




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MANSFIELD

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HUMAN RIGHTS BILL

 **Ms McMILLAN** (Mansfield—ALP) (5.13 pm): Rather than rise to speak about fear and condemnation as those opposite do on a regular basis, I rise today to make my contribution to the Human Rights Bill 2018 which is before the House. This bill stemmed from several recommendations from the 2016 Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee inquiry regarding the appropriateness and desirability of a human rights act for Queensland.

As a current member of this committee, I commend the committee's insight for realising the lack of a contextual framework to protect and enforce the rights of all Queenslanders. Currently and rightly, Australia has ratified several United Nations treaties such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the ICCPR, which covers an extensive range of human rights. The legal consequence of Australia's ratification is Australia's acceptance of the legal obligations under international law. However, treaties such as the ICCPR only become an enforceable source of individual rights and obligations when they are directly incorporated in domestic legislation.

I make particular comment on clause 27 of the Human Rights Bill which recognises an individual's right to practise their own culture. I have had experience of that on a number of occasions throughout many years. Specifically, clause 27 states that all persons with particular cultural, religious, racial and linguistic backgrounds have a right to enjoy their culture, declare and practice their religion and use their language in community with other persons of that background. As a principal I spent my career removing barriers and advocating for those children who are often condemned for using their first language either in a learning context or amongst their peers. Similarly, those students who choose to wear cultural or religious jewellery are often condemned. Today is a very significant day for many of our young people, particularly our children, who do not share our political and cultural beliefs. As a person who has been very fortunate to be educated and has a developing and sophisticated view of the world in which I live, rather than condemning them I have been in awe of our students who speak a second or perhaps even a third language.

In such a multicultural society as Australia and in my community of Mansfield it is important for us to recognise and celebrate each others' differences. As we often say on this side of the House, our difference is our strength. As a community leader I frequently attend citizenship ceremonies in my electorate, embracing the warmth, the culture and the wonderful learnings that are presented to me as a member of my multicultural community. It is very heartwarming to see how many of my constituents are proud of the introduction of the Human Rights Bill by the Palaszczuk government. In the words of the Attorney-General and member for Redcliffe, this clause, among many others included in this bill, is the next step towards the protection of the human rights of Queenslanders. This is due to the term 'compatible with human rights' being used throughout the bill as a unifying concept that is central to many provisions. As a result, this bill provides that an act, decision or statutory provision is compatible with human rights if the act, decision or provision does not limit a human right such as the right mentioned in clause 27 or limits it as reasonably justifiable as per the standard in clause 13.

An important aspect of this bill is the rebranding of the Anti-Discrimination Commission Queensland to the Human Rights Commission. The retitling and rebranding of the Anti-Discrimination Commission sets the scene and builds the culture across Queensland that the Palaszczuk government wants and is prepared to lead into the coming years. The QHRC will have important functions under the bill, including community education and awareness raising about human rights and working with public entities to assist them to ensure their services, policies, programs, procedures and practices are compatible with human rights.

Right across Queensland on a daily basis there are decisions made by our government and its employees that impact the rights of our young people and those in our communities who are most vulnerable. Many members of this House would not have experienced poverty. I have had the opportunity to lead a community that has many challenges. Until one lives within a community that is experiencing poverty, one cannot really understand the impact that the introduction of a human rights bill will have in Queensland.

I acknowledge the work of the previous committee and thank the current secretariat and Chair Peter Russo, the member for Toohey, for the great work they have done in preparing this report. I also acknowledge the vast number of community members from Mansfield who have spoken to me personally about the need for a human rights bill in Queensland. In particular, I pay tribute to the many members of the Mansfield local Labor branch who have been so passionate and had such honourable convictions towards this very important bill.

The historic introduction of the Human Rights Bill in Queensland will ensure that a strong culture of understanding, equality and tolerance is apparent across and within all that we do in government. It is a fair and compassionate bill. I am proud to stand with this progressive Palaszczuk government, which proposes contextual and legislative reforms that demand a change to the cultural context of the public sector, by aiming to place people first in all that we do. The people of Queensland have different needs, interests, dreams, attributes, abilities and capabilities. This bill is for the people of Queensland, our people.