



# Speculations on likely directions in Coalition social policy.

PREPARED FOR THE LEADERSHIP & PARTNERSHIP FORUM

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# Today

I will focus on the six themes I think will be key to Coalition social policy roll-out, particularly around family & children:

1. Marriage as a foundation stone in social policy
2. Employment and enterprise as a focus – alternative to welfare Dependence, mutual obligation, pathways to job-readiness
3. Localism and little platoons, neighbourhoods, civil society
4. Contestability – between and within sectors toward the creation of markets wherever possible
5. Financial imperatives eg the role of the commission of audit
6. How it all applies to indigenous policy – “kids in school, adults of work & rule of law”

There are many more – but these 6 give you a good feel for the likely changes in the policy environment.



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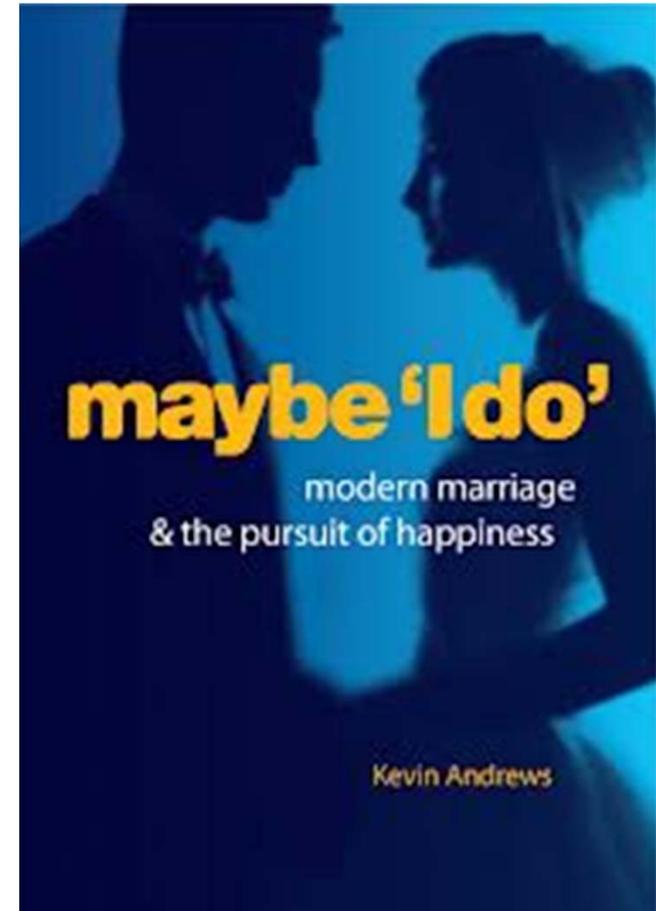


# Marriage

“Over four decades of social science research across Western nations confirms one thing clear and unambiguous conclusion: A healthy marriage is the best source of physical and mental health, emotional stability, and adults and children.”

**Kevin Andrews (p 353).**

***This book is about putting marriage as the foundation stone of social policy for a safe and healthy society. It is not Govt policy but it was written by the Minister!***



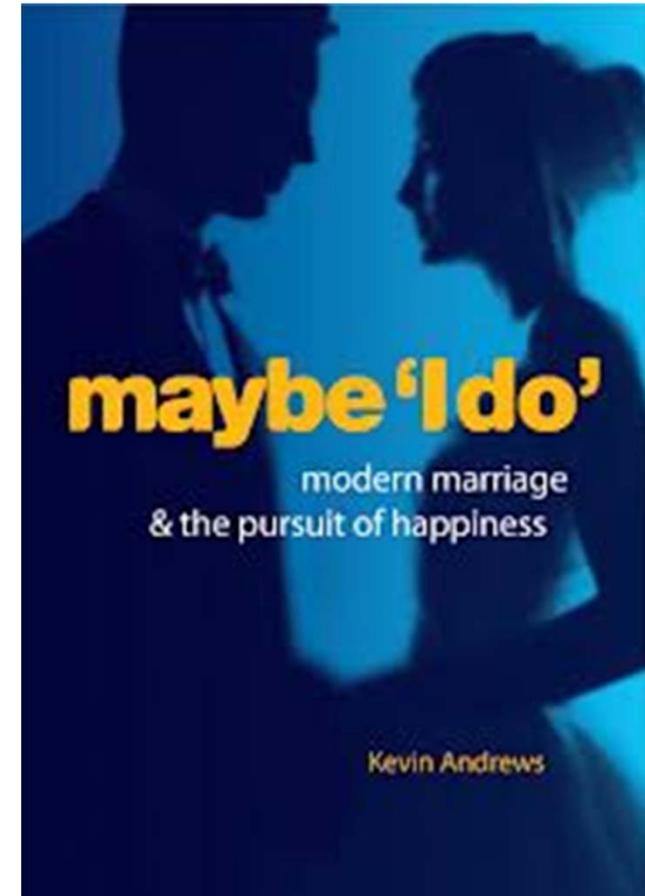
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# Marriage

What does this mean?

- Ultimate policy goal the driving down the rate of divorce and increase the proportion of people who marry (p265).
- Four policy goals for good marriage- friendly policy are stated:
  1. The need to have an explicit marriage and family policy
  2. The need to maintain at least a replacement birth rate
  3. Requirement for national policy should proclaim the ideal of marital permanence and affirm marriage as the optimal environment for raising children.
  4. The policy should value family stability and reinforce personal and inter-generational responsibility.



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# Employment & enterprise focus

What does this mean?

- Many policy areas coalition will be looking for links to employment and for contribution to 'employment readiness'. How do your programmes deliver this?
- Likely to be especially important in indigenous policy frameworks.
- Continued pressure on keeping a rein on 'entitlement spending'. (However, Kevin Andrews has signalled he disapproved of the reduction in Newstart for single-parents. Divergent 'wet v dry' views).



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# Localism: ‘little platoons’, neighbourhood and civil society.

*“Wherever possible, public policy should utilise the family and community organisations, rather than displacing them”.*

Kevin Andrews, *Maybe I do*, p286

What does it mean?

- First line of defence idea.
- The State can never replace it “The State is not an arm of compassion”.
- The State can’t afford it with aging population and increased demands.
- Evidence base around contribution of very local – neighbourhood things - to well-being.



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# Contestability

*Dry element within the Coalition thinks this way. Create genuine markets where you can and contestability where you can't.*

What does it mean?

- Markets are the best allocate or resources – better than central plans
- Real markets rely on information and price signals which are not available in the social policy arena (insufficient performance as opposed to financial Information.
- Contestability is considered an alternative to a real market – partial market – still provides competition and incentive to innovate.
- Coalition divided on the importance of competition.



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# Indigenous policy

Tony Abbott wants to be “Prime Minister for Aboriginal affairs”. “Practical changes to improve lives” - “Aboriginal children need to go to school, adults to work and the ordinary rule of law needs to operate in indigenous communities”.

**1. Priority number 1 – kids in school** – Truancy officers. See Scullion announcement today’s Australian:

*“Truancy army to get kids to school”*

**2. Economic development and wealth creation:**

- Land ownership, private property (ideological and practical)

**3. Economics v culture** – economics will be ascendant: New Advisory Council - Mundine, Pearson, Langton (Scullion also a businessman)

*“Nothing will change if we don’t get kids to school....*

*At present children can decide whether they go to school. This has to change.”*

Nigel Scullion



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# Financial imperative – new language

1. Manage **entitlement spending** growth (Hockey, Cormann)
2. Improve the **quality of government investment** spending (infrastructure and human capital) to grow the productive economy. Areas of potential resonance for family and children’s policy:
  - Raise work-force participation
  - Lower days lost to work (mental health, marital distress)
  - Improve cognitive and socio-cognitive capacity – early childhood



3. **Commission of audit:** “value-for money”, “eliminate waste”, “duplication between State & Federal”, “contestability”, “new technology”, “consolidation”, “rationalising”, flattening structures”. “privatisation”, “co-payments”, “price-signals”, “user-charging”, “incentive payments”.



# 6 themes – in summary

1. Marriage as a foundation stone in social policy
2. Employment and enterprise as a focus – alternative to welfare  
Dependence, mutual obligation, pathways to job-readiness
3. Localism and little platoons, neighbourhoods, civil society
4. Contestability – between and within sectors toward the  
creation of markets wherever possible
5. Financial imperatives – reduce burden of future government  
spending – see the role of the commission of audit, gives  
strong clues.
6. Indigenous policy directions – practical on the ground, “kids in  
school, adults of work & rule of law” – economic drivers,  
ownership, employment, wealth creation

There are many more – these are but predictions of emphasis.



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