

July 2010



Julia Gillard ousts Kevin Rudd as Prime Minister

Julia Gillard was sworn in as Australia's first female Prime Minister on June 24 following a Labor Caucus meeting where she was elected to lead the Labor Party unopposed. Wayne Swan was also elected as Deputy Leader unopposed.

Ms Gillard's elevation came after Kevin Rudd bowed to pressure and withdrew from the leadership contest. He made a gracious and emotional address to the Australian people and said he would recontest the next election for the seat of Griffith.

In a public statement on the day of the federal leadership change, ACL Managing Director Jim Wallace congratulated Ms Gillard on becoming Australia's first female Prime Minister. However, he also thanked Mr Rudd for the commitment and energy he brought to issues such as homelessness, poverty, reconciliation and the importance of marriage.

The statement also said that ACL would be expecting to see Labor under Ms Gillard confirm its concern for the poor and the disadvantaged, as well as the values in society that proved attractive to many Christians throughout Australia under Mr Rudd.

Ms Gillard comes from the left faction of the Labor Party and is a member of the pro-abortion group, Emily's List. When recently questioned about her religious beliefs, Ms Gillard said that although she was raised as a Baptist she does not believe in God. However, she said that she respects religious beliefs.

There is also evidence that Ms Gillard is a pragmatic and consultative politician who we hope will respond to the Christian desire to see a more compassionate, moral and just society.

ACL welcomes new PM's commitment to marriage

The ACL has welcomed Prime Minister Julia Gillard's commitment to marriage between a man and a woman.

During a recent radio interview Ms Gillard said that Labor policy on gay marriage will remain the same under her prime ministership, and confirmed that it is her personal view that marriage is between a man and a woman.

Both major parties have shown a long-standing commitment to ensuring marriage remains exclusively between a man and a woman, and it is pleasing to see Ms Gillard state her personal commitment in this area.

ACL questions Greens' influence on Tas Gov't's euthanasia stance

Tasmanian Attorney-General Lara Giddings has launched a new bid to legalise euthanasia in the State, as part of a so-called "progressive law reform agenda" which includes progressing a charter of rights, introducing surrogacy laws and reforming sex industry laws.

ACL has publicly questioned the Tasmanian Greens' influence on the Tasmanian Government's euthanasia stance given that

what is supposedly meant to be a private member's bill on the issue was raised in Ms Giddings' Budget Reply speech – and thereby appears to be giving Government endorsement to legalising euthanasia.

ACL is also opposed to moves to progress a charter of rights, introduce surrogacy laws and reform sex industry laws – particularly if that means legalising brothels and causing harm to women caught up in the industry.

50,000 people call on NSW Gov't to protect Scripture

A staggering 50,000 people have called on the NSW Government to protect special religious education and reschedule the proposed ethics classes to another time slot.

Christians from all major denominations across NSW signed a petition organised by the ACL which was tabled in NSW Parliament on June 25.

WA Government has not done its homework on harmful brothel trade

In a move set to lead to increased exploitation of women in Western Australia, the Barnett Government recently announced that it is planning to legalise brothels in industrial and commercial areas, with legislation to be introduced next year.

ACL is strongly opposing the move and is not satisfied the Barnett Government has met its election commitment to properly investigate the Swedish model of prostitution regulation. Instead of legalising the industry, ACL is calling on the Government to shut down all brothels and implement a law similar to Sweden's, which penalises the buyer rather than the women who are exploited.

Government response to gambling report disappointing

Anti-gambling advocates and church groups have reacted with disappointment to the Federal Government's muted response to a comprehensive report on gambling in Australia.

The Productivity Commission recently published a comprehensive report on gambling. Among its recommendations were limiting to \$1 the total maximum bet for each button push of a poker machine, restricting to \$20 the amount fed into a machine at the one time, and mandatory six-hour lockout periods at pubs and clubs.

In responding to the report, the Government has failed to adopt, but not ruled out, each of the above recommendations.

ACL joins legal action against release of *Salò*

ACL has joined fellow pro-family group FamilyVoice Australia, and Liberal senators Julian McGauran and Guy Barnett, in a Federal Court appeal against the release of the disturbing 1975 film *Salò* which depicts the kidnap, torture and sexual abuse of minors.

The film had previously been refused classification on six separate occasions, but was recently approved for DVD sale in Australia.

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Well I have so often said in this column that a week is a long time in politics, so the sudden and far reaching changes we have seen over the last week of the parliamentary sitting period shouldn't really surprise us. But we should all be saddened by the lack of grace it demonstrated of politics.

Whatever their party allegiance, nobody could have helped but feel sorry for the way Kevin Rudd was treated by his own party, nor realised the heart of the man, when the issues from which he drew pride in his final address as PM were inevitably victories for compassion in public policy.

In the end Kevin Rudd failed the test of leadership of his own inner circle and party, but there can be no doubting his motivation when we have seen the apology to the Stolen Generations, real commitment on homelessness and determination to protect the MDG targets for aid, despite a global financial crisis. And while all Christians will be disappointed in the reports of his anger and profanity in office, we should remember the pressures he was under and realise that it was his personal faith that also held on issues like gay marriage.

Julia Gillard comes with a much more secular view, and views on abortion and other issues that seem to strongly reflect her left faction lineage. However she is not typically "left" on the US Alliance, Israel, and Afghanistan, and is overwhelmingly reported as a political pragmatist.

The huge audience at the Make it Count event in the same week as the leadership change, and the bevy of Christian statesmen and women present, should send political pragmatists and tacticians a strong message that they cannot abandon the Rudd policies that many analysts attribute won him the 2007 election.

Hopefully they are listening.

Jim Wallace AM
Managing Director

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'2010 Make it Count' highlights Christian concerns

On Monday night, June 21, a gathering of many of Australia's most senior denominational and church leaders – rarely paralleled in the nation's history – heard both Kevin Rudd and Tony Abbott speak of the valuable contribution the Christian faith has made to the nation and also respond to Christian concerns on issues ranging from indigenous welfare, refugees and climate change to marriage, chaplaincy and the sexualisation of children.

The '2010 Make it Count' event, hosted by the ACL, was web-cast live to tens of thousands of Christians meeting in hundreds of churches across Australia.

It saw both the Opposition Leader and the then Prime Minister speak of their commitment to improving the lot of indigenous people and acknowledging Australia's responsibility to provide protection for genuine refugees while defending their differing border protection policies.

Both leaders also reinforced their support

for continuing the convention of Parliament being opened each day with the Lord's Prayer, and to maintaining the status of marriage as the union of a man and a woman.

ACL also welcomed as a breakthrough Mr Abbott's acknowledgement that the current media classification system is "broken" in terms of its role in the premature sexualisation of children, and the need for another review of the system, "tasked with a way to ensure proper community standards apply to all media". It was also pleasing to see both Mr Rudd and Mr Abbott's support for the role of school chaplains and Mr Abbott's commitment to funding until 2014 at least.

ACL has appreciated the strong support shown for the Make it Count event by a wide range of denominations and churches located across the breadth of Australia. Participating churches came from all States and Territories, and both city and rural areas. There were multiple instances of churches from different denominations

joining together at one venue to watch the web-cast.

The 200 denominational, church and para-church leaders who came to Old Parliament House for the event included senior representatives from a very wide range of denominations.

ACL is very appreciative of the tremendous effort of ACL supporters in getting their churches involved in '2010 Make it Count' and helping to make this event a landmark one for the Christian church in Australia.

Although there was a sudden change of Prime Minister only three days after the event, it is important to remember that the political target audience for the event is actually the parties and their political and policy machinery. None of this has changed, so the impact of the event on the parties remains.

The event's success is a testament to the commitment of Christians across Australia to work towards a more moral, compassionate and caring society.



Former PM Kevin Rudd addresses the event



ACL MD Jim Wallace speaks at Make it Count



Opposition Leader Tony Abbott addresses the event



Rt Rev Trevor Edwards



Cardinal George Pell, Most Rev Philip Wilson, Pastor Wayne Alcorn & Pastor Brian Houston



Pastor David McDonald asks a question



Crowd at Make it Count in Canberra



Broadcast camera



Rev Dr Brian Winslade asks a question

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