




Speech By  
**Nikki Boyd**

**MEMBER FOR PINE RIVERS**

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### **TERMINATION OF PREGNANCY BILL**

 **Ms BOYD** (Pine Rivers—ALP) (12.46 pm): Many people my age in Queensland do not have a practical understanding that it is a criminal offence for a person in Queensland to terminate their pregnancy. It is a very distinct memory for me when I realised that termination of pregnancy is a crime in Queensland. I was a teenager with an assignment to complete on a topic of my choice and free reign in a library. It was shocking to discover that what I thought was a fundamental choice—a freedom that I thought I had—was not enshrined and protected but a loophole. I was then and I remain now appalled by this situation, and 20 years later I am determined more than ever to be part of repairing this oversight in our state's legal framework.

Our judges have been several decades ahead of this parliament in realising community expectations and it is time for us to catch up. Access to safe, regulated, high-quality abortion services is a significant women's health issue. We must entrust women with the autonomy to make one of the most important decisions they will ever make—when they will have children. Our legislation evolves and changes with the society that it is designed to govern.

This legislation, now 119 years old, is in no way reflective of modern medical practice, representative of us as a free society or realistic in the age that we live in today. In England in 1899 Queen Victoria aged 80 was in the 62nd year of her reign. The Bore War commenced and the first successful transmission of a radio signal occurred across the English Channel. At that time women were not entrusted to vote, to hold public office or to build an autonomous professional career. These old laws have long fallen out of favour as we embrace modernity and so now we must embrace women of our state having agency over their own bodies.

The current criminalisation presents as a serious health challenge for Queensland women. Uncertainty and deep stigma exists for both women and health practitioners. This legislation provides for safe, accessible and timely health services for women and a clear, reliable framework for medical practitioners. I have read every submission made and attended every public hearing through this committee process. After the Premier's pleas for a respectful debate, it was both sad and sickening to see the vile images, extremist language and inaccuracies submitted to this process, presented to members' offices and circulated in the wider community.

Throughout the committee's inquiry during the last parliament I was a woman who had just had a miscarriage. I have faced this process as a pregnant woman. I can assure those few on the other side of this debate that the foul vitriol that has been sent to my office has done nothing but strengthened my resolve to create a better environment for all Queensland women. We need a Queensland where women cannot be harassed, intimidated and abused outside health facilities, one with much less stigma, judgement and aggression. It has provided me with a deep appreciation for the resolve and commitment of the health practitioners and staff working in this space. One should not be subjected to abuse in their workplaces.

Many of us in this place have experienced the abuse of the extreme fringe firsthand. It is part of our job and I am sure we are all accustomed to it. However, health practitioners and those accessing their services are not policymakers and this experience could be considered intimidation. Workers and patients must have rights, and I defend their right to go about their work and seek medical assistance free from abuse and intimidation.

To our health practitioners I say: thank you for the work that you have done in the face of adversity. To my own staff I want to say: thank you for the many times you have shielded me from the abhorrent material, abusive calls and unacceptable behaviour of the extreme fringe in this debate. I also commend the bravery of the women who appeared before the committee speaking of their own personal circumstances, often tragic circumstances in their pregnancies. To Ashleigh, Zena and Melanie, I say you are inspiring and amazing and I am in total awe of your strength. These cases demonstrate that every woman's journey is different and unique. Above all else, it is their own journey and it should be theirs to determine.

Our society expects a basic set of freedoms. The most fundamental of these relate to our health care, our property and our families. We expect our parliament to champion these freedoms, so I am proud to support the removal of yet another ancient restriction and enshrine in our state's laws a well overdue freedom.