




Speech By
Hon. Stirling Hinchliffe

MEMBER FOR SANDGATE

Record of Proceedings, 16 October 2018

TERMINATION OF PREGNANCY BILL

 **Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE** (Sandgate—ALP) (Minister for Local Government, Minister for Racing and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (5.20 pm): I rise to place on record my support for the Termination of Pregnancy Bill 2018. I commend the Premier for her leadership on this issue, an issue that has been shirked for too long. The reference to the Queensland Law Reform Commission has ensured that a considered bill is before the House for debate. Equally, I recognise that there are strongly and sincerely held beliefs on both sides of this debate. I want to acknowledge the work of the Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee and its predecessor committee in the last parliament. In particular, I want to note and thank the member for Greenslopes for a number of informative discussions that we have had about this healthcare issue.

As this is a matter of conscience and not subject to a caucus vote, I believe it is important that I explain my position on the record so that my constituents have plain sight of my decision. During my time in public life I have consistently maintained that it is not the role of this place—the parliament—to dictate moral positions that are not broadly held across the community. There can be no doubt that the act of termination of pregnancy, something that has occurred throughout human history, is the subject of divergent moral views. I respect those in our community who find it morally repugnant; however, the reality is that this is not a view so widely held that it is justified to use the power of the state, the authority of this parliament, to enforce it.

In my electorate, I am confident that the majority of my constituents do not support the law as it currently stands. Indeed, I would suggest that most of my constituents would believe that terminations are currently legal without question. To anyone who has asked I have made it clear, since my first election in 2006, that I would support law reform if it relates to the current criminalisation of women accessing terminations and the health professionals supporting them. To me, the fact that laws regulating the access to terminations are contained within the Criminal Code is wrong and it is in desperate need of reform.

Queensland women need legislation focused on their physical and mental health, particularly focused on their personal circumstances and not dogma when facing an important life choice for themselves and their family. The current legislative arrangements fail this in every way. My challenge to those who oppose reform is: if you support the current laws, do you want to see Queensland women jailed in their thousands? While some have personally told me yes, most have not, and I am confident that very few Queenslanders think this desirable.

With law reform necessary, we are presented, thanks to my friend the Attorney-General, with a bill that reflects the recommendations of the Queensland Law Reform Commission following extensive consideration and consultation. Women and their medical professionals should not be made criminals for making a difficult decision in the interests of a woman's physical and mental health, and women facing this difficult choice should not be harassed and harangued when accessing services.

I acknowledge that this bill, if passed, will be the culmination of the hard work of many people over many years. I commend the many groups across the community who have advocated for this change for many years but especially Children by Choice. Children by Choice pioneers like Beryl Holmes must be acknowledged. I acknowledge the work of campaigners whom I have worked with over the years—campaigners like Cait Calcutt, Kate Marsh, Terri Butler and Jo Briskey, amongst others.

At this point I wish to acknowledge a former parliamentary colleague, former member for Aspley Bonny Barry, for persisting on this issue when others have shirked. I know that Bonny is watching this debate with nervous anticipation. Another nervously following this debate is my wife, Megan. As well as being my life partner and mother of our three children, Megan has been a telephone counsellor at Children by Choice, an advocate for law reform and a member of the Children by Choice management committee. She is a very pragmatic woman and this, combined with her experience, has informed Megan's strong support for this legislation. We share a view that abortion should be safe, accessible and rare. I am satisfied that this bill will lead to a better Queensland with the necessary protections in place for women and their medical practitioners. I commend the bill to the House.