




Speech By  
**Jarrold Bleijie**

**MEMBER FOR KAWANA**

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Record of Proceedings, 17 October 2018

### **TERMINATION OF PREGNANCY BILL**

 **Mr BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (3.09 pm): Mr Deputy Speaker, I do not support this bill. I do not support abortions in the state of Queensland. I do not support abortions on demand. I certainly do not support full-term abortions for social reasons, which this bill allows. This is not a health issue. If it were a health issue, members in this place would be considering the health of a baby who could be subject to a nine-month full-term termination because of a social reason that may occur during a pregnancy—not only a social reason that may occur during a pregnancy but a social reason that may occur in the future. In this bill, mothers and fathers can take into consideration social reasons that may occur in the future for getting an abortion up to full term: a nine-month baby.

Members in this place have said that this is modernising Queensland laws. I say to members in this chamber that killing a baby in 1918 is no different to killing a baby in 2018. There is no difference. There are some in this place who will speak up for the children, and I am one of them. I am going to speak up for the kids who do not have a voice. There is choice available in the state of Queensland. There is choice available if you do not want to have a baby. There are options available for not getting pregnant. There are options available to prevent pregnancies. There are choices available, but voting on a law that would allow a mother and a father to terminate—to kill—a baby, a child with a beating heart up to nine months is something that I would never, ever vote for. Members have said that this is an historic day and it will be forever recorded in time. Yes, it is: it will be. The way that I vote will always be recorded in time.

Supporters of this bill have said that it is about the decriminalisation of abortion. I do not support the decriminalisation of abortion in Queensland. I think it sets a deterrent for those who wish—or those who are under pressure—to have an abortion in the state of Queensland. If keeping it in the Criminal Code stops one baby from being aborted, then I think that is good because that is one more child that we have in the state of Queensland who could be a firefighter, police officer, member of parliament, lawyer, plumber or whatever.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Kelly): Pause the clock. There is too much audible noise. If you are having conversations, please take them outside. The debate is to be conducted with full respect, and I would ask that the member be heard with that respect.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Rather than having more modernised laws to deal with abortion and the termination of pregnancies we should be putting more money into supporting mothers and fathers who have unexpected pregnancies. We should be providing more opportunities and resources to groups like STEMM, which is on the Sunshine Coast. I want to thank Jacqui and the team at STEMM at Burnside State High School. The STEMM program supports teenagers with education, mothering and mentoring. A member in this place earlier spoke about young women having children and how they may end up being welfare dependent or single mothers. That is not necessarily so if the state can help and the community helps these people.

We do not want to get into the situation where, just because someone may not be able to financially raise a child, this bill says, 'It's okay, that is a social reason. We are going to make it easier for you to abort that child.' We need programs and more resources like the STEMM program, which helps educate mothers. They say that if you educate a mother, you educate a family. I have been to the graduating ceremonies of these young mums. These are pregnant teenagers who could take an easy way out under this bill and terminate their pregnancy. Their life would probably be a lot easier than being a 15- or 16-year-old mum, but this program keeps them in school. It gets them an education and it helps them. I have been to their graduation ceremony and I have seen the mums holding their babies. They have gone off to get jobs or a university degree—one became a nurse—and they have kept their babies. Those babies are going to have terrific lives because their mums received the support they needed. That is why I say if there is any deterrent for having abortions we should keep it, and that is why I do not support any changes in Queensland.

I have been a member of parliament for nearly 10 years. I have never publicly said this, but my wife Sally and I were rock and roll dance partners. Sally was 15 and I was a couple of years older. Sally fell pregnant at 17, which came as a big surprise to our families because we both kept telling them that we did not believe in sex before marriage. There was a lot of concern that a 17-year-old became pregnant and there was a lot of explaining to do. We did not tell anyone for three months—not my parents and not Sally's parents—because we were scared. I was a couple of years older than Sally, and she was 17. We did not tell anyone. We were scared of what people might think. I remember quite vividly that for three months every morning Sally had terrible morning sickness. When I woke in the morning I would go into the bathroom where she would be dry-retching, and I would cough to cover up the dry-retch sounds so we did not give away the fact that she was pregnant. When the lump showed, we had to tell people.

This was back in 2002. One thing that I have never spoken about is when Sally and I did the pregnancy test. She was not well and we thought, 'Oh dear, something's up.' I remember saying to Sally, who was 17, 'What are we going to do?' I was only 18 or 19 at the time and I guessed that if young families did not want a baby or there were issues, then there would be options available. I recall saying to my girlfriend Sally at the time, 'What are we going to do?' Less than a millisecond later Sally looked me in the eyes and said, 'We are keeping this baby.' Nothing crossed Sally's mind other than keeping this baby. I wish that I had been as strong then as my 17-year-old girlfriend was.

We now have Taylor, who is 15 years of age. She is a beautiful girl who is going through that teenage period. I am not going to hide the fact that Taylor and I butt heads a lot, as fathers do with their teenage daughters. The scary thing is that she now has a 17-year-old boyfriend, and it is bringing back terrible memories for my wife and me. My daughter is sufficiently more educated in these matters than my wife and I were at the time, thank God. She is a beautiful girl, and if my wife had been as weak as I was at the time we may not have Taylor. If we had made that decision I would not have been able to live with myself. We now have a beautiful teenage daughter who is going to go on and do amazing things in this world. I might add that our families gave us an incredible amount of support. We had nothing to fear because of the support we got from our families when we eventually got the courage to tell them. We now have another two beautiful children, Madison and Jasper. Back when Taylor was in the womb her mother spoke very strongly for her. We made the call that we were going to keep Taylor, and I am so incredibly grateful that we did.

That is why I cannot support any modernisation—if that is what people call it—of abortion laws in Queensland. Every child in an unplanned pregnancy has the right to be born and has the right to fulfil destiny, whatever that may be for that individual child. Today I speak for the children without voices. Today I choose life, and my vote will reflect that.