

# Signs of the Times

Peter  
Bentley

ACC National Director



*I think one of the issues with the recent revision of marriage is that many people find it hard to understand how words have changed and change so quickly. Words are increasingly fluid today - much like gender is regarded in certain circles.*

### Love is Love?

For example take the University of Sydney advertising campaign in 2017 linked in to the marriage debate: “Unlearn Love”.

The meaning could be taken several ways, but I am sure that the university was not saying that the love of two men is not love. I believe they were saying that married love is not what you always thought it was, and that now the idea is to challenge the status quo and develop new ideas and ways of expression.



I always find it helpful in this new era of re-defining words to ask people when they say anyone can be married to ask them what marriage is and gently probe their response.

The same with the word ‘love’. Love can be love, and it may even be ‘in the air’, but perhaps those of us in the church could help the wider society learn more about the types of love mentioned in the bible?

### Marriage and Gender

Among dozens of signs and slogans in Newtown, this was the clearest in its revisionist context. The move away from the understanding of marriage as a natural biological union from which children are produced and nurtured moves marriage to a context of romantic love and individual fulfilment where being male or female does not matter. Sameness is promoted rather than complementarity.



### Ridicule of belief

I am wondering if understanding of, or even basic awareness of the deepness of belief for people of faith could become increasingly rare?

On the day of the marriage survey announcement a mural was proudly unveiled on the back of the Botany View Hotel in Newtown, Sydney. The designer Scott Marsh chose to celebrate the day by denigrating two prominent Catholic figures as well as the Catholic faith. Tony Abbott was illustrated wearing a bridal dress and tiara along with an allusion to performing a sexual act with the straw in the bottle of wine, as well as being



depicted placing his hand down the pants of a buffed up Cardinal George Pell as a lifeguard wearing a rainbow swimsuit. Needless to say this caused considerable reaction - within 24 hours the mural had been splashed with white paint and then later painted over with black paint, with some wording left (The Happy Ending). In the days following people added to the black canvas with a wide range of insults and swearwords. One intriguing aspect

from some of my discussions around the area was that while people were very upset at the 'vandalism' of the mural, some could not understand that the mural had been offensive in the first place.

## Marriage and Religion

I am aware from photos or comments sent to the ACC office that at least 12 Uniting Churches (half in Victoria) campaigned in a public way for the Yes side in the Marriage Plebiscite. Paddington UC had two prominent signs displayed. As I mentioned in my last column, reading some of the social media criticism of ACC simply sending a pastoral letter to its members, I wondered why these same UC members were oddly silent on the public promotion by some churches advocating the Yes side. Clearly these critics have plenty of time to spend on social media making barbed comments, but little time to explore the dictionary definition of the word 'irony'.

