



Speech by

Lawrence Springborg

MEMBER FOR SOUTHERN DOWNS

Hansard Wednesday, 2 September 2009

CRIMINAL CODE (MEDICAL TREATMENT) AMENDMENT BILL: DECLARED URGENT

Mr SPRINGBORG (Southern Downs—LNP) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (10.24 am): There is no doubt that this is a complex and highly emotive issue. The government members are right in their proposition, which we generally share, that there needs to be a legislative solution to deal with this issue which has arisen in the past couple of weeks. Certainly there needs to be clarity in the law, but that clarity needs to be properly established and there needs to be proper consultation. We also have to make sure that, in the course of our legislative deliberations, we get it absolutely right.

By way of demonstration of that point, for the past two weeks the government has had the resources of government, including the significant resources within the departments, working on this legislation. To give some idea of the complexity of it, that work was still being done as late as yesterday before the bill was introduced into the parliament. Therefore, the government has an advantage in having those arms available to it in order to draft the legislation. Having said that, of course there are many examples in this place and outside where legislation that has been prepared in haste can have unforeseen consequences, especially if it has not been properly tested through the scrutiny that can be brought into this place by people who have been properly briefed, who have talked to a range of interest groups, who have taken their own legal advice and who have been able to study the legislation.

This bill was introduced last night at just before quarter to eight. By the time we debate it today, it will be about 19 hours since it was introduced into the parliament. That is hardly the 14 days that would normally pass before the parliament debates a bill, particularly a bill such as this. I would argue that another 24 hours might significantly fill the gap for people who desire to properly consult on this issue.

Opposition members: Hear, hear!

Mr SPRINGBORG: There needs to be broad consultation. This is a highly complex and emotive issue. I have absolutely no problem whatsoever with the principle espoused by the government in trying to address this issue and the legislative parameters that it has laid down. However, that does not necessarily mean that they are completely perfect. In his contribution, the Attorney-General mentioned that this bill is needed to clarify not only matters to do with the termination of pregnancy but also other medical issues. The latter is not under question and does not need to be rushed. However, we certainly need a little bit more time with regards to the former.

The other thing that concerns me is that we have not had access to the government's legal advice. I know that it is not normal for the government to provide access to that legal advice in this place. However, there are precedents where that has happened, particularly with matters where the government has argued the case of urgency. Most recently that has happened in this place with regards to off-the-plan sales for units.

In conclusion, I refer to the emotional nature of this issue and the fact that within this parliament there are probably not just three sides to this debate but a multiplicity of opinions across the spectrum. On

such an issue there could be 50 different views. Therefore, we need to address the issue of scepticism and concern, and we need to make sure that we get this absolutely right within a legislative framework. I rise to oppose the proposition that the bill needs to be debated urgently, even though I understand the issue needs to have a solution in the not-too-distant future. However, the government has not made the case for urgency and a little delay would make for a better informed and better consulted debate in this place.