




Speech By
Tim Nicholls

MEMBER FOR CLAYFIELD

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HUMAN RIGHTS BILL

 **Mr NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (3.37 pm): The great advances in the human condition, whether in health, education, material prosperity, representative democracy, individual human liberty, defiance of dictatorships and peace and stability, and civil and political rights have almost without exception come about since the development of the Westminster system together with capitalism and free enterprise. It is a political system tracing its roots back almost 900 years with the great declaration of Magna Carta. It is important also to note that Magna Carta and the 1689 English Bill of Rights did not create any new rights. They secured rights—in the case of Magna Carta, rights that had been secured from the King; in the case of the Bill of Rights 1689, which still applies in this place, rights which secured a guarantee of the constitutional settlement of the Glorious Revolution which saw the re-establishment of rights that had been taken away by Cromwell.

It is a system that has its faults—indeed, a system that has matured and changed over the centuries. Nevertheless, it is a system that has worked and delivered so much including the end of slavery in Britain while it was still going on in the United States, which had a bill of rights; the abolition of the property qualification to vote; the enfranchisement of women, taken up early and enthusiastically here in Australia and New Zealand; the abolition of the White Australia Policy; the resistance to dictatorships and totalitarian regimes; recently, the recognition of marriage equality; and even here in Queensland the resolution of the abortion debate.

Let me be clear: this is not about whether Queenslanders or indeed Australians should enjoy the full range of civil, political, economic and other rights. Of course they do. They already do under a Westminster parliamentary democracy. To suggest otherwise—to say that we need more because we are not protecting rights when we have some of the proudest traditions of protecting and enhancing rights in the world—is both absurd and denigrating.

Let us look at Nazi Germany. They had a form of bill of rights, guaranteeing the ‘dignified existence of all people’. Let us look at Zimbabwe. There was no mention of Zimbabwe and their bill of rights or even in fact the Soviet Constitution and their appallingly named People’s Court. None of that guaranteed any of those rights.

I am conscious of the time but I must say: the separation of powers is a significant issue that has not been addressed here today. The other question is: who is clamouring for this bill? Who is asking for it to come out? Is it being discussed at the bars and clubs, at the barbecues, at the community clubs? No. Who is bringing it forward? We have the member for Toohey and his coterie of ALP supporters at the Yeronga branch. He referred to Professor George Williams. What he failed to tell the House is that Professor Williams is one of the most outspoken proponents for bills of rights, that he headed up the Victorian inquisition that, unsurprisingly, recommended it and that he now says, ‘This bill of rights is far superior.’ The Attorney refers to Stephen Keim, a well-known Labor supporter. The bill should be opposed.