



Speech by

**Hon. R. SCHWARTEN**

**MEMBER FOR ROCKHAMPTON**

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Hansard 28 April 1999

**TRANSPLANTATION AND ANATOMY AMENDMENT BILL**

**Hon. R. E. SCHWARTEN** (Rockhampton— ALP) (Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing) (8.53 p.m.): I rise reluctantly to contribute to this debate. I have to say to my learned colleagues who sit at the back of the Chamber: the last two speeches I heard from Independent members were completely over the top.

I congratulate the member for Thuringowa on bringing this debate into the House. I think it is a debate that had to be had. Most of the contributions that have been made by members on both sides of this House have been very positive. I think the previous speaker summed it up when he said that we are dealing with emotive issues.

Before we go any further, I state that I have consented to being an organ donor. I have discussed with my family what arrangements I would like to see put in place should I be involved in an accident or whatever. The reality is that I am probably too old and do not have much to offer in the way of second-hand organs. Generally it is young people who are the best organ donors.

I will relay a story which sets out something that I think people need to bear in mind when considering the issue before us. I do not want to source it to a State or a person, because the people concerned are very good friends of mine. This young girl was 21 years of age when she was involved in a motorcycle accident in another State. She ended up in a coma and was kept alive by the specialists concerned with a view to giving her organs to people on the organ donor waiting list. They kept her alive for nine days. She was a beautiful young girl, very much loved by her family—her mother and her father. Her parents were there and were aware that she had consented to being an organ donor and had volunteered to be part of that program, and they endorsed that decision.

However, what they did not know was that the moment the doctors made a decision to turn off the tap, as it were, and transplant her organs, the family forewent all rights to her as a human being. Her mother, whom I have known all my life, said to me, "Nothing would prepare me for what occurred then." The daughter was taken away from her parents at a moment's notice and what they got back was basically what she described to me as a bag of scraps. They had taken her eyes, parts of her limbs and her internal organs. This beautiful blonde-haired, blue-eyed girl—their daughter—was basically, as the mother said, a bag of bones.

I relay this story reluctantly because, as I said, I know this family very well. The point I am trying to make is that this was a result of all the best will in the world, which we have in this place. I do not think there is anybody in this Chamber who would agree with the statement that we should take our organs away when they can be best put to use on this earth to help some other person develop into a whole human being as a result of receiving an organ. I think it is very unfair for people to stand up in this place and attack the Labor Party, for example, by suggesting that we on this side of politics do not support organ donation. Of course we do. Anybody with any heart and soul does.

We do need to have this issue properly researched. In my view there has to be absolute bipartisan support. It is pleasing to see that the National Party and the Liberal Party are prepared to offer that. I think it is only right to get the issue out in the public arena and develop a proper set of protocols so that the very unfortunate set of incidents that has plagued that family for 15 years now does not happen to a Queensland family.

I say in all sincerity: this is not about a party standing over another group of people in this place. This is about trying to get it right. If we have to take just a little bit longer to ease the burden of people such as my friends, then I say do it. Let us get it right. Let us put aside the sniping, the petty backbiting and the attempts to make the major parties look as though they do not care, because that really is below the belt. There is nobody in this Parliament more sincere than I in relation to this issue. As I say, I have first-hand experience with a family in this regard.

I implore the members who sit at the back of the Chamber to think about what they have said and to actually, for once in their lives, look beyond their personal differences with us on this side of the House and think about the long-term issues. It will take a little longer to get it right. I am confident that we will get it right. The goodwill exists right across this Chamber to do it. I am sure that while that goodwill exists we will get a result.

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