

# Australia: Protest the unholy father

Monday 14 July 2008, by [EVANS Rachel](#) (Date first published: 12 July 2008).

Pope Benedict XVI is coming to town. Sydney is once again to be subject to a special police regime as this saintly, celibate white man bravely preaches the joys of sexual abstinence in the very Circus Maximus of Sin City (Randwick race course).

Pope Benedict is also the CEO of a very big company called the Catholic Church. The third largest landowner in the world, if this company were incorporated it would be listed in Australia's top 10. So this pope is also loaded.

When George Bush, CEO of another very powerful institution, sauntered into Sydney last September, the NSW Labor government snapped to attention, creating massive exclusion zones, placing snipers on rooftops and bringing out the biggest toy in the Australian public order toy chest — the NSW police's \$600,000 water cannon.

Ten thousand protesters kept their cool in the face of this provocation, rallying against Bush's mass murder record and the crazed threats of NSW Premier Morris Iemma and police commissioner Andrew Scipione.

Of course, Pope Benedict is not responsible for the deaths of 1 million Iraqis. But this "holy father" is the author of a conservative contraception edict that condemns millions of people to death through AIDS. In Africa, where the Catholic Church has a great deal of influence over people's sexual practices, HIV-AIDS is a pandemic.

As justification, the pope quotes a 1968 encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, On Human Life (!?), which describes contraception as evil. The Vatican has also published a document claiming that condoms have holes and do not protect against AIDS.

It is a crime against humanity that church leaders persist in medieval, obscurantist and false advice about human sexual practices. Indeed, it's a massive and damaging sin, while pre-marital and homosexual sex, using condoms and the pill, and having an abortion are not.

Loopy old Pope Benedict has said that homosexuals are "objectively disordered" and same-sex marriage is "a threat to world peace". Prior to becoming pope, Cardinal Ratzinger told voters it would be a sin to vote for pro-choice candidates. He has campaigned against governments implementing marriage, or civil union rights, for same-sex couples.

Some governments, especially that of very Catholic Spain, have had the spine to withstand his reactionary garbage on these vital issues. Not so in Australia. Here, the political influence of the Catholic (and non-Catholic) right on government policy continues to prevail on respectful and pious Labor administrations (against majority opinion).

The Australian government was the first and, so far, the only in the Western world to ban same-sex marriage. Abortion remains on the criminal code in NSW, Victoria, Queensland, the Northern Territory, South Australia and Tasmania.

Given this massive show of moral squalor it would have been a political sin to allow Pope Benedict's

visit for World Youth Day to go without protest.

The NoToPope Coalition was formed to bring together everyone opposed to Pope Benedict's backward and anti-human positions. Initiated by Community Action Against Homophobia, the coalition now includes 16 groups, with the Socialist Alliance being the first political party to sign up.

The Iemma government has reacted by showing that it learned nothing from last year's Bush protests. Now we are also rallying against laws that may result in protesters being slapped with a \$5500 fine for handing out condoms!

Deputy premier John Watkins' "annoyance" regulations have made Macquarie Street the laughing stock of everyone from the *Sydney Morning Herald* to influential Catholic figures like Father Frank Brennan. *The Chaser* is said to be considering suing for theft of material as Morris Iemma persists in his own weird form of papal infallibility.

The premier's war on everything has brought the NSW Council for Civil Liberties into action in support of the right to protest. Christians have joined the NoToPope Coalition, with supporters of liberation theology forming groups such as "Catholics for Condoms".

The NoToPope Coalition welcomes the determination of such groups to protest Pope Benedict's backward positions. We also welcome and look forward to dialogue with the tens of thousands of Catholic youth who are coming to World Youth Day. We shall try to convince them to join us in action to stem the HIV-AIDS pandemic, and to fight within their church for a humane approach to sexuality and marriage rights.

Help us get this message out as powerfully as possible. Protest the unholy father on July 19!

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**P.S.**

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