



Catholic Archdiocese of  
Canberra and Goulburn

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## Pastoral Statement | August 16, 2017

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*Dear Friends,*

*In recent weeks two significant public issues concerning the Church have been canvassed in the media.*

*I wish to offer some brief and simple responses you may wish to make available to your people, if you feel it is appropriate.*

### **SAME SEX MARRIAGE.**

Given the fact that a postal vote on the issue is forthcoming, it is essential that people who have not yet registered on the electoral role do so immediately. This will ensure participation in the postal vote is possible. The closing date for enrolment is 24th August.

It needs to be stressed that our love and care for people in our parishes, communities and neighbourhoods who are same-sex attracted is reaffirmed. This will be a vulnerable time for some and we need to reiterate once more that we are walking alongside each other in mutual respect.

At the same time, our acknowledgement of what is now described as traditional marriage (man and woman united in love and open to the possibility of children) be reaffirmed. It is one of the greatest treasures humanity has yet produced. It needs our fulsome support at this time of moral fluidity.

### **THE SEAL OF CONFESSION.**

The Catholic Church considers Confession as a privileged encounter of mercy between the priest (representing Jesus) and the penitent on the road to conversion.

The absolute confidentiality of the "seal" of confession is to be maintained and never to be compromised for any reason. This has always been protected in the law of Australia and long may it continue.

This matter raises significant issues pertaining to the rights of Freedom of Religion and Speech.

This issue has become current due to a recommendation of the Royal Commission that the current civil privilege in this matter be changed.

Outside of this particular discussion, it needs to be stressed that the Catholic Church insists that all offences against children be reported to the authorities.

*I hope these summaries are helpful for the pastoral care of your people who may welcome such clarifications.*

*Let us pray to the Lord in our Masses for these two areas of concern.*

Yours sincerely in Christ

**Archbishop Christopher Prowse**  
**Catholic Archbishop of Canberra and Goulburn**