




Speech By
Christopher Whiting

MEMBER FOR BANCROFT

Record of Proceedings, 13 August 2020

HEALTH LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr WHITING** (Bancroft—ALP) (4.14 pm): I rise to commend the bill to the House. I will speak on just one aspect of the bill before us today—that is, the prohibition of conversion therapies by health service providers, a provision that I fully support. Queensland is the first jurisdiction to propose such legislation, and I say that with pride.

As many speakers have said and it was certainly in the committee report as well, there is a considerable body of evidence showing that conversion therapy is harmful and does not offer clinical or therapeutic benefits. That is very clear. Even the United Nations General Assembly stated that conversion therapies have been found to be unethical, unscientific and ineffective. I will not just take their word for it; I will also take the word of people like a dear friend of mine. I have known him and loved him as my own since he was four years old. My friend is trans and identifies as queer. He supports wholeheartedly the banning of conversion therapies by health service providers. My friend has had experience with many issues surrounding gender conversion therapy, and he gave me a great insight into how his journey has been handled previously.

He went to a faith based high school and he was given religious counselling at the school when he did come out at school. He also gave me a great insight on how his journey has been handled by GPs. He found that some GPs did not give him the information on his options. He was told that they could not do anything about his gender issues and he just had to live with it. If he had got the right medical advice earlier, he said that he could have got hormones earlier and avoided a lot of the issues and problems around puberty for him. My friend said that we need to educate GPs and medical professionals and that there needs to be more respect for trans people and people's gender diversity. He said that conversion therapy is very hurtful and the fact that it still exists is horrible. He said that it does not have a place in modern medicine and that you cannot change gender identity or sexuality by talking people down. He said, 'It is not my medical issue; it is your issue of faith.'

I appeal to everyone regardless of their faith and regardless of their ideology. I appeal to everyone challenged by this because of their faith. I say to them to just love the people around you. Support them as they go on their gender identity journey. Know that it takes them an enormous amount of courage and strength to speak out and go down this path, and we should respect them and be proud of them because of that courage. The best thing we can do is to not try and change them, just love them and support them.

To my friend who will always have a corner of my heart, I just want to say that I am proud of you. I am in awe of your strength and clarity of vision. I am proud that this government is making your life and the life of your friends better and easier for you. I hope it can lessen any discrimination and pain that you may face in the future. I commend this bill to the House.