



Speech By
Joseph Kelly

MEMBER FOR GREENSLOPES

Record of Proceedings, 27 February 2019

HUMAN RIGHTS BILL



Mr KELLY (Greenslopes—ALP) (11.57 am): Point 3 of the preamble of this bill states—

Human rights are essential in a democratic and inclusive society that respects the rule of law.

To me, that speaks volumes. In my first speech to this parliament I spoke about my commitment to democracy and I believe the commitment of every member of this House to democracy. Clearly, if we do not have human rights, we do not have democracy. I see it as my duty to support, promote, uphold and improve human rights.

Perhaps that motivation comes from the period in which I developed my political awareness. We had a world where human rights were being trampled on in places such as South Africa, Northern Ireland and the Basque Country. As a result, we saw terrible conflicts arise with utter devastation for people on all sides of those conflicts.

Closer to home, I want to acknowledge the powerful speech given yesterday by the member for Algerie about the struggle of Indigenous people in this country for land rights. That is not just a struggle for land; it is a struggle to reclaim an economy, a spirituality, language and culture.

After I started my working career I felt restrictions on my right to peacefully protest as a union member. That political awareness that I was developing at that time made me realise how important human rights are. As I took that forward into my work as a nurse and later working with adults with intellectual disabilities, I saw just how those people who are vulnerable in our society can have their human rights trounced and stepped on by governments and government agencies. That was reinforced by experiences I had travelling in Central and South America where one could see the impacts of a lack of human rights on the day-to-day quality of life for individuals. It should remind us how fragile human rights are and why bills like this are so important. We can see how easily people's rights within countries can slip as we are seeing in Venezuela at this present time.

When we look through the rights that are being enshrined in this legislation—I will not go through them all—there are some that I think are particularly important: the freedom of movement. In our lifetime the Indigenous people of this state had their freedom of movement impaired by government decisions. The freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief is a debate that is currently—

Mr Hunt interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Pugh): Order! The member for Greenslopes is not being contentious, member for Nicklin.

Mr KELLY: I agree. I am not being contentious. I would have thought these things are self-evident truth. The freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief are currently under debate in this country. As I have already said, I started my working career at a time when peaceful assembly and freedom of association were impinged upon. In fact, many of those opposite were part of a government that tried to stop people like me wearing a badge to work saying 'I am proud to be part of a union'.

An opposition member: No-one stopped you.

Mr KELLY: I take that interjection. No, nobody stopped me because I ignored those unjust and unfair laws. This bill protects the right of people to take part in public life. We should think about property rights. The Indigenous people of this country continue to fight for land rights, having not just lost their property but the attachment that that brings around spirituality, language, culture and economy. I see this as a step forward in the reconciliation process.

Finally, I want to touch on the rights that are enshrined in the bill in relation to health care. I note the member for South Brisbane's contribution around people with disabilities. Having been a nurse in both the public and the private sector, in the not-for-profit and for-profit sectors, having worked in the fields of disability, I have seen people who are vulnerable, who are incapable of advocating for themselves, struggle in their dealings with government and government agencies. This bill gives those people the capacity to have their rights protected in a way that has not occurred before. As a proud member of the Queensland Nurses and Midwives' Union I will always say that health rights are human rights.

I particularly like the fact that this bill is adopting a dialogue model. I am particularly concerned that there is a move to remove some of the elements of this bill with some foreshadowed amendments. The dialogue model amongst the three arms of government that has been proposed by this bill is important and should be absolutely and utterly maintained. As I said, I see human rights as fundamental to a functioning democracy. I see this bill as improving human rights in this state, giving protections that have not been there before, giving people the capacity to pursue those protections in an easy manner and so I commend this bill to the House.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Before I call the member for Gregory, for the benefit of the House I will read out the warnings list which is valid until lunchtime. On the list we have the member for Oodgeroo, the member for Sandgate, the member for Kawana, the member for Nanango, the member for McConnel, the member for Buderim, the member for Cooper, the member for Nicklin, the member for Chatsworth, the member for Broadwater, the member for Toowoomba South and the member for Everton. That list is valid until lunchtime so please all be on notice.