




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR TRAEGER

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ANTI-DISCRIMINATION (RIGHT TO USE GENDER-SPECIFIC LANGUAGE) AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

 **Mr KATTER** (Traeger—KAP) (5.31 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

Those who oppose this bill will say that it is not needed, that it is pre-emptive and we are boxing at shadows. Most of us intuitively would say this is a pathway that is firmly embedded in society and it is an issue that needs to be addressed now. It would certainly be my view that it needs to be addressed now. None could deny that there is a cultural shift in society, particularly in metropolitan areas where it is most prevalent, and I think it should be debated in a place like this and should be confronted.

This bill seeks to address two issues. The first is to make amendments to the Anti-Discrimination Act so that if someone like myself wanted to use traditional gender specific language and say 'he' and 'she', for example, they would be protected and would not be discriminated against for using that language. If someone politely—not even politely—asked me to use something different, I would be quite happy to do it—and I think most people would—but I should not be forced to change the primary language I have been using and brought up with for that purpose. I think there should be a tolerance and that people should be able to say, 'Why don't you call me something else.' What I am asking is for tolerance from the other side, for the other side to say, 'We would allow you to use that, Rob Katter, because we tolerate all sorts of views.' That is the essence of this bill. I would argue strongly that the basis for this is tolerance in all parts of our society.

Whilst the first part is to protect the rights of people using gender based language, it is also to protect businesses and other organisations such as sporting clubs from disadvantage in the provision of facilities and services that exclusively recognise gender as either male or female. A working example of that may be if hypothetically at some time in the future at the local sporting club someone did not want to identify as male or female and was offended that there were not facilities provided at that sporting club. That sporting club would then be subject to penalties for not providing that. We would like to, at no real cost to anyone, give them some certainty that they would be protected from that. Certainly in my electorate they could ill afford to build another toilet facility at the football ground. If they cannot afford to they should have some protection.

I was asked for evidence in relation to this issue. Last time this was brought up in the media the University of Queensland said they do not do that, they do not know where people are getting this from. It was said in this House that this is just the KAP trying to cook up a storm and there is no basis for this.

We were contacted by two university students. I have unfortunately lost the communication from one of them, but I will table the other and read it out first—

Thank you very much for planning to introduce legislation that will prohibit universities from penalising students who don't follow their language guides. As a student at UQ I have been marked down for using words like man or mankind as a synonym for humanity. These policies are anti-academic freedom and by having them in place universities are forcing students to accept all the premises of the marxist ideology that is behind them.

Tabled paper: Extract from a social media page regarding gender-specific language [1155](#).

I am not trying to say they are Marxist ideologies, but the evidence is there that someone has been discriminated against for using that language. I have browsed the guidelines of the university again today. One might say they are just guidelines, but members cannot tell me that we are not going to end up in the position in five or 10 years time—who knows how long it will take—where a person will be penalised if they do not do it. Here is an example where someone is forced to use that language. We have not debated this. There is not the social or moral mandate to enforce this. It is a good time to have this debate and bring these issues to the surface.

I am sure everyone will say this is an aggressive grab of conservatism. No, it is not. It is an appeal for tolerance towards other people expressing a different point of view and wanting to retain that primary vernacular that they are accustomed to by saying he or she. I do not think that should offend anyone. Here is the point, I might be offended if you force me to use the other language.

Ms Boyd: I'll start calling you a woman and we will see how you go.

Mr KATTER: I take that interjection. We have already descended to the lowest common denominator and we are playing the gender card. I find it interesting. I do not know what I am supposed to call the women's hospital when this progresses in the future because that will offend someone. Again I will stress that I might be offended by being forced to say something else.

I will address it again: people say we are taking this too far, we do not need to have this debate, it is just being confrontational. Tell that to Jordan Peterson in the United States. He got sacked from a university. It started a movement. Members cannot tell me that the same sorts of issues will not come to Australia. It is only a matter of time. For those reasons it is healthy to debate this now.

Already the Queensland government has committed to building awareness and education around transgender identities in schools by providing information to principals about gender-neutral school uniforms—that is fine—school camps, use of toilets and participation in sport, but you cannot tell me this is not a precursor to enforceable codes, because it will be.

The University of Queensland has policies to mark down students for language that could be considered gender exclusive even though the language is grammatically correct. It is interesting that the last time that this issue was in the media the university was saying it did not do that. That is fine. If you do have that position you are allowed to have a different point of view, but be consistent. Here we have students saying they are marked down. The guidelines and the policies are easily accessible on their website. I do not understand why you would try to take that on as an issue. If you want to have that point of view that is fine, but stand behind it and let us confront the issue maturely in the debate here and enshrine some rights for both sides of the argument.

I do not agree that it is intolerant of me to maintain language by saying 'he' and 'she' or 'his' and 'her'. That does not mean that I have to use that language; it just means that I am protected if I do use it. We had an interesting contribution from the Australian College of Nursing, which advocates protecting the rights of nurses who might inadvertently offend someone by using the wrong language. They should be given the opportunity to correct that while, in the meantime, continuing to say 'mister', 'missus', 'he' or 'her' and not having to change the norm.

At the same time, I really promote the idea that people are open to different types of language and the exploration of that, but we should not be forced to use particular language. That is the crux of my argument. We want to put that up as a proposition, to see how people would vote on it. I think that is a reasonable proposition for someone like myself who wants to retain those values and retain the ability to use such language without facing any discrimination into the future. I would like those rights protected. It behoves the government to provide those rights for everyone across both sides of the cultural divide.