



Federal Election: The democracy sausage and religious freedom

FROM THE CHAPLAIN

The dust is starting to settle on the Federal election, one which proved more strongly fought than any in recent memory.

Mr Morrison claimed the LNP victory in religious terms as a miracle, not surprising for a man of clear and strong Christian convictions. And it appears that many people of various religious sentiment, Christian and other, voted out of a concern for the loss of religious freedoms.

In the nearby multi-cultural and multi-religious federal seat of McMahon, there was a 6.5% two party primary vote swing against the ALP. Chris Bowen, the local member, wrote that *"people of faith no longer feel that progressive politics cares about them"*. They are people with a social conscience who want to be included in the progressive movement." (SMH, 22/05/19)

It was concerning to many, especially in the independent schooling sector, that the ALP's Mark Dreyfuss wrote to Christian Schools across Australia prior to the election saying they were likely to lose the right to employ Christian staff if they won the election. The response of this was for Christian Schools Australia to take the unprecedented move of writing to families to alert them to this news.

The impact of the recent Israel Folau saga was also identified as telling for people of religious faith, who are understandably concerned with the capacity to live and share one's beliefs. It is clear that the importance of religious faith to people has been underestimated by those who wish to keep this as a private matter only, without realising the legitimate public dimension of faith.

Australia is a secular country, but it is certainly built on Christian values and a deep appreciation of the Christian faith. Mark Spencer, National Executive Officer of Christian Schools Australia, said *“parents in marginal seats had expressed their concerns to his organisation over the protection of religious freedom. There are mums and dads across Australia who want to choose a school that reflects their values,”* he said. SMH, 20/05/19. This is one reason why many of you choose to send your children to Thomas Hassall.

Christian values are not the property of any particular political party, but when one seeks to take the protections that allow freedom of speech and association that we have been entitled to, then it is understandable that some quiet Australians may speak out at the polling booth.

It is also important to consider that political action is not THE answer to our deepest problems, concerns and hopes. Tom Habib wrote at The Gospel Coalition Australia (22/05/19) that in a world that in recent times has removed God from public life, it is no surprise that we have turned to the state to provide answers. He explains “politics is becoming more religious. The stakes are higher and the tone nastier...a matter of life-or-death. Our leaders are cast as messiahs or devils who will either save the world or destroy it”.

As a Christian, Anglican school we hold to beliefs that say God is the answer for our deepest longings. He draws us to himself in an eternal relationship, through his son Jesus. He offers us a radical life in God’s kingdom, loving God and loving our neighbour as ourselves. We make a difference where we move in our everyday life. And when this life is over, we hope for life with God in the new heaven and new earth, when Jesus returns to rule as the ultimate King.

Rev. Jim Dayhew

College Chaplain
