



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

Bishops Commission for Catholic Education

Archbishop Timothy Costelloe SDB, Chairman
Bishop Mark Edwards OMI
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Bishop Greg Homeming OCD

Statement 21 August 2017

As Chair of the Australian Catholic Bishops Commission for Education, I made the following statement on Friday in response to a request from Fairfax Media for comment on issues in relation to the same-sex marriage debate as it may impact on Catholic schools.

The full text of the statement is reproduced here.

Catholic schools are committed to being welcoming and inclusive communities for students, families and staff. They are operated under the auspices of the Catholic Church in Australia and seek to provide a quality education within the context of the Catholic faith. An essential element of that faith is the Church's teachings about marriage.

Families who choose a Catholic education for their children understand that Catholic schools always seek to be expressions of this Catholic world view and that their children will be educated within a Catholic framework.

Those who seek employment in Catholic schools also understand the nature of Catholic schools as faith-based schools. In accepting a role in a Catholic school staff will recognise their responsibility to conduct themselves in such a way as not to undermine the fundamental ethos of the school. Like all other employers, the Catholic Church should be able to ensure its values are upheld by those who choose to work for the organisation.

The statement does not, either explicitly or implicitly, propose or suggest that, to quote one of the headlines on this matter, someone who enters into a same-sex marriage will be "married Sunday, fired Monday".

Individual Catholic Bishops will, in consultation with their Directors of Catholic Education and other advisers in their own jurisdictions, make decisions about how to manage any issues which may arise, should the legal definition of marriage be changed to include same-sex couples.

Normally such issues would be addressed, in the first instance, in discussions between the staff member concerned and the local leadership of the school. The aim would be to discover a way forward for the school and the staff member that preserves the Catholic

ethos of the school. And always, of course, the well-being of the students who attend the school, and the families who choose a Catholic Education for their children, will be paramount. Young people and their families are, after all, the reason for the school's existence in the first place.

I join all those people who are pleading for a measured, mature and sensitive community debate as the nation prepares for the postal vote on proposed changes to the legal definition of marriage.

Archbishop Timothy Costelloe SDB
Catholic Archbishop of Perth

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