



Speech by

## Fiona Simpson

MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE

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### SURROGACY BILL; FAMILY (SURROGACY) BILL

**Ms SIMPSON** (Maroochydore—LNP) (10.10 pm): Children can be the greatest joy in people's lives. It is natural for people to want to do whatever they reasonably can to have their own family. When biological reasons preclude this, it can cause great grief. However, the standard by which we seek to legislate legal parenting must be governed by what is in the best interests of the child, not the parent.

Tonight we are debating two bills conjointly: surrogacy and same-sex surrogacy. I thank the member for Southern Downs for his bill, which provides LNP members with a conscience vote on the issue of surrogacy. However, on the issue of same-sex and single surrogacy, provisions that are contained within the government's bill, we depart from the government's view. The LNP has stated our belief in the right of the child, wherever possible, to have a mother and a father. That is why we oppose the same-sex and single surrogacy provisions of the government's bill. While the debate is held conjointly, due to the technicality of the parliamentary rules only one bill can be voted on and that will be the Labor Party's bill.

The real purpose of Premier Anna Bligh's bill is not children's rights but homosexual rights; certainly it is not the rights of heterosexual infertile couples. These are elitist, left-wing views that are hell-bent on social engineering. If the Premier really cared about the vast majority of infertile couples who want to have children—men and women in stable, loving relationships—she would make it easier to access adoption services in this state, but she is not and they are being ignored. More than 600 Queensland couples are among the thousands of Australians desperately wanting to adopt a child from overseas. Most children available for adoption come from overseas. In 2007-08, only 86 adoptions occurred in Queensland. Across Australia there were 440 adoptions. I do not accept that there are not more overseas children suitable to be considered for adoption in our country. Making adoption more affordable and accessible would truly be in the best interests of children who already exist and who are stuck in institutions overseas without the opportunity of having a reasonable upbringing with a loving family.

According to one article, Australia has the lowest rate of intercountry adoption of any developed country. Last year 40,000 children were adopted worldwide but only 270 of them came to Australian couples. I know that many couples would gladly abandon much sooner the emotionally and physically wrenching process of IVF if they knew they had a reasonable chance of becoming parents through adoption.

While understandable in limited circumstances, surrogacy is not the priority or the answer for the majority of couples who desperately want children. There are children who want and, what is more important, need families with a mum and a dad. I have heard the moralising of government members who are lobbying for same-sex surrogacy and single surrogacy. They cry discrimination if people question their cause, but what about the discrimination of the unheard—that is, the children who do not have homes and the couples who want to adopt them but find the hurdles too great and too burdensome? It is time they were heard rather than marginalised.