


Speech by

Hon. Anastacia Palaszczuk

MEMBER FOR INALA

Hansard Wednesday, 30 November 2011

CIVIL PARTNERSHIPS BILL

 **Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Multicultural Affairs) (9.20 pm): We live in a modern, vibrant, tolerant and accepting state. We are privileged to live in a society that is a world away from the dark days of the 1970s and 1980s when Queensland was, perhaps deservedly, viewed by the entire nation as the epicentre of the double standard—Australia's backwater. Every Queenslanders is grateful that the times have changed and, in relative terms, that change has come very, very quickly. But, while we have come a long way, in our rush to get there some have been left behind. And, although we pride ourselves on our evolution, while we take pride in our modern and tolerant and accepting society, the simple fact is that we live with a set of rules for one group of people and another set of rules for others.

Love knows no boundary. But the simple fact is that we impose boundaries, we continue to establish barriers for a large and important section of our society based on the gender and sexual preference. That—in the Queensland of 2011—beggars belief. Thousands of same-sex couples who love and are committed to one another want nothing more than to have their relationship formally recognised, not only by their families and their friends but by the law. They want and deserve the same rights as heterosexual couples. If people want to formalise their love for one another, why should we stand in their way? Who are we to tell same-sex couples they cannot have the same basic human rights enjoyed by heterosexual couples? That is why I rise to support the Civil Partnerships Bill.

This is a bill which aims to minimise discrimination and allow any two adults, regardless of their gender, to enter into a legally recognised relationship. It offers same-sex couples the opportunity to legally celebrate their relationships and in a fair and compassionate society—in an accepting society—that is important. A bill in this parliament cannot deliver the kind of marriage equality that is law in Canada, Spain, Sweden, South Africa, Argentina, Ireland, Portugal and in six states of America. But we can take this step, which legally is as far as the state can go towards recognising same-sex relationships—and that is a big step in the right direction.

We owe a debt of thanks to the thousands of Queenslanders who took the time and the care to make submissions in support of this landmark change to this parliament's Legal Affairs, Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services Committee. Those voices have been heard, just as the voices of those who oppose this move have been heard. Everyone is entitled to a view.

One of the strongest arguments for making this change is the positive effect it will have on younger lesbian, gay and bisexual people. These are the people who can struggle to come to terms with their sexuality and the associated depression and isolation. By allowing all people in committed relationships to have the option of having their relationships recognised and celebrated, we reinforce the message that these are healthy and loving relationships. We reinforce acceptance. We celebrate our diversity and we celebrate tolerance. I am pleased to put my support for this change on the record and I commend the bill to the House.