




Speech By
Hon. Curtis Pitt

MEMBER FOR MULGRAVE

Record of Proceedings, 3 December 2015

**RELATIONSHIPS (CIVIL PARTNERSHIPS) AND OTHER ACTS AMENDMENT
BILL**

 **Hon. CW PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (Treasurer, Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) (3.16 pm): I am proud to be part of a government that has its sights firmly fixed on the future. All of our policy commitments are about making Queensland a smarter, more progressive place positioned to fearlessly seize every opportunity before us. The Palaszczuk government is not constrained by ideological agenda, ignorance or innuendo, and so it is incumbent on us to right the bitter wrongs of the LNP.

What we saw in June 2012, just three months after the LNP was elected, was a successive series of law reforms aimed solely at removing rights from a minority group. I clearly remember the so-called priority placed on the LNP's cost-of-living legislation that was introduced and parked so that the civil unions legislation passed by the former Labor government could be made a priority to repeal. It was unfair, vindictive and, frankly, pointless. Queensland had only just caught up with the rest of Australia's eastern seaboard by introducing civil union laws when the LNP embarked on the biggest roll-back of gay and lesbian rights anywhere in the Western world literally.

There were no winners. This was retrospective political payback against a defenceless minority. It is no wonder Queenslanders used their democratic right on 31 January to vote out the LNP in favour of a modern government to reflect a modern Queensland. Cruelly, the problem was not removed with Campbell Newman. The main perpetrators are still sitting in this chamber. The member for Southern Downs, as former health minister, axed \$2.6 million in funding to the Queensland Association for Healthy Communities to silence our state's only health organisation for LGBTI Queenslanders.

This was followed by the feverish excitement of the former attorney-general, who, on the same night the changes made to civil unions were rushed through, unexpectedly announced the next reform on the agenda was Queensland surrogacy laws. The former speaker, the member for Maroochydore, decided she did not like TV crews reporting on the completely understandable protests against her government's malicious actions, citing safety issues in the public gallery. So she banned TV cameras from filming inside the parliament for a period.

This blatant contempt for our democracy was an unfathomable form of censorship in a modern Western society. The member for Clayfield, who claimed to know better, did nothing to stop his colleagues' crusade. On 22 June 2012 civil unions simply ceased to exist in Queensland, without the LNP government even having the decency to hold a press conference. This was not a pre-election commitment. They did not have a mandate, and evidently they did not have the support of Queenslanders to do this. If this had happened in some southern state or midwest America, it would have made international news. That is exactly what we saw in Kentucky when country clerk Kim Davis tried to defy a Federal Court order instructing that she abide by the US Supreme Court's decision. Labor will not let Queensland become some kind of backwater state of Australia. Generations to come will remember the regressive, vindictive agenda of the LNP.

This bill will achieve its objective of restoring provisions for civil partnership ceremonies by renaming the Relationships Act the Civil Partnerships Act. It will also make other terminology changes, including replacing references to 'registered relationship' with 'civil partnership'. Critically, this bill will provide for couples to enter into a civil partnership by making a declaration to each other through a civil partnership ceremony. In doing so, it ends the LNP's discrimination of forcing same-sex couples to register their partner like a pet with no celebration or fanfare. At its heart, this bill is about equality. In fact, there is no alternative way of achieving this policy objective. This change comes at no cost to our state. The cost of the civil partnership notary registration scheme will be offset through an annual registration fee for civil partnership notaries.

In truth the only cost associated with this legislation has been the emotional toll inflicted on same-sex attracted Queenslanders by the LNP regime over the previous three years. For same-sex attracted teenagers growing up in this state, the past three years were a trauma they should never have had to witness. For couples who had entered civil unions, it was a petty personal attack that they should never have had to endure. Now with the dark hatred of the LNP years behind us, it is clear Queensland's collective spirit is in a much healthier place. I want the world to know that the LNP's regressive vision for Queensland will not define the future of Queensland. We are an open, accepting, intelligent state that will not be held prisoner to any extreme agenda. No kid should be made to believe that they are not entitled to the same basic hopes, dreams and rights as everyone else.

I say to every teenager contemplating their sexual identity, I say to adults who grew up vilified during the Joh era, especially those Queenslanders who had the authenticity of their relationship undermined by the LNP, that we are making Queensland better. I also want to say to the gay and lesbian staff members working for the LNP that we will make this state better for you too—even if you are not allowed to have an opinion. This is our job. That is our responsibility as a progressive party of reform. I want you to know that there are politicians in this place willing to fight for your rights, because frankly you should not have to—not in 2015.

The legislation we are voting on is a key step to putting Queensland back on the right track to a brighter future. So much has been said on this topic that it is difficult to say something new, but some of Macklemore's lyrics from his song Same Love sum it up perfectly—

We press play, don't press pause

Progress, march on.

...

When kids are walking 'round the hallway plagued by pain in their heart

A world so hateful some would rather die than be who they are

And a certificate on paper isn't gonna solve it all

But it's a damn good place to start

No law is gonna change us

We have to change us

Whatever God you believe in

We come from the same one

Strip away the fear

Underneath it's all the same love

About time that we raised up

...

When everyone else is more comfortable remaining voiceless

Rather than fighting for humans that have had their rights stolen

I might not be the same, but that's not important

No freedom til we're equal, damn right I support it