



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

Bishops Commission for Family, Youth and Life

Archbishop Anthony Fisher OP (Chairman)
Bishop Peter Comensoli
Bishop Mark Edwards OMI
Bishop Michael Kennedy

19 September 2017

Your Graces, My Lords and Reverend Monsignors,

Weekly Communiqué to assist information-sharing for the Marriage Postal Survey

People have started to receive their ballots from the ABS as they continue to be posted out at a rate of around 1 million a day over the next 10 days. The Yes and No sides launched their campaigns over the weekend. The debate over religious liberty has become a significant issue in the campaign.

Coalition for Marriage National Campaign launch in Sydney on September 16

The Coalition for Marriage launched their [national campaign](#) at the International Convention Centre in Sydney on Saturday in front of a crowd of 1000. Speakers included Senator Matthew Canavan, Senator Concetta Fierravanti-Wells, Senator Cory Bernardi, Katy Faust and Keith Mills. Similar events are being planned this week for Adelaide, Perth, Brisbane and Melbourne.

Ground rules for the Australian Marriage Law Postal Survey

The Federal Government passed the *Marriage Law Survey (Additional Safeguards) Act 2017* last week setting out a range of ground rules in regards to campaign conduct for the postal survey. This Act **requires any campaign material to be personally authorised** along with a range of other measures. A fact sheet on the new law is attached to the email accompanying this letter.

Religious Freedom becomes a critical issue in the Marriage Law Survey debate

Last week the issue of religious freedom became a major issue in the media in regards to the Marriage Law Postal Survey. An article on this issue by The Australian's Editor-at-Large, Paul Kelly, is attached to the email accompanying this letter.

Pastoral Letters and news articles from Archbishops and Bishops

A copy of some recently received pastoral letters and news articles are attached to the email accompanying this letter from:

- [Bishop Michael Kennedy](#)

If you have issued a pastoral message on the plebiscite and would like for it to be shared please forward a copy to Ben Smith so we can send it out in future updates. All of these messages will be uploaded to the [ACBC website](#) for easy access and reference.

Letters to Catholic School Principals, Teachers, Staff, Parents and Carers

Attached is a letter that has been sent by the Archbishop of Sydney and the Executive Director of Sydney Catholic Schools, Dr Dan White to all principals, teachers, staff, parents and carers about the marriage survey.

Catholic Students at Sydney University experience intimidation for promoting the No vote

Catholic students have been attacked by same-sex marriage protesters at the University of Sydney after trying to engage students, one on one, about why it was "ok to vote 'no'". A [short video](#) of the protest was captured showing the intimidation they experienced.

Encouraging people to have conversations about the consequences of redefining marriage

The No campaign is encouraging supporters of traditional marriage to get involved in personal conversations about what is at stake in the marriage survey. Interested people can volunteer at www.coalitionformarriage.com.au/volunteer. People can get informed by reading an in depth resource on the potential consequences of redefining marriage for religious freedom, freedom of conscience and parent rights at: www.coalitionformarriage.com.au/handbook.

Parish Bulletin Notices

Marriage Plebiscite: As survey forms begin arriving in letterboxes across Australia, it is important that we are fully equipped with information about the consequences of changing the definition of marriage and the impacts this will have on individuals, families, education and churches. The Coalition for Marriage has released a comprehensive guide to some of the key consequences and questions around this important conversation. Go to www.coalitionformarriage.com.au/handbook to download your free copy.

Marriage Plebiscite Campaign Volunteer Training: The Coalition for Marriage is currently conducting training sessions for campaign volunteers. To register for volunteering go to www.coalitionformarriage.com.au/volunteer.

Release of *Pope Francis, Marriage and the Plebiscite* brochure for parishes and agencies

A brochure entitled, *Pope Francis, Marriage and the Plebiscite*, has been developed by the Marriage Education Project Coordinator which has received the endorsement of the Marriage Plebiscite Working Group and the Bishops Commission for Family, Youth and Life. The brochure outlines some of the key points of Pope Francis' teaching on marriage and the family. It also highlights some of the consequences that may flow from a redefinition of marriage. This brochure could be used for parishes and Diocesan Agencies. The document is attached to the email accompanying this letter.

Month of Prayer and Fasting for Marriage and Families – October 2017

On August 28 you would have received a letter from Bishop Michael Kennedy, regarding the Month of Prayer and Fasting for Marriage and Families - to be held across Australia in October 2017. The letter highlights the rationale behind the initiative and provides some link to resource for parishes.

Positive stories about the beauty and blessing of marriage

A [media blog](#) has been set up on the ACBC website showcasing a range of positive stories on marriage from various local Catholic media outlets. These stories can be used to motivate and educate the Catholic community on the goodness and beauty of marriage.

Resources

A web page on the ACBC web site has been established to provide some information on the Postal Survey: www.catholic.org.au/plebiscite. There are also a number of marriage resources at www.sydneycatholic.org/marriageinfo/. Further resources are currently being developed and will be available for distribution soon.

I hope you find this information of assistance for your ministry. If you have any feedback please contact Ben Smith on ben.smith@catholic.org.au.

Yours fraternally in Christ



Archbishop Anthony Fisher OP
Archbishop of Sydney
Chair, Bishops Commission for Family, Youth and Life



Mr Ben Smith
Marriage Education Project Coordinator
Australian Catholic Bishops Conference