

Family Relationships in Australia: The Conservative-Liberal-Radical Debate

Peter McDonald (translated by Saori KAMANO)

There have been considerable changes in the family in Australia in the past 30 years. These changes are examined within a political framework of a social debate between conservatives, liberals and radicals. It is argued that, in general, Australia has taken the liberal viewpoint through which greater autonomy is provided to individuals to determine their own individual and intimate lives. In some instances, the state has provided financial and legislative support for this process. There has been growth in cohabiting unions, divorce, delayed marriage and childbearing, lone parent families, increased childlessness, and higher percentages of children born outside of marriage. These can all be seen as social experiments that the society has been prepared to tolerate as people seek their own solutions between their conflicting needs for autonomy, intimacy and social and economic participation.