book of poetry *No Time for Deck Chairs* I found a poem entitled 'Partners'. We'll leave the last word to Stan:

*For eight years now, through smoulder or blaze,
We've shared our lives, joined from quite different
ways.
Yours were crowded with faces and voices and
such,
Far less mine, crowds were sometimes too much!*

*We have travelled the world, met our respective
sisters,
And I've met your daughters and their little
'blisters'!
We've loved and we've laughed, we've cried and
recovered,
For yes, we know now; neither has been
smothered!*

*I putter amid books, you draw in most friends.
Our interests do mix; we accept ageing trends.
Elizabeth, should you go first, I will terribly miss
you,
So, while I still thankfully can, I'm again going to
kiss you!*

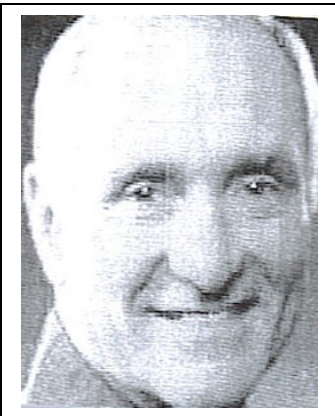
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AND HUMANISM*

OUR PATRON



*Robyn Williams AM
Humanist of the Year 1993, Member of the
Order of Australia 1988, a talented actor,
science journalist and broadcaster, Robyn,
presents Radio National's Science Show,
Ockham's Razor and In Conversation.
Robyn has written more than 10 books and
received an Honorary Doctorate in Science
from the Universities of Sydney,
Macquarie and Deakin.*

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