




Speech By
Hon. Shannon Fentiman

MEMBER FOR WATERFORD

Record of Proceedings, 1 September 2022

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Workforce, Women

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, Minister for Women and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence) (10.35 am): Today is the first day of the Albanese government's Jobs and Skills Summit. Recent research has shown that Australia is missing out on tens of billions of dollars in economic activity because fewer women than men take part in the workforce. Access to affordable child care remains the biggest barrier impacting women's workforce participation. Queensland has the second highest participation rate of women and the smallest gap between men and women. This is why I am pleased that the new Albanese Labor government has now made childcare reform a key priority.

Ahead of the summit the ACTU has released the *Delivering equity for women at work* report, which sets out its recommendations on how Australia can address women's economic participation and what the economic benefits would be. The report's findings are staggering. Cutting workplace gender inequality in half could generate an extra \$111 billion every year in this country. This can be achieved through a number of initiatives, such as increasing paid parental leave, addressing pay and job security in the care economy and making early childhood education affordable and accessible.

The Palaszczuk government has put women's economic participation at the heart of its economic recovery and I am pleased that the new Queensland Workforce Strategy continues to note the critical role of women. Additionally, our government's Skilling Queenslanders for Work program has assisted over 22,700 women to get a job, under the new revitalised Back to Work program more than 11,400 women have gained employment and we are supporting thousands of women across Queensland into careers through our free TAFE and free apprenticeships initiatives. We also want women to be safe at work and I am pleased that the Palaszczuk government has committed to implementing the recommendations of the Respect@Work report to ensure that women can go to work free from harassment.

Today I am pleased to table the Queensland Human Rights Commission report *Building belonging: review of Queensland's Anti-Discrimination Act 1991*, alongside the Queensland government's interim response.

Tabled paper: Queensland Human Rights Commission: Report titled 'Building belonging: Review of Queensland's Anti-Discrimination Act 1991', July 2022 [1259](#).

Tabled paper: Queensland Human Rights Commission: Report titled 'Building belonging: Review of Queensland's Anti-Discrimination Act 1991', July 2022, interim government response [1260](#).

It has been over 30 years since the Goss government introduced Queensland's Anti-Discrimination Act. While at the time the legislation was groundbreaking, our society is now a different place and that is why I asked the commission to undertake a review of our anti-discrimination framework to ensure that it is modern, efficient and robust. At its centre, the report recommends strengthening laws to further prevent sexual discrimination and sexual harassment, particularly in the

workplace. This includes creating legal obligations on employers and organisations to actively take reasonable and proportionate steps to eliminate discrimination and sexual harassment as far as possible. Introducing a positive duty upon employers to take reasonable measures to better protect workers was also a key recommendation of the Respect@Work report.

The commission's report further recommends that victims of domestic and family violence are further protected from discrimination, such as when applying for a rental property or applying for a job. Importantly, the report recommends strengthening protections for the LGBTI+ community. The actions of Citipointe Christian College at the start of the year highlighted the importance of having specific protections for students and staff at our schools. This report recommends reforms that will mean our students and staff feel safe in religious schools while still protecting religious freedoms.

I place on the record my sincere thanks to the commission for its comprehensive, consultative, inclusive and evidence based review. I also thank the stakeholders and members of the public who shared their personal stories with the commission. It is critical that any reform in this area is informed by the views and experiences of those who have suffered from discrimination and sexual harassment, and that we hear their voices. The commission's report gives us the opportunity to do just that: to build a Queensland where everyone belongs, where all Queenslanders are respected and where all individuals are offered protections from discrimination and sexual harassment. The Palaszczuk government will consider all of the 122 recommendations of the commission's report and we welcome the opportunity it offers to improve ways to build a better Queensland.