




Speech By
Kim Richards

MEMBER FOR REDLANDS

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HUMAN RIGHTS BILL

 **Ms RICHARDS** (Redlands—ALP) (12.50 pm): I rise in this House today to support the passing of the Human Rights Bill 2018. This is a historic moment in time for Queensland legislation. I just want to talk a little bit about what we have heard from the other side so far. It really is a case of, when you have nothing else, what do you do? You run a scare campaign. It is outright misleading to talk about fracturing our society, member for Gympie.

The introduction of this human rights legislation will protect vulnerable Queenslanders. It is a fundamental right that should be enjoyed by all people. It is all about our values. Human rights are standards that allow people to live with dignity, freedom, equality, justice and peace. Every person has these rights. They should be guaranteed to everyone without distinction of any kind. Human rights are essential to the development of individuals and communities, and this legislation consolidates and establishes statutory protections for certain human rights recognised under international law. The member for Macalister highlighted in her contribution, importantly, the inclusion of rights to health and education services.

I would like to congratulate the committee chair for his tireless work over many years in the human rights space. The member for Toohey has been a lifelong, passionate advocate for human rights. I would also like to honour the contribution of Minister Leeanne Enoch. It really is difficult to comprehend what her family experienced, and it speaks to the importance of this legislation.

In passing this legislation, Queensland joins Victoria and the ACT to legislate for such protections and freedoms. Again, their society is not fractured and falling apart on the back of this legislation. The submissions spoke at length to the Victorian framework, which this legislation has been drawn upon.

This bill seeks to introduce the right to recognition and equality before the law; the right to life; the right to protection from torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment; freedom from forced work; freedom of movement; freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief; freedom of expression; the right to peaceful assembly and freedom of association; the right and opportunity to take part in public life; the right to own property; the right to privacy and reputation; the protection of families and children; the right to enjoy culture; and the recognition of the distinct cultural rights of Australia's first people. The bill states that acts, decisions and statutory provisions made by the legislators in government departments should be compatible with these human rights and that any act, decision or statutory provision that does limit a human right or any other ratified declaration should only be done to the extent that it is reasonable and justifiable in the circumstances.

This inquiry saw over 150 submissions made on the legislation, demonstrating the importance of the legislation to Queenslanders. The Queensland Bar Association welcomed the legislation, stating its support for the bill and its proposed recognition of human rights. They also complimented the Queensland government for making the decision to bring the Queensland bill to the parliament.

The submission from the University of New South Wales's Dr Janina Boughey and Professor George Williams advised that the Queensland Human Rights Bill follows a similar model as the human rights legislation in the United Kingdom, New Zealand, the ACT and Victoria. Importantly, their

submission states that the bill does not seek to fundamentally alter the roles of, or relationships between, the three branches of government. What the bill does is it seeks to encourage dialogue about human rights protection between the branches and to foster a human rights culture within government. I think it is really important that this is a significant cultural change for government.

The submission went on to say that the bill builds on the successful experience of the human rights legislation. Again, it is the 'successful experience'. It is not fractured; it is not broken. It is the successful experience. Their submission went on to say that this bill is the best drafted and most effective shield of people's rights yet seen in Australia. We should be very proud of this.

The bill seeks to provide a low-cost mechanism of resolving complaints through the Human Rights Commission. We are placed here in this House to make this historic change for Queensland. It is without any doubt that a federal bill of rights would be a great thing for the people of Australia. As is often the case, it is our Palaszczuk Queensland government that leads the way. This is a bill that will be a catalyst for significant cultural change in the Queensland public sector, with fairness and people at its heart. I commend this bill to the House.