



Speech by

Hon. Anastacia Palaszczuk

MEMBER FOR INALA

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SURROGACY BILL; FAMILY (SURROGACY) BILL

Hon. A PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Disability Services and Multicultural Affairs) (10.14 pm): I rise to speak in support of the government's Surrogacy Bill. The decriminalisation of altruistic surrogacy is an important law reform that should be welcomed by both sides of the House. This reform supports people who are unable, for a variety of reasons, to have children of their own but who nevertheless want to start a family. Personally, I know couples who have been told by doctors that they will never be able to have their own children. It is an unfortunate fact of life that many couples who want children of their own are unable to have them for medical reasons. This can be a shattering experience and it is only natural that some couples will explore other ways to start their own family. The Surrogacy Bill is a way forward for those couples and we should be supporting them rather than presenting them with obstacles, as the opposition is doing. This bill does not impose restrictions on who can enter into a surrogacy arrangement. It means that people in various types of relationships can become parents by entering into surrogacy arrangements.

While everyone is entitled to their own opinion, during the debate on this bill we have heard some, quite frankly, ludicrous and ill-informed criticisms and opinions from the opposition. Some members opposite have expressed rigid and outdated views about what constitutes a family in the modern day. Times have changed and we need to change with them. Today there is much wider community acceptance that families can take on a variety of forms. This reform will bring Queensland into line with other Australian jurisdictions that have regulated altruistic surrogacy. Despite the doom and gloom we have heard from the opposition on this issue, the ACT, Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia all have this option available to people.

The bill provides people with another option to have a family. I firmly believe that people will not make these sorts of decisions lightly but will think long and hard before entering into a surrogacy arrangement. This bill is not going to open the floodgates. These are very tough decisions, and people will think long and hard before entering into such a complex arrangement. This bill protects the rights of children while giving parents legal certainty. For example, it secures the rights of children under succession law. It also gives parents the power they need to make important health and education decisions on behalf of their children.

This bill provides some important safeguards. For example, there is a requirement for parties entering into a surrogacy arrangement to obtain legal advice. The explanatory notes of the bill state—

The Bill requires that the court be satisfied that all parties each obtained independent legal advice prior to entering into the surrogacy arrangement.

The bill also makes counselling mandatory for parties entering into a surrogacy arrangement. The counsellor will have to be accredited by one of a number of professional bodies and have the skills required to provide the appropriate counselling needed. These are important safeguards to ensure that individuals and couples understand the arrangement they are entering into. As I said previously, a surrogacy arrangement is not going to be entered into lightly and people will think long and hard before entering into it.

The government has undertaken extensive public consultation on this bill. The majority of respondents supported the proposed reforms. Unfortunately, the opposition is out of touch with reality and beholden to a social agenda that is not in touch with contemporary views and contemporary values. In conclusion, I quote the Attorney-General's second reading speech. He stated—

Labor governments see family life as fundamental to the wellbeing of society, and we do not seek to impose one narrow set of criteria on our description of what constitutes a family in Queensland. Nor do we have any preconceived ideas about which individuals make the best parents. Queenslanders should be free to determine, between themselves, the surrogacy arrangements they wish to put in place.

I commend the Attorney-General on this bill and for the work that he has put into it. We are providing people with a path to achieve their dream of having a family. We are introducing a law that provides not only security for children but also security for everybody involved in the arrangement. I commend the bill to the House.