




Speech By
Mark Furner

MEMBER FOR FERNY GROVE

Record of Proceedings, 3 December 2015

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

 **Mr FURNER** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (12.27 pm): I also rise this afternoon to speak in favour of the Relationships (Civil Partnerships) and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2015, and in doing so it gives me pleasure to support another Palaszczuk Labor government pre-election commitment. I do acknowledge all of the committee members on the committee that I chaired, the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee, and also the secretariat and Hansard staff for their commitment to avail themselves on Melbourne Cup afternoon, when the hearing was held for this bill. I think it speaks volumes about the commitment of that committee and those staff who availed themselves on that day.

However, the committee met some challenges in reporting to this House. The committee report speaks for itself, showing government members provided a statement of reservation detailing the substance of evidence in summary of those submitters and witnesses before the committee. As chair of the committee I found this extraordinary, to have to go to this length to provide to the House clear and concise evidence to all Queenslanders.

This bill will reinstate the provisions in the Relationships Act 2011, formerly known as the Civil Partnerships Act 2011, for adult couples of any gender to hold a civil partnership ceremony prior to registering their relationship. The committee received 29 submissions, sought and received written evidence from the department in relation to responses to matters raised in submissions and held a public hearing, as I indicated, on 3 November 2015.

Evidence from the department was interesting. It actually provided data making it clear that marriage equality and civil partnerships are separate issues, as the following facts indicate. There have been 6,856 heterosexual and 1,227 same-sex civil relationships registered with the Queensland Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages. Expressed as a percentage, this means that 72 per cent of those civil partnerships registered in an average month are heterosexual and 28 per cent are same-sex. Despite opinions provided by FamilyVoice Australia that civil unions mimic marriage, the committee was advised otherwise by parents of gay people and partners themselves. One example came from one of the witnesses, Mr Tinkler, who conversely expressed this view to the committee. He said—

Civil Partnerships are not the same as marriages and although we support marriage equality as a completely different issue, we see Civil Partnerships allowing a modern and secular way in which committed couples like ourselves can celebrate our love for each other.

That is what it is all about. It is all about love for each other as couples. The Very Reverend Dr Catt in his evidence made the relevant point to the committee—

No matter what happens in the federal sphere about marriage, there will be people who will be looking for civil partnerships for all sorts of reasons. They are actually quite separate issues, in my view.

The bill does provide all couples who are not married an opportunity to hold an official ceremony to acknowledge and celebrate their commitment, regardless of the sexuality of the couple. This bill poses no discrimination to anyone. I commend the bill to the House.