



Speech by

## CHRISTINE SCOTT

MEMBER FOR CHARTERS TOWERS

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Hansard 28 November 2002

### DISCRIMINATION LAW AMENDMENT BILL

**Mrs CHRISTINE SCOTT** (Charters Towers—ALP) (4.08 p.m.): It is a pleasure to rise to take part in debate on the Discrimination Law Amendment Bill 2002. I know that every member in this House will wish to speak to this bill, so in the interests of timeliness I will be brief and confine my remarks in this instance to just a small number of aspects of the legislation.

I have long appreciated in this permissive age when topless bar attendants and waitresses are accepted in the public arena how incongruous it has been that a mother can be asked to leave a restaurant or a shopping mall simply because she needs to breastfeed a hungry baby. No-one should expect a bottle-fed baby to be removed from the public gaze or breastfeeding mothers and babies to have their meal in a toilet, as they have often been required to do. No-one else would accept being made to have their meal in a toilet. I am very pleased that, in this modern age, breastfeeding mothers can no longer be required to remove themselves or their children from the public gaze as previously occurred. A hungry baby, whether it be breastfed or bottle-fed, needs to be fed when and where it is necessary.

I should also like to comment briefly on the gender identity aspect of this bill. I welcome all changes in this bill, including those which allow post-operative transgender people to obtain new birth certificates in their reassigned sex. This brings Queensland into line with the majority of the mainland states, which currently have similar legislation. While I would never wish for anyone to go to jail, I wonder if any of the opponents to this legislation have considered the previous implications for a person who has had a sex change operation and who has previously not been allowed to change their birth certificate and therefore, with all the attributes of their new gender, may have found themselves in a prison situation in accordance with their old birth certificate. I would consider this not only inappropriate but also possibly dangerous either to their health and safety or, conversely, to the health and safety of others in that institution at the same time.

I believe that being born homosexual—I do believe that people are born that way—is no different from being born left handed. Many years ago we punished people who were born left handed and tried to force them to change. We now have a more enlightened view about that particular situation, and I am very pleased that we now seem to have moved into the 21st century in our treatment of people who are not part of the majority in respect of their sexuality. These and other reforms within this bill are not intended to endorse, condone or encourage any particular lifestyle, but we need to recognise that other lifestyles certainly exist, even though they may be in the minority. A head-in-the-sand approach of denying their existence is unhelpful to say the least.

I think those who are so insistent that homosexuals and those who practise other lifestyles are evil, deviant and so on should ask themselves how they would feel if they suddenly found one of their teenage or adult children was gay. Would they suddenly feel that these people were evil or agents of the devil? I think not. I think they would love them no less. My view is that homosexuality occurs in nature amongst animals, although those animals and humans are in the minority. It is a natural occurrence and therefore there is nothing intrinsically wrong with it.

This legislation protects the fundamental rights and human identity of all people, no matter who they are. It is designed to reinforce the inherent social diversity of our vibrant, contemporary and just society. I commend the bill to the House.

