




Speech By
Jennifer Howard

MEMBER FOR IPSWICH

Record of Proceedings, 13 June 2018

BIRTHS, DEATHS AND MARRIAGES REGISTRATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms HOWARD** (Ipswich—ALP) (6.23 pm): I rise to speak to the Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Amendment Bill. The amendments in the bill ensure that our laws support the equal rights of sex and gender diverse Queenslanders. The Palaszczuk government is committed to supporting the legal rights of all Queenslanders, no matter who they are. Last year, the passage of the Commonwealth marriage equality bill opened the way to amending Queensland's births, deaths and marriages legislation. It is a necessary and important measure that will remove discrimination and guarantee that all gender diverse Queenslanders can enjoy the same marriage rights and legal recognition of identity as do all other Queenslanders.

Through this bill we propose to remove the restriction that prevents married individuals noting their reassignment on the register of births or the adopted children register. No longer will applicants have to be married to have their reassigned gender noted on the births register or the adopted children register. This will bring Queensland law into line with Commonwealth marriage law.

Last year, with the passage of the marriage equality bill, the Sex Discrimination Act was also amended to repeal the exemption in Commonwealth and anti-discrimination law that allowed us to refuse to alter a married person's gender on the official record. Currently, a married person who has undergone sexual reassignment surgery must first divorce their partner in order to have their reassigned gender noted. With the passing of the Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Amendment Bill, a gender diverse Queenslanders who is married will no longer have to divorce their partner in order to note their reassigned gender in the official record.

I commend the Palaszczuk government and the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, Yvette D'Ath, for listening to Queenslanders who have been significantly affected by the discriminatory sections in the current births, deaths and marriages legislation. Those people have told us that they want these discriminatory sections removed by 9 December 2018, which is the date the amendments to the Commonwealth Sex Discrimination Act come into effect. We will deliver on that. I am pleased to see that our government and the Department of Justice and Attorney-General are working with the public to review the Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act.

This bill, which amends section 22 of the act, was instigated by the release for community consultation of the first of three public discussion papers. The right to officially recognise sex and gender is necessary for a person's sense of selfhood and identity. The current restriction is discriminatory and causes untold anguish to gender diverse individuals who are faced with the distressing choice of choosing between their marriage and legal recognition of their gender identity. From the outcome of the marriage equality bill, which was passed last year, we know that community attitudes have evolved and our laws must keep up with what the community expects and wants. Although there is still a lot to do in terms of fighting discrimination, as a society we have come a long way and many of us now expect that gender diverse people ought to have equal rights. Many gender diverse people also expect the same.

Unfortunately, something as mundane and bureaucratic as having your sex and gender legally recognised on the state's official record has become a real cause of distress and anguish to gender diverse individuals due to out-of-date laws. In failing to legally recognise a person's gender identity, which contributes so much to a sense of identity and selfhood, we are denying them dignity and full recognition as a human being with equal rights. This bill helps us to achieve a fairer and more inclusive Queensland, where the legal rights of everybody are recognised in law.

Removing discrimination from our laws is fundamentally crucial for the state of Queensland. To this end, I am pleased to support the Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Amendment Bill. Once again, I commend the Premier and the minister for their work to make sure that all sex and gender diverse Queenslanders can now enjoy the same and equal rights as other Queenslanders and have their identity and selfhood legally recognised and respected.