




Speech By  
**Hon. Grace Grace**

**MEMBER FOR MCCONNEL**

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Record of Proceedings, 17 October 2018

### **TERMINATION OF PREGNANCY BILL**

 **Hon. G GRACE** (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for Education and Minister for Industrial Relations) (11.40 am): As an adoptive mum and exercising my conscience vote, I rise to speak in support of this bill before the House. I want to commend my colleagues, particularly the Premier, the Deputy Premier, the Attorney-General, the Minister for Health and, indeed, all of my cabinet colleagues, who have steered what is, without doubt, a very sensitive issue. I welcome that we all have a conscience vote in this House in relation to this bill. I believe it has been steered remarkably well by the Premier to ensure that all of the information that we require to exercise our vote in this House today has been given and has been open and transparent.

I have read a few reports in this House in the many years that I have been a member of parliament and I can honestly say that the Queensland Law Reform Commission report was remarkable in its detail and in the manner in which it was written and expressed. It was a very reasoned, balanced report and probably one of the best that I have read in a long time and hence why we are here today debating this bill.

I also want to thank Judi and Sam in my electorate office. Many members have spoken about some of the material that we have received in our offices. I want to thank them for their patience, dealing sensitively with all of the information that came through the door and also the manner in which they dealt with constituents. I want to thank everyone for informing me via any way they wanted to in relation to their views.

I have known about this issue for many, many years. I have been an advocate and pro choice for many years. I have heard all sides in relation to this debate. My way of thinking in relation to this is that the laws that we currently have in the Criminal Code made in the late 1800s or 1899 are simply archaic and need to change. They were made at a time when women did not even have the vote. They were made in a time when there were no women in this parliament. They were made at a time when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders did not even have a vote in this House. They were made at a time when we had no electricity. In fact, Toowoomba got electricity in 1905, Warwick in 1912 and Ipswich in 1917. They were made at a time when there were no planes or cars.

Today we live in a fundamentally different world. We now live in a global, technologically based world with different social circumstances. It is a completely different world to the one in which these laws were made. I believe that as legislators in this House it is upon us to ensure that we have laws that are relevant, up to date, modern and express exactly the rights of our citizens in this state.

The reality is that abortions do happen. I join with the member for Noosa in saying that the fact that I am supporting this bill does not mean that I am pro women having abortion or against women having abortion. I am very supportive and I will always support their right to choose in a modern environment, in an environment that is supportive and in an environment that is without fear, stigma or

uncertainty—no matter where that comes from, whether that fear comes from within their household, from their partner, from their peers or from people they do not even know.

We need to remove the stigma and the uncertainty around a decision which we know is never taken lightly—and to suggest that it is, I agree, is offensive to women and to the women who take this course of action. It should be done in an environment of choice; in an environment that is supportive, with information that they are able to access when they believe they need to access it; and in an environment where there is no uncertainty around their actions. That is our job in this House: to make these laws clear about exactly where these women stand, without fear and stigma.

I support the hotline that the minister has implemented. I do hope that women who need to access the hotline will be given that information, as I know they will, and that if they seek that support they will be able to get it. There are women in regional or remote areas who find themselves in circumstances where they need to make these decisions in an environment where maybe that support is not quite as readily available. I say to these women that we are looking forward to putting in mechanisms where they can reach out and grab that support when they need it. We live in a different world to 1899. People then would not have even imagined the world that we are living in today. They would not have imagined that we would have a premier of this state who is a woman or that we would have a cabinet with 50 per cent women. We need to ensure through modern technology that that support is available to women.

I support the safe zone. It is hard enough to make that decision and walk through the door without the stigma and fear of people making them feel like second-class citizens. It is concerning that these archaic laws made many young women have children. If we talk about trauma in the decisions that women have to make every day, imagine the trauma when many of them were stigmatised as single mothers or welfare dependents. Indeed, many organisations who thought they were doing the right thing made these women have their children and then ripped those babies from their arms and adopted them out, often without the woman's knowledge. There are stories of this. There are books that have been written. There are movies that have been made. If you want people to live with trauma for the rest of their lives, do that to a young woman without her knowledge and that is what we are facing. Surely we live in a society today where we do not condone that. Surely we live in a society today where women are free to make informed choices, with all of the information made readily available by the government.

Here today we have a duty and an historic opportunity to finally remove the criminality around this issue. These women are not criminals, nor will they ever be. You may have a belief that no-one should be able to have an abortion and I respect that belief. At the end of the day, if a woman decides that that is in the best interests of herself, her family and her situation—whatever it may be—she should be able to make that decision free of any harassment, stigma and fear and without criminality hanging over her head.

It is a modern world. We live in a global world. We live in a technological world, as I have said. We have a duty in this House to make history and remove the criminal aspect of this from the Criminal Code. It should never have been there. I do not accept for one minute that by doing that we are going to have women lining up to have abortions. That is disrespectful and it is not a considered response to this issue.

It was the same when we decriminalised homosexuality, and I did not see everybody all of a sudden becoming a homosexual. It is absolutely ridiculous to suggest that removing abortion from the Criminal Code would in any way increase its incidence. The reality is that in Victoria that has not occurred; the numbers have not increased. Let us get into the modern world. Let us make history today. I commend the bill to the House.