



Speech By  
**Hon. Yvette D'Ath**


**MEMBER FOR REDCLIFFE**

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## **MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

### **Marriage**

 **Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (9.49 am): I rise with the permission of some very special people in the gallery today to inform the House of an historic event in my portfolio and, more importantly, an historic moment for Queensland and for Australia. I am honoured to reveal today that on 15 December last year, despite what members may have seen reported in the media, Australia's first same-sex marriage was actually held in Queensland. At the time it was not the couple's wish to tell their story, but all involved now want the world to know. This marriage between two extraordinary women, Jo Grant and Jill Kindt, was allowed to proceed without the 30-day waiting period because Jo was terminally ill with a rare cancer.

Jo passed away last month. She is survived by her mother, Sandra, and her father, Paul, and by Jill, the woman Sandra and Paul proudly call daughter-in-law and Jo lovingly called wife. Today Jill, Jo's parents and also Kari, a celebrant, are all here joining us and want us to share the kindness and dedication of strangers that made this event possible. This is ultimately a love story of the deep bond between Jo and Jill and the will of the Australian people to legally recognise that bond. This is also an inspiring story of the extraordinary lengths that our Births, Deaths and Marriages staff went to in order to make this historic marriage happen before time ran out. It is a story of hope that reframes Queensland as a modern, trailblazing state which recognises equal rights and the most fundamental principle that love is love.

As we know, thanks to a national vote on 9 December, marriage equality became law in Australia. However, the first wedding could not be legally held for another month, unless the registrar ruled exceptional circumstances and waived the 30-day waiting period. In Jo's case, those circumstances were devastating: she was receiving palliative care after a battle with a rare cancer. Jill, as ever, was by her side. They had been together for eight years and had held a commitment ceremony in 2013 but very much wanted to get married, desperately aware that Jo's time was running out. Jo had already defied doctors' expectations.

A marriage necessarily involves quite an amount of paperwork and preparation, all of which takes time, which Jo and Jill did not have. However, I am proud to report today that, thanks to the extraordinary staff at Births, Deaths and Marriages going the extra mile, Jo and Jill were approved, married and registered all in one day, and, yes, they were the first in Australia to do so.

The marriage ceremony took place in the couple's beautiful Coolum Beach garden as their family and friends watched on, a community of strangers pulling together to make this marriage happen in time. Then the extraordinary staff at Births, Deaths and Marriages went one step further. Determined to deliver the marriage certificates immediately, they met the celebrant, Kari, halfway between Brisbane and the northern beaches, pulling over at a roadside servo to deliver the precious paperwork, and we have photo evidence of that.

The photos of their wedding day are very special, as are all of ours. Jo was very frail, but you see the love between these two people. In one shot, Jo's arms were raised triumphantly as she and Jill laugh. Jo's mum, Sandra, believes the marriage renewed Jo's spirit, keeping her alive long enough to have one last Christmas with her family. Jo passed away on 30 January. We tend to focus on marriage as a public declaration of love, as a day of romance, but it is, of course, a legal contract. In the dark days before and after Jo's death, that hard-won marriage certificate cleared legal hurdles for Jill and provided access and permissions that might have otherwise been denied.

Jo and Jill were one of 159 same-sex couples who have been married in Queensland since the marriage equality laws were passed. Another 70 have already booked in with the registry to marry before the end of the year. Now that we have marriage equality, the time is right to examine whether Queensland's life event registration services meet changing community expectations and the needs of LGBTI Queenslanders. Today I am releasing a discussion paper exploring what additional improvements could be made to the legal recognition of Queensland LGBTI people and their families.

There are many people in the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex community who feel that current legislation does not adequately reflect or capture the true fabric of all Queensland families. Later today I will detail some of the specific changes that are required. As a matter of priority, later today I will introduce to the House amendments to the BDMR Act, which currently unfairly requires a person to divorce their partner if they have a gender reassignment. These changes are important steps in ensuring all people's sex and gender are respected and formally recognised in Queensland. Jo and Jill's story should remind all of us of the need to celebrate those changes in the name of love.