

QLD:LNP leader pitches for Christian vote

By Miranda Forster

BRISBANE, Feb 8 AAP - The Liberal National Party leader Campbell Newman has played up his religious beliefs during an address to Christian church leaders in Brisbane.

Mr Newman also spoke out against "sexualised" billboards and reaffirmed his party's opposition to civil partnerships between gay couples during an election pitch at an Australian Christian Lobby (ACL) forum on Wednesday.

Mr Newman told the forum that he was not a good churchgoer but he believed in God and said grace every night.

"I'm proud to say that I have a background in the Christian faith," he told the forum.

"I was brought up as an Anglican, I've married a Catholic, I have two daughters who were baptised and are practising Catholics and go to Catholic schools.

"But I'm not a good churchgoer.

"I make that admission as well.

"But I have faith.

"And I do believe in God.

"And we say grace every night."

Mr Newman made the comments during an election pitch to Christian church leaders at the University of Queensland on Wednesday evening.

He also reaffirmed a commitment to "look at" repealing laws to allow civil partnerships between gay couples, and spoke out against "sexualised" billboards.

The billboards had greatly troubled him while he was lord mayor of Brisbane, he said.

"Frankly, I think some of those ads we've seen in last three or four years have gone right over the top," Mr Newman said.

He vowed that if elected, he would work with the federal government to bring them into line with community standards.

The comments came after Katter's Australian Party earlier announced it would repeal the civil union laws if it formed government and criticised Mr Newman for funding a controversial gay safe-sex billboard advertisement while he was Brisbane's lord mayor.

State leader Aidan McLindon said under Mr Newman's watch, the council provided more than \$100,000 over seven years in grants for Healthy Communities, the organisation that ran the campaign.

"One has to wonder, 'Is this a socially conservative party or not?'" he said of the LNP.

Healthy Communities says the Rip and Roll ads were funded by the Queensland government.

A webcast of Mr Newman's address to the ACL forum drew about 250 viewers.

No one from the Labor Party addressed the gathering after Premier Anna Bligh and her deputy Andrew Fraser declined to attend and Labor offered to send Health Minister Geoff Wilson instead.

The ACL rejected the offer and accused the Labor Party of snubbing Christians.

Mr Fraser said a "churlish" ACL had rejected Mr Wilson's offer of attendance for political reasons.

ACL state director Wendy Francis was one of the most vocal opponents of Labor's civil partnership laws, he said.

Australian Catholic University political analyst Scott Prasser said voters deserved to hear from the leaders.

"We're in election mode," he told AAP.

"It was the Labor Party's choice to send a messenger boy rather than the leader.

"If I was in the position of the ALP, where I'm trailing dramatically in the polls, I would certainly have attended to argue my case.

"That's what politics is supposed to be about."

Ms Bligh was in north Queensland on Wednesday for a Townsville Bulletin-hosted debate, which Mr Newman declined to attend.

Mr Newman defended his decision, saying he would debate Ms Bligh during the election campaign.

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