



Festival **Focus** Queensland

June 2003

In jail 'for life'

Graham Preston is in jail - "for life". Graham leads the Brisbane group *Protect Life*. For over a year he and others have staged peaceful, silent protests outside abortion clinics - just holding a photo of a baby.

On 15 May Graham Preston was sitting alone just inside the door of the

Spring Hill abortion clinic. "This clinic is on the first floor of a building, so sitting outside the door was impossible," he said.

The clinic called police, who arrested Graham when he refused to move on. He was jailed after refusing to sign bail conditions that he not return to the clinic. He has been remanded in custody until the July 16 court hearing.

The two months in jail have been hard for Graham, his wife Liz and their six children - but the Baptist family take their

Christian faith seriously. The motto of *Protect Life* is from Proverbs 24, verse 11: "Rescue those being led away to death."

Graham Preston has been jailed for trying peacefully to save lives, but police have taken no action against the abortion clinic which destroys the lives of up to 25 unborn babies every day. Abortion is still a criminal offence in Queensland.

Letter from jail

In a recent letter from jail (John) Graham Preston - PO Box 1300, Richlands 4077 - said (in part):

"Welcome to Planet Prison! On this side of the razor wire fence it sometimes feels like we are living in a different world. From the prison oval you can catch glimpses of the traffic on Ipswich Road and it is strange to think of life going on as 'normal' on the outside as we sit here.

Sometimes I have the feeling of being in a zoo as I've seen kangaroos, hares and ducks roaming freely, observing us inside our cages!

"I would not try to pretend that it is easy or at all pleasant being locked up, but it has not been unbearably awful. It is a maximum security prison and I have been in units with men who have been charged and convicted with anything from murder down.

"I'm now in a unit of 36 men and we are essentially confined to the cell block and attached exercise yard which is enclosed with wire mesh. Being separated from family is very difficult.

"I have found that if you get past the tough exterior which many inmates maintain, you see that they are just fellow human beings in this broken world. They have hurt people, sometimes very badly, yet even so they are just people too. I continue to be surprised at how many inmates express support for my stand along with disgust for abortion itself.

"My sincere thanks to those who have written and to those who are praying. It has been greatly encouraging and humbling. You can feel isolated here at times..."



Graham Preston

Warm welcome for David d'Lima

Brisbane churches have warmly welcomed Festival of Light field officer David d'Lima, who arrived with his family on 3 June for three months of deputation.

The d'Lima family is happily settled in Burpengary (phone 07 3888 8816). David has already spoken in ten churches, with requests for return visits. The pastor at Narangba Valley Wesleyan church said: "David's message was well received and many positive comments were made to me. I believe many would like to hear him again."

David d'Lima said: "God has raised up civic authorities for a purpose - and I am encouraging people to pray for their MPs and other leaders. I am sharing biblical

teaching on how Christians can be salt and light in society."

David d'Lima is looking forward to a one-day seminar in Ormiston on Saturday 9 August. "The seminar theme is *Dare to be a Daniel*," he said. "Phone 3286 9277 for more details."

Linda Watson - an inspirational woman

Former prostitute and madam Linda Watson, who runs Linda's House of Hope in Perth to help girls leave the sex trade, has been chosen as a finalist in the *Women's Weekly* contest for Australia's Most Inspirational Woman.

Linda believes that legalising brothels has led many more girls into the prostitution trap. In 2001 she spoke at meetings in Toowoomba, telling MPs and councillors about the enormous physical and mental damage she and others suffered while in the trade.

"It staggers me that politicians would even go down this path," she told the *Women's Weekly* (July 2003, p 126). "They are our leaders. I say to them, 'You

wouldn't want this life for your own children, would you?"

"Politicians have been conned into thinking that legalising prostitution will help stamp out drugs and crime in the industry. That's a lie. The problem is much bigger than people could ever imagine."

People can vote for Linda Watson as Australia's most inspirational woman by phoning 1900 956 385.

The d'Lima family at Burpengary



'Gay' adoption - MPs speak out



Dorothy Pratt MP

The Queensland government is still considering a recommendation to allow homosexual couples to adopt children. Several MPs have already indicated their strong opposition to the proposal.

Mrs Dorothy Pratt MP (Ind, Nanango) told *Focus*: "I believe that you need a husband and wife to raise children in a balanced environment. Children need the example of male and female.

"Unfortunately that doesn't always happen, such as when husbands and wives separate. But it is a privilege to raise children. Homosexual couples, in pursuing a lifestyle where children are not naturally possible, forgo that privilege."

Naltrexone doctor vindicated

On 27 June the Health Practitioners Tribunal adjourned indefinitely all malpractice charges against Dr Stuart Reece of Brisbane, who has used naltrexone implants to help hundreds of heroin addicts quit their habit.

The charges against him were based on false reports by drug addicts. A vicious campaign by the *Courier-Mail* last year has deeply hurt him and his family.

Dr Reece's patients and their parents have welcomed the Tribunal finding. Marie Francis said her son had been a heroin addict for 10 years and had been successfully treated by Dr Reece (*Courier-Mail* 28/6/03, p 1).

"Dr Reece is highly valued among parents and carer groups of heroin addicts," Ms Francis said. "We know categorically that had it not been for Dr Reece, we would not have our son today."

Naltrexone implants, which block the effect of heroin, can give addicts the breathing space they need to turn their lives around and become drug-free. Counseling is of little help while the patients remain addicted to drugs.

"Methadone is the main treatment option in Australia, but it merely replaces one addictive drug with another," Marie Francis said.

A recent article in the *New England Journal of Medicine* pointed out that methadone maintenance does not address the basic addiction problem. New research suggests that opiates including methadone directly suppress the immune system and may cause premature aging. The Australian Bureau of Statistics figures show that

between 1997 and 2001, 590 patients died with methadone in their system.



Stuart Reece

Concern grows on foster abuse

Sex abuse by foster parents has hit Queensland headlines in recent weeks. Bravehearts campaigner Hetty Johnston has raised serious allegations in the *Courier-Mail* (eg 30/6/03, p 1).

Ms Johnston first highlighted sex abuse by foster carers on June 18, with allegations that a family in northwest Brisbane had molested foster children. Government agents had been told about the abuse but did nothing.

Geoffrey Bullock of Festival of Light has called on the Beattie government to

draw up stricter protocols for choosing foster families. "Stable, mature married couples make the best carers," he said.

"But these days social workers are not allowed to 'discriminate' in favour of marriage. Children are the victims of this 'non-discrimination'."

Over the counter pill danger

The National Drugs and Poisons Schedule Committee has provisionally approved the sale of the "morning after" pill (Postinor-2) without a doctor's prescription.

The Australian Medical Association opposes the move. Doctors say women need to consult their GP before taking the pill.

Melinda Tankard Reist of Canberra said (*Herald Sun*, 26/6/03) that Postinor-2 is a very high dose of the artificial hormone levonorgestrel. "It is equal to taking about 50 Microval birth control pills," she said.

Ms Reist said Britain's Chief Medical

Officer wrote to all UK doctors in January this year, warning of the risks of ectopic pregnancy from the 'morning after' pill.

In ectopic pregnancies the embryo develops in a woman's fallopian tube instead of the womb, causing massive pain, bleeding and sometimes death. The fallopian tube is destroyed, halving the woman's fertility. Levonorgestrel is also linked with blood clots which may cause strokes and heart attacks.

Dr Donna Purcell of Queensland Right to Life has pointed out that Postinor-2 can also prevent a tiny embryo from implanting in the womb, thus causing a very early abortion.

Qld MPs oppose internet porn

Three Queensland federal MPs - Paul Neville (Nat, Hinkler), Bruce Scott (Nat, Maranoa) and Cameron Thompson (Lib, Blair) have raised their concerns about Internet pornography in federal parliament.

They spoke on 27 March in support of a bill to prevent people using a loophole in Communications law to access banned hard core porn websites. The bill has not yet passed the Senate.

Bruce Scott noted a study by Michael Flood of the Australian National University, published by the Australia Institute in March 2003.

The study found that eight out of ten

boys aged 16-17 have visited hard core pornography websites and 60 per cent of girls the same age had been exposed to Internet porn. The children had viewed sites depicting rape, sexual torture, bestiality and incest.

"As a parent, it disturbs me that children can have access to this sort of material, at times under their parents' noses, without them knowing," Mr Scott said.

Festival Focus Queensland

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Rescue those being led away to death - Proverbs 24:11

The story of Graham Preston, in jail because he tried to save unborn lives (p 1) is a sobering reminder of the tragedy which goes on, day after day, in Brisbane's abortion clinics.

Graham is following the example of many others who have silently sat outside the death clinics in Australia and more often in the US. They have prayed that mothers who enter may think again and choose life for their unborn children.

Many US pro-lifers in *Operation Rescue* were jailed for their efforts, as Graham has been. They have caused great controversy in Christian circles. Some say that Christians should not trespass in abortion clinics because they are deliberately breaking the law.

But Chuck Colson of Prison Fellowship says the situation is like a field with a small lake, where we see a child drowning. Would we be right to ignore the "No Trespassing" sign in the field, and go and

rescue the child?

Of course we would! "Operation Rescue, I believe, is the moral equivalent," says Colson.*

In May 1989, *Light* magazine told some of the dramatic US Operation Rescue stories. One was of Christy Anne, who said: "God counts nothing more valuable than each of His creations. I need to act like abortion is murder, since that is exactly how my God views it."

Christy Ann paid dearly for her "sidewalk counselling" of pregnant women entering an abortion clinic. She was sentenced to jail and was denied medication for her bronchitis. By the time she was finally taken to hospital she was gasping for breath.

But in the infirmary Christy Ann found herself handcuffed to Robin, a young inmate who was six and a half months pregnant. Robin was going in for an abortion. Christy Ann began crying uncontrollably.

Robin was angry at first. But later,

when Christy Ann had been treated, she saw Robin still sitting in their room. She had not had the abortion.

Christy Ann then sent her an information package with photos of unborn babies in different stages of development. It was the first time Robin had ever seen a picture of an unborn baby. She knew she could not kill her child.

Robin's baby was only one of the many Christy has saved. Her time in jail was spent counselling other prisoners and sharing the gospel with them. "God isn't just concerned about the physical destruction of these pre-born children," she would say. "Your spiritual separation from Him grieves Him just as much.

"God has called me to focus on the sanctity of life, but I don't expect everyone to jump on this bandwagon. I want people to be committed to obeying the will of God, whatever that is for their lives."

* *Christianity Today*, 3/2/89.

LETTERS

'Medical' marijuana

A recent editorial in the Rockhampton *Morning Bulletin* called for a trial of medical marijuana because other drugs "may not be as effective".

Those trials (of the active component in marijuana, THC) have already been done overseas. They show there are better medicines than THC, with fewer side effects.

The real reason for an Australian trial was voiced by Dr David Penington of Victoria, who supports drug legalisation. He said, "If people are given the ability to cultivate a few plants at home, medical marijuana would follow."

Dr Penington failed to add that an increase in depression, schizophrenia and other serious psychological problems would also follow - for which there are few medical solutions.

Betty Bennett
Rockhampton, Qld

'Gay' Jesus slander

The *Cairns Post* (30/5/03, p 9) reported that Rollan McCleary received his doctorate from the University of Queensland on 29 May for claiming that "Jesus Christ was gay because of the position of the planets at the time of his birth".

The news sparked some fiery debate. F Mohammed (a Muslim) wrote on 3/6/03, p 13, expressing concern at the "slander" of Jesus. He said: "We believe that Jesus was a prophet just as Moses, Noah, Solomon, David etc..."

"Let's see how many Christians respond to the outlandish research and defend their prophet. It amazes me that

there are so many weekend Christians, yet they behave in the most appalling way during the week."

On 6/6/03, p 12, there was an indignant reply from a Christian!

I have written to Premier Beattie as public funds (\$51,000) financed the "research", and have been referred me to the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Queensland. I hope to take this matter further.

John Abernethy
Edmonton, Qld

Thanks!

Many thanks for the latest edition of *Festival Focus, Queensland*! It's great news that there is now a Queensland branch of Festival of Light. I hope to distribute copies of *Focus* to those who I think might be supportive.

Frank Lyndon
Manly West, Qld

I was glad to pick up a copy of *Festival Focus Queensland* at church and I enjoyed reading it. I thought it was excellent, with factual information, positive - ie no 'emotive' attitudes, good headlines, good layout and altogether a very good publication. Thanks!

Royce Perkins
Toowoomba, Qld



Festival of Light Australia - how it began
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New hope for desperate dads

Geoffrey Greene of the Shared Parenting Council says talkback radio switchboards lit up around Australia when PM John Howard said he would consider changes to the Family Law Act to help divorced dads see more of their kids.

"The Prime Minister has hit a nerve," Mr Greene said. "The Family Court system is failing children all around Australia. Grieving fathers, many in tears, have been phoning talkback radio in droves."

Geoffrey Bullock, Queensland state officer for Festival of Light, has welcomed the new inquiry into shared parenting by the federal parliamentary Standing Committee on Family and Community Affairs.

"Festival of Light is a member of the Shared Parenting Council," Mr Bullock said. "We believe the Family Court should adopt the 'rebuttable presumption of shared parenting' in divorce cases involving dependent children. Under this system, judges would assume that divorcing couples will share custody of their children unless there are good reasons not to do so.

Madonna campaigns for family law reform

Queensland journalist Madonna King has joined the campaign for family law reform. Her *Courier-Mail* column *Dad's the other word* ((24/6/03, p 13) said, in part:

This year, more than 1000 fathers will commit suicide, with many such deaths blamed on family law issues. This weekend, fathers across Australia will travel to pick up children for an access visit - only to find their children missing. And today, hundreds of mothers will seek help after their former partner refuses to pay child maintenance.

And they say family law works. It doesn't, and it's about time it was overhauled.

For 20 years, we've told our fathers, our husbands and our sons to play a bigger role in their families, to spend fewer hours at work and to take a bigger role in their children's future. And they have.

Then, when a relationship breaks down, reports suggest only three per cent of fathers are awarded equal joint custody.

It's about time that changed and Prime Minister John Howard - even if his motivations is to gazump Peter Costello with a social agenda - should be applauded for flagging his family law review.

Take these facts:

- Three quarters of separated men want more contact with their children and 40 per cent of women want them to have more contact.
- Fathers spend more than 35 hours a week minding their children.
- More than 50,000 couples will divorce this year.
- Family law issues can account for up to one quarter of an MP's work.
- Only 16 per cent of divorced couples have the children living with each parent for more than 30 per cent of the time.
- Mothers are awarded custody in three-quarters of cases.

Add to these, statistics that show more women are working full-time, men are having children later and one-quarter of them are using flexible hours to care for their children, and a clear picture emerges.

As men have taken up the challenge to play an equal role in domestic life, they remain discriminated against when it comes to family issues.

Under the current law, both parents are responsible for decisions about their children, but no guide exists on which parent a child lives with or how much contact the other parents should have.

The proposed revamp looks at giving parents automatic shared custody - that is a presumption that a child spends equal time with both parents - unless reasons exist for this not to be the case.

The response from women's groups - who have controlled the debate for decades - raised the same old arguments and

"In US states where this rule applies, the children are much happier. And perhaps the biggest benefit is that the divorce rate in these states has fallen.

"Violent fathers will not get custody under this system. But loving fathers will get a chance to play a significant role in their children's lives," Mr Bullock said.

He encouraged Queenslanders to make submissions to the federal inquiry. "Simply tell your own story in a letter or email," Geoffrey Bullock said. "Send it to the Family and Community Affairs Committee, House of Representatives, Parliament House, Canberra ACT 2600, or email to fca.reps@aph.gov.au. And send a copy to Festival of Light (GPO Box 1483, Brisbane Qld 4001; office@fol.org.au)."

proved how quick they are to ignore the benefits of both parents being involved in raising a child.

John Howard says he wants to provide strong male role models for boys growing up without their fathers' influence. That can't be bad. Nor can the idea that both parents have a right to equally love, cherish and care for their kids after the relationship breaks down.

Automatic shared custody is only a guide, as government advisers and the Shared Parenting Council of Australia acknowledge. You can't apply a mathematical formula to children. Cases exist where parents - mothers and fathers - have no right to play a role in a child's future.

Often the system can unfairly treat or fail to protect mothers - further illustrating the failure of the present set-up.

But in cases where both parents are committed to the real well-being of their child, a bigger role for fathers should be reflected in law.

Shared Parenting Council director Geoffrey Greene shares custody of his children, aged seven and four, and believes it is the reason they are happy. He says the 50/50 plan is only a guide, but helps switch the balance to give men a greater role.

A civic ministry seminar with
David d'Lima of Festival of Light
encouraging Christians to

Dare to be a Daniel

- who led pagan kings to commend the worship of Almighty God in the nations

8:30 am - 3 pm, Saturday 9 August
Christian Faith Centre
Thorn Street, Ormiston

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An offering will be taken. For details
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