




Speech By
Hon. Shannon Fentiman

MEMBER FOR WATERFORD

Record of Proceedings, 3 June 2015

ADJOURNMENT

Marriage Equality

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Communities, Women and Youth, Minister for Child Safety and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (12.16 am): There can be no doubt that the time has come to act on marriage equality. When we as legislators continue to be out of step with the attitudes and expectations of the community that we represent, we are failing at our jobs. There is overwhelming support across Queensland, and Australia more broadly, for marriage equality. Recent polling suggests more than 70 per cent of Australians support marriage equality. I heard a commentator say on the weekend that every English-speaking country—including a majority of states in the US—has marriage equality in some form. It is time to catch up.

I am a member of the party of reform, a party that recognises people from right across the sexuality spectrum as equal. It was Labor that, way back in 1998, amended legislation to provide same-sex couples with the same protection under domestic violence laws as heterosexual couples—much to the derision of those opposite at the time. It was Labor that provided—and the other side that undid—recognition of people in same-sex relationships as loving, caring people capable of being good parents. This was done through amendments in relation to removing discrimination regarding surrogacy and parental recognition. It was Labor that, when last in government, established a civil unions regime to register, recognise and celebrate before the law stable, committed, loving, long-term partnerships. Proudly, it is Labor that will restore this. When in government federally Labor amended 85 pieces of legislation to remove discrimination against LGBTIQ people and same-sex couples.

It has come to Labor again to stop talking and start acting. Labor leaders Bill Shorten and Tanya Plibersek have this week introduced a bill to amend the Marriage Act to remove discrimination. It is not just the Labor leaders who support this. Many conservatives are also backing equality, from long-serving MPs like Warren Entsch to parliament's youngest, Wyatt Roy. Current legislation is also out of step with industry leaders, with 53 of Australia's leading companies proudly advertising their support for marriage equality over the weekend. That list grows by the day. It includes every major bank, all the major consulting companies, airlines and telecommunications companies. It is time for marriage equality, and I urge all Queensland federal MPs to support marriage equality and support the bill introduced by Bill Shorten and Tanya Plibersek.