

Individualism, Protest, and Professional Politics



There was a silent protest yesterday with regard to the draconian changes to law being proposed by the Minister for Health in her “Reproductive Health (Access to Terminations) Bill 2013.” I was there.

I estimate that 300+ people with a diversity of demographics were there. The photograph above shows what that looks like.

They were there to silently, respectfully, simply by their presence and their prayers, register their opposition to a proposed law that would remove any consideration of the humanity of an unborn child from law (and not just in the case of abortion), and would detract from the freedom of conscience of medical practitioners and ordinary citizens.

How awesome it is that we are free to make such a peaceful expression in this state.

Oh, and yes, there were children present. My wife and I accompanied three of my children there. One of them didn't want to come, we respected his decision. One of them, the eldest, would have gone even if we hadn't. I will likely accompany my children on a march in support of refugees in a few weeks time.

How awesome it is that our children are able to stand in solidarity for the weak and disregarded.

How self-serving is it then for our Premier, and at least one journalist, to imply that bringing our children was inappropriate. It is only inappropriate in their eyes because they disagree with us! It was a peaceful, sensitive, safe, and purposeful place to be.

The only “clash” was from one disturbed person who spoke loudly and wildly to the 300 quiet people gathered and who was respectfully engaged. The fact that this was reported as “church leaders clashing with pro-choice representatives” is a matter of sensationalism, if not bias.

The teachers and principals of our childrens’ schools were supportive of their attending with us. What a meaningful way for children to engage with the real world and demonstrate that the political processes are open to their influence as citizens! I’m sure Nick McKim would agree, after all, in wanting to reduce the age at which citizens can vote he has said on facebook:

Suggesting that today’s young people are too busy playing their gaming consoles to care about participating in public life is deeply offensive to thousands of people, and devalues their contribution.

We should never underestimate the awareness, intelligence and capacity of our young people.

The Premier doesn’t agree with that obviously.

What we are seeing, once again, is the rampant individualism of our Premier coming to the fore. It seems that she doesn’t truly understand that families are real, children are included in discussion, and participate in familial activities. School and church groups are the same. But, no, the Premier sees the world as a bunch of autonomous individuals, the weaker of whom should only be allowed to do things that she approves of, which includes being terminated before birth for economic

reasons, or euthanased when they feel they've reached their use-by date.

For the Premier it seems, protests and communal expression are matters of professional politics and media stunts. Perhaps that's understandable, given that she started her professional political life at such a young age. But they can also be genuine expressions of concern from a cross-section of the community hitherto unmotivated to make their feelings known, safely, respectfully, peacefully.

The Premier would be better off listening to them, not dictating to them.