




Speech By
Hon. Grace Grace

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Record of Proceedings, 21 March 2017

CRIMINAL LAW AMENDMENT BILL

 **Hon. G GRACE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations, Minister for Racing and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (4.58 pm): I rise to support this bill. The bill contains, as we know, a number of important proposed reforms not the least of which are changes to the so-called gay panic defence. Specifically, it provides that a person who commits murder cannot rely on an unwanted sexual advance other than in circumstances of an exceptional character as a basis for the partial defence of provocation. Currently, this defence, if successfully raised, reduces a charge of murder to manslaughter. I believe that using it in the circumstances where someone from the LGBTIQ community is murdered as a result of some advance that may or may not have occurred and that is used as a defence to reduce a murder charge to manslaughter represented a grave injustice and that urgent reform is required. I commend the Attorney-General for bringing this legislation forward.

I know that a lot of members of the LGBTIQ community have been waiting for this to occur. It was just simply wrong that people could use a legitimate provision in the Criminal Code in a situation described as a gay panic defence. I know that a lot of us have waited for these laws to change, and it is wonderful that I am able to speak in support of these changes and vote in support of them this afternoon. The amendment that I support is, as we know, consistent with the recommendations made by the chair of an expert committee tasked with reviewing the issue by the previous Labor government. I urge all those in this House to support this important and historic proposed reform.

I also want to make special mention of a wonderful group of girls I met earlier this month who gave me one of those 'that's made my day' moments and who have played an important role in this historic reform agenda. These year 10 and 11 students from Brisbane Girls Grammar School in my electorate of Brisbane Central—and long may it remain Brisbane Central—are outstanding young women. I am pleased to say that their efforts were recognised when they took out the Queensland state title in the national Opti-MINDS competition. What a great result! I received a petition from them and I want to read the petition into *Hansard*. It is addressed to me and it states—

We are writing to show our support for the bill against the Homosexual Advance Defence.

We are a group of girls, in Grade Ten and Eleven, who are very passionate about equality for the LGBT+ community, and recently we have taken notice of the bill that has been presented to parliament with the purpose of abolishing the Homosexual Advance Defence.

In response to this bill we have been collecting signatures on a petition to support the removal of the 'Gay Panic' defence.

We presented this petition at the national Opti-MINDS competition and received widespread support from both the Queensland representatives as well as the national competition participants. We then brought this petition to our school, Brisbane Girls Grammar School, whose students were also incredibly enthusiastic about the cause. We received over one hundred signatures within 40 minutes, in one day alone.

Attached are scans of our petition to exhibit the widespread acclamation that the abolishment bill has in the younger community and with the new generation. We strongly urge you to vote this bill forward.

I acknowledge those students and say that that is exactly what I will do this afternoon: vote in favour of this bill. I want to thank these outstanding young women for standing up for their principles and for the rights of the LGBTIQ community. I would love to name the six young women from Brisbane Girls Grammar School but I am conscious that this may not be appropriate, particularly without parental permission. They know who they are; I met with them recently at the school. I wholeheartedly thank them for making my day. What a great bunch of young women they are. They are passionate about this issue, passionate about equality and passionate about doing something in the community. I will say it once again: it was one of those moments that makes your day as a member of parliament. I think all of the members in this House would understand those moments. They have taken on this issue and made it their own. They even won a national competition with regard to this issue. It sets a great example to their fellow students and the whole Queensland community. Congratulations to them on their efforts, and I once again wholeheartedly thank them for their efforts in relation to this cause.

Thousands more Queenslanders out there have campaigned to end the gay panic defence, and I particularly want to say thank you to my very dear good friends Stephen Page and Phil Browne, who made submissions to the committee. They are wonderful advocates in the community. I join with the Deputy Premier in saying that we have been supporters of the LGBTIQ community, as are many on this side of the House—and I am sure those opposite—in relation to equality for this community. I want to acknowledge the efforts of everyone who has worked over many years to bring about fundamental legislative changes to bring about greater equality. All I want to say is bring on the equal marriage bill! Just bring it on. Let us vote in favour of it at a federal level and let us end this inequality in relation to marriage.

I once again want to acknowledge the work of the Attorney-General and the committee. It is great work. This is an historic day, and it is one bill that I am very proud to be able to vote in favour of. I will be supporting this bill and voting in favour of it. I commend the bill to the House.