




Speech By
Rob Molhoek

MEMBER FOR SOUTHPORT

Record of Proceedings, 17 October 2018

TERMINATION OF PREGNANCY BILL

 **Mr MOLHOEK** (Southport—LNP) (3.20 pm): I rise to speak to the Termination of Pregnancy Bill 2018. Like the member for Bonney, I chose to go to my community and raise the topic for discussion. Just a few weeks ago I posed some questions to a room of about a hundred local business and community leaders. I suggested that they pretend for a moment that they were all elected members of parliament and I asked them to vote as we vote—very publicly. You cannot hide your vote in the House; everybody knows what you think.

The first question I posed was: do you think abortion should be decriminalised in Queensland? Almost every hand, bar two, went up to indicate that absolutely it should be decriminalised. I thought, 'Okay, let's go a little further with this.' As we all know, the challenge with any legislation is always in the detail. The next question I posed was: at what stage is it reasonable to terminate a pregnancy? How many of you think that at six weeks it is okay? Probably 70 per cent of the hands in the room went up. Then I posed the question: what about at 13 weeks? The crowd started to thin. It dropped to about 50 per cent of the room. Then I posed the question: what about at 22 weeks—mid term? Then the hands started to disappear pretty rapidly. Then we had some discussion around the issue of late-term abortion. We talked about some of the practices in other parts of the world and the stories we have heard from Victoria. Then I posed the question: who should make the decision? Everybody started to get pretty wobbly at that point. Then of course other issues came up for discussion—issues around genetics and catastrophic pregnancies—and then there was some fairly robust discussion around the issue of gender selection.

I wish that this was just a bill to remove termination of pregnancy from the Criminal Code, but it is not. I wish that the bill before the House simply sought to amend the Criminal Code to remove the offence provisions from the code and leave most of the practices currently in place as they are. I really do not understand why Labor have chosen to go so far.

Nor do I want to be remembered as someone who would dare to judge others. It has been my experience on many occasions in the six or so years I have been a member of parliament that many have been very quick to judge my actions, or my lack of actions, and have made all sorts of judgements around my personal life. Earlier the member for Glass House spoke about his faith as a Christian. While I would suggest that my halo is a little tarnished these days, I want to endorse his comments. My faith reminds me that it is not appropriate to judge others. The gospel that I believe in highlights the fact that we need more grace, hope, forgiveness and restoration in the world. Luke 6: 36-38 states—

'Do not judge others, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn others, or it will all come back against you. Forgive others, and you will be forgiven. Give, and you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full ...'

I absolutely believe that that as a principle is paramount, but I struggle with this legislation. In fact, I have felt incredibly sad this week as we have pondered the bill before the House. There will be no clear winner from the debate this week, regardless of how the votes go this afternoon or tomorrow. I am not a woman, but I am a dad, a son, a granddad, a brother, an uncle, a great-uncle, a great-great-uncle, and I am a person who has, I believe, sincere compassion for others. It is not my desire, in

speaking against this legislation, to in any way condemn or criticise those who make this very delicate and challenging choice in their lives.

I am also sad that this issue has been, in many respects, dumbed down so much. If it was just a simple decision to decriminalise, that would make it easy. The optics and the politics of this in the past few months have been really quite saddening. Those on the other side of the House have sought to make this an issue about whether the LNP are biased or bigoted, whether we will have a conscience vote or not. Everyone keeps talking about it being a woman's choice but nobody really wants to publicise or talk about the detail.

A lady came to my office just a week ago and said to me, 'Do you understand what the procedures are for conducting an abortion?'—or a termination of pregnancy, as we prefer to call it now. I am certainly not going to elaborate on the conversation I had with her, but I have to say that I was horrified at some of the procedures that are undertaken. I am not sure that everybody in the general public fully understands or appreciates just how invasive and horrific some of these procedures are.

The member for Kawana shared a very personal insight on the matter. I did not get my wife pregnant before marriage—I am not pretending to be any more virtuous than the member for Kawana—but I do remember when Melinda miscarried between our two sons. We had one son, David, who is now a doctor in Emerald. Unfortunately, a second pregnancy ended up with a miscarriage and subsequently a curette. That is a fairly pleasant term, I suppose, but back then it still involved a day in hospital. It involved significant bed rest. It involved not being allowed to fall pregnant for at least 12 months. I remember that at the time Melinda was quite stressed about the fact that there was even a risk that she may not be able to fall pregnant again. I simply want to remind the House that these are not simple procedures. They are traumatic and there are significant consequences that flow, both emotionally and physically. I think it would be remiss of us to treat these changes and this proposed legislation so lightly.

The member for Caloundra has foreshadowed some amendments. One of those I believe is a very sensible amendment in respect of consultation with another medical practitioner. I foreshadow that I would support that amendment. My sincere hope is that if this legislation does pass the second reading then those on the other side of the House will support what I think is a very sensible amendment from the member for Caloundra.

We heard from the member for Moggill. I go back to my earlier point: if we were just decriminalising this it would be a much simpler issue. What the member for Moggill has said repeatedly is that the current system is working and that we should have faith in the medical system, which already typically has rigorous assessment processes in place.

I am sad that I cannot support Labor's legislation in its current format. I believe that it has been poorly constructed. I am sad that it has gone so far. I simply wish that the proposal before the House had been more moderate, more tempered and just dealt with the issue of decriminalisation.

There are so many other challenges that we face in society. The sort of support that we have heard about being needed so desperately by women does not just come in the form of giving them a right to choose. It also comes in the form of better housing and better service provision. It comes in the form of cheaper electricity and real support around domestic violence and crisis housing. I think it is almost somewhat disingenuous that those on the government side of the House have not done more to address some of those social issues in light of the great concern about providing a way out through economic and social circumstances.