




Speech By
Hon. Shannon Fentiman

MEMBER FOR WATERFORD

Record of Proceedings, 21 April 2016

**ELECTORAL (IMPROVING REPRESENTATION) AND OTHER LEGISLATION
AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Communities, Women and Youth, Minister for Child Safety and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence) (3.53 pm): I echo the words of the Attorney-General in the House this afternoon: this issue does require serious consideration. I have to say that it is not the first, second, third, fourth or even fifth issue that my local constituents in Waterford raise with me when I am out and about in my electorate. I have travelled the length of Queensland and met with community organisations in regional centres like Rockhampton, Toowoomba, Mareeba, Biloela, Moranbah, Mackay and many others, and I can honestly say that not one person has ever raised this issue with me.

What they tell me is that they are relieved that they now have a government that listens to them and wants to work with them to build a better Queensland, to grow Queensland. I think it is really important to focus the efforts of parliament on the priority issues of building a new economy, securing jobs for the future and keeping our families safe and supported, yet here we are again debating this issue for a third time when it is just not something that Queenslanders are telling us they need. It is not a priority for them. Queenslanders do not want four new jobs for politicians; they want jobs for them and jobs for their children. They want to see a government that is delivering new jobs and is focused on new industries, harnessing innovation and the great work that our Minister for Innovation is doing with Advance Queensland.

Young people want to know that politicians will put their efforts into grappling with the big issues that affect their future. During National Youth Week it was a real privilege to travel throughout Queensland to attend the youth forums that we have been holding right across Queensland and to talk to young people about the issues that concern them. There are a lot of challenges for our young people today. Youth unemployment is a real issue, and this government is doing much to tackle youth unemployment. Our young people are worried about where the jobs that they will have are going to come from. They are worried about making sure they have access to TAFE and to skilling and to higher education. During the last election campaign I was so proud when the Labor government announced that it would rescue our TAFEs, because we know that so many of our young people rely on getting those skills to make sure that they can find meaningful employment. These are certainly the themes that are coming through loud and clear during our consultations with young people right across Queensland.

Young people are also telling us that they want us to protect the environment, and I know that the minister for the environment is making sure that they have world-class educational training opportunities. They want us to tackle gender inequality; they want us to tackle domestic and family violence; they want to make sure that they have access to the best quality health care; and they want to see an inclusive society. These are the kinds of issues that my constituents raise with me locally.

These are the issues that Queenslanders raise with me as we travel to community cabinets and I meet the hardworking Queenslanders who work in our community services sector. Not only is this a distraction from the important work of governing Queensland but it would not even be close to the top of the list of reforms required to change the look, the shape and the feel of this parliament to make sure we truly are a modern parliament representing a modern Queensland.

There are more than 225 cultural groups proudly calling Queensland home. We are a true multicultural success story. As the Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services raised during this debate, our home town of Logan is an incredibly diverse multicultural society with 216 different ethnicities. There are more people from different ethnic backgrounds living in the city of Logan than there are in New York City, so the challenges that Logan faces and the priorities for this government are about making sure that we have community cohesion and social cohesion and that we continue to promote and celebrate the work of our multicultural communities. I think the passage of the multicultural recognition legislation was a key issue for those multicultural groups.

These are the issues that Queenslanders want this parliament to be focused on, and these are the issues that I am proud to say this government is working hard on. I think we should be talking about putting some effort into making our parliament better reflect the people we represent and better reflect the community.

It was a real honour to chair one of the sessions for the youth parliament late last year. One of the things I remember so strongly about sitting where you are today, Mr Speaker, and looking out across our youth parliamentarians was the diversity of representatives. There were so many women and so many representatives from diverse backgrounds. If we are going to talk about reshaping this place, these are the issues we should be considering and the debates we should be having. How do we make the parliament a more diverse place? How do we better represent different parts of our community? How do we as a parliament reflect the broader community?

What people do not say at my mobile offices, on talkback radio or in letters to the editor is, 'Please can we have more politicians.' I am not sure any member of this place, as they are out and about talking to voters, would have had a request from a constituent for more politicians. I have absolutely no doubt that representing a large electorate would have its challenges.

Ms Grace interjected.

Ms FENTIMAN: The member for Brisbane Central is telling me about some of the challenges she faces with an inner-city urban seat. Also, some federal members have bigger electorates and they seem to make that work. As a result of the focus we have on innovation and technology, being able to hear from and represent constituents will become easier and easier as we make these advances.

I find it particularly interesting that those opposite have suddenly found a passion for this issue—something they were dead silent on when they were in government. The fact that we have come back to this a third time displays a desperation from a former government that still cannot accept that they lost the trust of Queensland.

We do not need more politicians. What we need is a strong government like the Palaszczuk government that has the commitment and the compassion to improve the lives of everyone in the community; that is delivering on our election commitments; that is out there listening to the people of Queensland; that is delivering on jobs now and jobs for the future; that is delivering on quality healthcare services, more teachers, more nurses and more doctors; that is delivering on tackling big social issues such as domestic and family violence, which I have spoken on many times in this place; and that is providing a new direction for child and family support so that we can better support vulnerable families.

These are the issues that our constituents want us to focus on in this place. They certainly do not want us to focus on having more politicians. If we are going to talk about delivering jobs for Queensland, let us talk about delivering jobs for the mums and dads of Waterford. Let us talk about jobs for the students who are concerned about getting quality training and finding jobs for the future. Let us talk about the issues that matter to Queenslanders, not about how we can get more politicians.