




Speech By
Peter Russo

MEMBER FOR SUNNYBANK

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RELATIONSHIPS (CIVIL PARTNERSHIPS) AND OTHER ACTS AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr RUSSO** (Sunnybank—ALP) (12.18 pm): I rise today on behalf of the people of the electorate of Sunnybank to speak in support of the Relationships (Civil Partnerships) and Other Acts Amendment Bill. The purpose of this bill is to restore the rights of couples of any gender to hold a state-sanctioned ceremony and have their relationship recognised as a civil union.

It will reverse the 2012 amendments which were brought in by the Newman government and return the law to how it was under the Bligh government in 2011. This bill will return the title 'civil union' to the legal relationship available to same-sex couples. It will restore a ceremonial and ritualistic aspect to the union process, allowing for the making of declarations before the documents are signed. These amendments would not be necessary had it not been for the previous government's blatant attempts to undermine the legitimacy of the relationship between same-sex couples.

After only six months in office, the previous attorney-general introduced legislation that he himself defined as purely symbolic. It did not affect the legal application of a civil union, but merely changed the name of it and reduced the process to one similar to registering a pet or a new car. The justification given to this blatant act of discrimination was that civil unions too closely mimicked marriage. On top of this, the LNP attorney-general claimed that such changes were urgent and deemed it necessary to fast-track the registered relationship amendments. The government bypassed the community consultation process and the laws were passed in a matter of days. The previous government did not bother to ask the community what they wanted and did not make the time to listen to the effect this would have on Queensland's LGBTIQ population. It also resulted in awful situations where couples who had celebrated a civil union woke up one morning to find that the legal standing of their relationship had been changed.

The LNP's 2012 amendments were trivial and hurtful, and it is right that our government is taking steps to remedy this damage. I have long been an advocate of equality not just within society, but unequivocally under the law. I believe that a person's sexuality is their private business, as is their choice as to who they spent their lives with. Neither of these personal choices should be judged by the general public, least of all by parliamentary representatives. The law should not discriminate. All consensual, loving, committed relationships are worthy of acknowledgment. I commend the legislation to the House.