




Speech By
Christopher Whiting

MEMBER FOR MURRUMBA

Record of Proceedings, 10 October 2017

**CRIMINAL LAW (HISTORICAL HOMOSEXUAL CONVICTIONS EXPUNGEMENT)
BILL**

 **Mr WHITING** (Murrumba—ALP) (5.11 pm): I rise to speak in support of this bill. I reflect on what was said by the member for Bulimba. This bill is all about fairness and doing the right thing. I truly believe that. I find it a privilege to stand in this parliament to speak in support of this bill. I also reflect on what the member for Waterford, the minister for families, said. Through this bill we give people back their dignity and their rights and we remove their stigma. That is a really important part of this bill. It is not often that we can do that through legislation. I think that is a very pertinent point. Through this bill, we are able to create a real social and personal effect.

During this debate we have heard that this bill represents a great step forward in social justice for Queenslanders. We have heard from Queenslanders who have been holding convictions that we consider in this day and age to be anachronistic. It is hard to explain to younger Queenslanders why older Queenslanders must carry convictions for things that they consider to be an expression of love between two human beings. As part of the consideration of this bill we have heard tales of how lives have been shattered. People who have held these convictions have not been able to teach or practise law and, in some cases, have had some restrictions on travelling. Once again, it is difficult to explain to younger Queenslanders how people can be restricted and lose so many rights for convictions that they consider to be incredibly outdated.

I echo the words of previous speakers in thanking the stakeholders who have contributed to this bill. It has been a long, hard road for many stakeholders who have campaigned hard. I pay tribute to all of those people who have played a role in bringing this bill to the fore. They have been very strong on this issue. I think they have been very strong in saying that the amendments that the Attorney-General has introduced were needed to make this bill even fairer. Otherwise, there is a major loophole. These stakeholders told us that, for many of them, if we did not have these amendments the stain of these convictions would remain. I am glad that we have been able to introduce these amendments to make this bill even fairer. I congratulate the stakeholders for not only the amendments but also following this bill through to where we are today.

During their contributions the member for Pine Rivers and the member for Capalaba talked about how they did not grow up at a time when people had that fear of police or fear of conviction. Certainly, as someone who grew up in the tail end of that period in Queensland, I can say that that fear of what could happen to a person's career was a very real fear. I think younger people have to remember that, during those times, that was what many Queenslanders faced. It is good that we have moved beyond those times and to a time when we have justice and procedural fairness.

Today, we have heard a bit more about the marriage equality debate. I think that issue is very much a part of the broader issue of this bill. The expungements that can happen through this bill and the granting of marriage equality to all Australians are not just what happens to someone else. These equivalent rights will apply to people we know and love—people who do not currently enjoy all the rights

that we do. I think of people such as my friend Caitlin, whom I have known since she was four years old. More than anything, she really wants to marry the person of her choice. She is a young woman and I will be so glad to say to her that we have played a part in not only introducing this bill but also, hopefully, marriage equality so that she can access the same rights that many of her fellow Australians can access.

In many ways, this bill is simply an administrative scheme—people can apply for expungement and their circumstances are considered—but this bill is much more than just a simple administrative scheme; it is the extension of justice and fairness to where we always thought it should be. I congratulate the Attorney-General on this bill. I am so pleased to be part of a government that is extending fairness and equity across a whole range of aspects of Queensland life. I commend the bill to the House.