




Speech By
Tim Mander

MEMBER FOR EVERTON

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TERMINATION OF PREGNANCY BILL

 **Mr MANDER** (Everton—LNP) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (12.36 pm): I stand here today to speak strongly against the Annastacia Palaszczuk government's abortion bill. This bill is one of the most significant that this House will ever debate. This is a bill that is literally about life and death. This is a bill where every member's vote will be recorded forevermore.

This bill before the parliament is flawed in many, many respects. In my opinion, it is also morally wrong. I would like to begin my argument against this bill by dispelling a couple of myths that have been promoted by those who support the passing of this bill. The first myth is that this is a woman versus man issue. It is wrong to say that all women are of the same opinion on this issue. In fact, the vast majority of people who have contacted my office both for and against this bill are women. Women who oppose this bill—women who are mothers and sisters—have as much validity as those women who support the bill, and we should remember that. Many of them recognise the unborn as human beings and they view these laws as nothing short of legal killing.

The second myth that needs to be dispelled, which has already been mentioned by the opposition leader and the shadow Attorney-General, is that safe termination of pregnancies is legal and available now. Termination is currently lawful if a health practitioner is satisfied that the continuation of a woman's pregnancy poses a serious risk to her physical or mental health. That explains why there has been literally tens of thousands of abortions in Queensland over the preceding decades without a single conviction. They are not labelled as criminals, as argued by those on the other side. Why? Because they accessed the abortion legally. Many of those opposite have constantly criticised those who are pro life for misleading statements when, in fact, this is one of the many that they propagate.

There are many things that I believe are wrong with this bill: abortion on demand up to 22 weeks gestation; abortion after 22 weeks for social reasons; no clarity around what 'consult' means with regard to getting a second opinion for late-term abortions; and no opportunity for nursing or support staff to express their conscientious objection. Unfortunately, time will allow me to address only two issues.

The first one is this: I believe, as do hundreds of thousands of Queenslanders, that a foetus in a womb is a baby. It is a human being. This is not a religious view; this is a scientific fact. Because of this, it is just wrong in my opinion to allow a perfectly healthy baby to be killed on demand up to 22 weeks gestation. Allowing this to occur contradicts the current laws and practices of this state in so many different ways. Only two months ago a violent man named Brock Wall murdered his pregnant partner on the Gold Coast. Wall was convicted of murder of not one person but two people. The courts recognised that the 10-week foetus in the womb of this pregnant woman was a human being and, therefore, the murderer of the mother should also be charged with the murder of the baby in her womb.

I have been written to by many constituents about this issue. On this issue I want to read a letter I received from one of my constituents which states—

About 10 years ago, my wife and I were in a car accident when she was 14 weeks pregnant. She was given an ultrasound to see if the baby was OK, and she was—in fact she was playing with the umbilical cord. Our daughter was obviously a living baby, and to a fair observer even at that age deserves the recognition of personhood in the law ...

The law of this country allows in other ways the recognition of fetuses in the womb. In the state of Queensland a stillborn baby born after 20 weeks requires both a birth certificate and a death certificate. The state recognises a baby at 20 weeks is a human being that deserves a fitting burial. This Palaszczuk government bill allows abortion up to 22 weeks. How can one reconcile this obvious contradiction? Laws are wrong when they contradict other laws, and I believe laws are wrong when they do not recognise that a foetus in the womb of a woman is a human and should be treated as, and have the same rights of, any other human being that has left the womb.

The second point I want to raise is about protecting women. There are no protections in this bill for women who experience reproductive coercion. The Palaszczuk government, with bipartisan support from the opposition, quite rightly has implemented many policies to tackle domestic violence, but despite all those efforts a form of domestic violence that the Palaszczuk government is ignoring in this bill is those women who are threatened or coerced into having an abortion right up to birth. I will read another email from a constituent which states—

I have experienced the dire results of an abortion on a family member. She was forced to have an abortion by an ex boyfriend, but told doctors she was doing it of her own free will. She has since told me it was not the case and he threatened to push her downstairs so she would lose the baby if she did not proceed. To this day, she wonders if that was the little girl she has always longed for ...

but never had. There are thousands of vulnerable women in this situation every day, and this government's words about domestic violence mean nothing when there is nothing in this bill protecting vulnerable women against threats and coercion to abort their baby.

Through this debate we will hear many speakers say that this is the hardest decision a woman has to make; that there is incredible anguish in making a decision as to whether to terminate their pregnancy. For those couples whose baby in the womb has abnormalities so severe, I can totally understand that anguish. However, the vast majority of abortions in the past and in the future will be on completely healthy babies so I ask: why is there anguish to terminate a pregnancy in this situation? If you do not believe that this foetus is a human and only a lump of lifeless tissue, surely any termination is just a clinical procedure, an unemotional visit to a doctor like getting your appendix out—but, no, there is anguish, there is heartache, there is lifelong guilt, there is bitterness because innately a woman knows that deep down in her body is a baby and she is terminating the life of that baby.

I also support this bill, as the shadow Attorney-General has mentioned, because this is the policy of the LNP. When I came into the LNP, if this were not our policy I could not have committed to the party, and so I also want to honour those thousands of members.

I now finish with a personal plea to the Premier, Anastacia Palaszczuk. Premier, is this the bill and legacy that you want to be remembered by—that perfectly healthy babies safe in the womb of their mother yet to see the light of day can be terminated for no medical reason whatsoever? Our society is better than this, and I ask each and every member to search their conscience and remember that your vote will be recorded in the annals of Queensland history.

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Correction to Record of Proceedings



Mr MANDER (Everton—LNP) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (12.51 pm): I rise on a matter of privilege suddenly arising. During the delivery of my speech I inadvertently said that I support the bill. I meant to say that I support the shadow Attorney-General's position on LNP policy. I rise to correct the record. Obviously I am against the bill.