



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE

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VIOLENCE AGAINST GAY AND LESBIAN COMMUNITY

Mr REYNOLDS (Townsville—ALP) (7.18 p.m.): Townsville people have been shocked this week to learn of another repugnant and un-Australian act of violence against a representative of the gay community. When the Queensland AIDS Council office in Townsville was bombed a few weeks ago, I strongly condemned people who break the law and treat members of a minority group in this way. Now I find myself again condemning an anti-gay attack following the stabbing yesterday of Townsville AIDS Council worker, Mr Darrel Colbert-Whitford, with a syringe. Let me say emphatically that these acts of violence are completely unacceptable to all fair-minded citizens and are seen by the general community as cowardly and irrational.

After the AIDS Council bombing, I moved quickly to help find funding for a public safety campaign in Townsville. The Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care kindly agreed to provide \$5,000 for the Safe Place Project, an initiative of the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Anti-Violence Council, also supported by the Queensland AIDS Council. This project is specifically designed to counter the disturbing increase in homophobic behaviour occurring within Townsville's central business district.

When the project was launched on 5 July, we all hoped that the positive publicity it generated and the enthusiastic support of local business houses would put an end to acts of violence and harassment. Now we have to contend with another cowardly attack based on sexuality—another hate crime, pure and simple. What is really concerning is that it seems to be part of a pattern and part of an irrational, random and brutal campaign with the gay and lesbian community being the target. I find this appalling. It has ramifications for all of us. Whenever someone is attacked because of their sexual or gender identity, it is an attack on the open, inclusive and tolerant aspects of Australian society. Opening the door to such a dark world is a very disturbing prospect indeed and the fact that it is happening in my own community makes it all the more disturbing.

Gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender individuals are entitled to be treated with dignity and respect. They are valued members of our community who deserve to be treated like anyone else. They certainly do not deserve to be targeted by cowardly bigots promoting their own prejudices at great cost to individuals such as Mr Colbert-Whitford, and at great cost to the community as a whole. We simply cannot tolerate these anti-social and uncivilised behaviours. They are un-Australian because they fall far short of the ethos of a fair go. Everyone deserves a fair go, regardless of sexuality, gender, ethnicity or class. To hurt another person simply because they do not—

Time expired.
