

## MEDIA RELEASE: RESPONSE TO SAME-SEX MARRIAGE SURVEY RESULT

By Catholic Communications, Sydney Archdiocese

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Most Rev Anthony Fisher OP

The Catholic Archbishop of Sydney, Most Rev. Anthony Fisher OP, says he is both disappointed and heartened by the result of the National Marriage Postal Survey on changing the legal definition of marriage in Australia.

"While I do not deny the good will of many who voted Yes, I am deeply disappointed that the likely result will be legislation to further deconstruct marriage and family in Australia," Archbishop Fisher said.

"But I am heartened that millions of Australians still stand by the conviction that marriage is a unique relationship between a man and woman. In fact, only 48% of eligible voters voted Yes to redefining marriage in law."

"To the many already-married couples and those contemplating it I say: don't let this decision dishearten you or undermine your appreciation of the sanctity of real marriage."

Archbishop Fisher said he wished to acknowledge all those who had courageously spoken up for traditional marriage in very difficult circumstances.

"From the outset it has often seemed a David and Goliath struggle with politicians, corporates, celebrities, journalists, professional and sporting organisations drowning out the voices of ordinary Australians and pressuring everyone to vote Yes," the Archbishop said. "What's remarkable is how many stuck to their guns and voted No or abstained."

"I recognise that for some people this debate has been a cause of distress. It is time now to come together as a nation, renew our friendships with those who think differently to us, and ensure that respect for different beliefs is clearly enshrined in our laws and customs."

Archbishop Fisher said it was vital that new marriage legislation protects rights to religious belief and expression, free speech and association, in education and parenting. "Polling data shows both yes and no voters support robust religious liberty protections."

Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull has previously said he believes in religious freedom "even more strongly" than in same-sex marriage and Opposition Leader Bill Shorten has promised to ensure that any marriage redefinition also respects freedom of religion.

"Lame proposals to protect ministers of religion and places of worship offer no protection to the 99.9% of religious believers who are not clergy," the Archbishop said. "It is imperative that our political leaders enact laws that protect the rights of all, religious believers included."

"Many of those who voted Yes and celebrate today's 'victory' no doubt do so out of love and respect for same-sex attracted people. Many of us No voters likewise count same-sex attracted people among family, friends, colleagues and neighbours and we abhor bigotry, vilification or discrimination against them. We trust that our community can show a similar generosity of spirit towards those with religious faith."

"As we create a legal 'right' to marry a person of the same sex, we must not trade off existing rights to religious belief and expression, and other freedoms. There is room in the Australian public square for both. Surely it is not beyond the wit and good will of our political leaders to progress both concerns."

**Most Rev Anthony Fisher OP**  
Catholic Archbishop of Sydney

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