




Speech By
Hon. Dr Steven Miles
MEMBER FOR MOUNT COOT-THA

Record of Proceedings, 3 December 2015

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

 **Hon. SJ MILES** (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection and Minister for National Parks and the Great Barrier Reef) (12.21 pm): I rise to make a contribution in support of this bill. I am proud to support this bill as a step towards equality for all Queenslanders. Equality is a core democratic principle that underpins our society. Unfortunately, there are still areas of our current laws which ignore this principle. For me this is all about the fact that there are people in my community—people that I am tasked with representing—who love their partners in exactly the same way as I love my wife Kim but who are unable to celebrate that relationship with their family and friends in the same way that we did and who are unable to have their relationship recognised in law in the same way that ours is.

At a state level we may not have the power to introduce marriage equality, but re-introducing civil partnerships sends the clear message that we recognise those relationships, and we will keep pushing the Australian government to recognise those relationships too. One of the first of many spiteful acts by the Newman government was to downgrade civil unions—which was introduced by my predecessor and good friend Andrew Fraser—to registered relationships. How romantic. Can you imagine turning to your partner and saying, ‘Darling will you register me?’ After decrying Labor for pursuing what they called a ‘non-priority issue’, the LNP could not wait. Within weeks of being elected to government in 2012 the member for Kawana had civil unions on the scrap heap. This prohibited the state from offering ceremonies for those who wished to register their relationship in this manner. And for what? A waste of time and taxpayers’ money to strip back the rights of people who already have fewer rights to begin with.

This bill reflects, as far as is legally possible for a state government, the desires of the majority of Australians to provide dignity where it is denied in the federal Marriage Act. I hope it will increase pressure on the federal government to provide that dignity through marriage equality. Marriage equality in this country will happen; I believe it is inevitable. For my friends who are in same-sex relationships, I know that one day I will share your wedding day with you. In the meantime, I want you to know that the state government respects your relationship in the same way that we do heterosexual relationships.

There has been an incredible movement across the globe to stand up for marriage equality and for LGBTIQ inclusivity, and I am so pleased it is gaining traction here in Australia. The re-introduction of civil partnerships and state sanctioned ceremonies available to all Queenslanders regardless of gender or sexual orientation is something this government committed to and something we are proud to deliver. Societies are better when they include all of their citizens. We know this is the right thing to do. The evidence of that is so strong that even the member for Kawana has had a change of heart, and I have commended him for that. With this bill we are righting a cruel wrong perpetrated on same-sex-attracted Queenslanders by the former LNP government. They may have been motivated by hate, but this bill is motivated by love. I commend the bill to the House.