




Speech By
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BIRTHS, DEATHS AND MARRIAGES REGISTRATION BILL

 **Dr MacMAHON** (South Brisbane—Grn) (4.36 pm): So many Queenslanders have fought for the recognition of trans people, intersex people and rainbow families in our births, deaths and marriages certificates laws. It is a privilege to stand here on their behalf to welcome the passage of a new Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act. Thank you and congratulations to the LGBTIQ+ community and those who have stood with them in the fight for documentation rights and the rights for every person to be legally recognised as who they are. Those of us who are not intersex or trans, those of us who feel at home in the gender roles assigned to us at birth and those of us whose families would be considered pretty typical already enjoy these rights, but not all Queenslanders do. Homophobia and transphobia are scourges that need to be fiercely erased from the face of the planet. I have seen up close in someone I was very close to the depths of anguish that come from not being able to live a life that is fully your own, not being able to fully realise your most authentic self, living in fear and denying your own real identity in sexuality. People suffer needlessly for years from this kind of pain and, to be frank, people die from this kind of pain. I hope that this bill is one more small step towards a world where no-one has to go through this kind of anguish.

Many Queenslanders that I speak with want the same things for themselves and their families— a safe place to call home, time with family and friends, a safe climate, a living wage, meaningful work or opportunities to take part in their communities and to feel safe and included, and a sense of belonging in our homes, communities, schools and workplaces. It should be our job in this place to fight for these things: to fight for the right to education, employment, health care; to fight for safe communities free from violence and discrimination; and to fight for everyone, regardless of gender, ethnicity, sexuality, disability or income, to be able to live full, dignified lives. It is worth remembering that the fight for legal rights is not something new. In living memory First Nations people were not counted as legally human and could not vote. In my grandmother's generation women had to get permission from their husbands to work or have bank accounts. Up until a few years ago, queer people could not marry. We look back on these indignities now with horror, but at the time the expansion of rights that the majority took for granted to those who had historically been denied them were fiercely contested by reactionaries and those who benefit from everyday people being divided.

The moral panic, the fearmongering, the paranoid warnings of those who oppose these changes never eventuated. We will look back on the changes in this bill and feel horror that there was ever a time when people could not make sure their documents and ID reflected their true selves. It is sad and, frankly, revolting that there are a small paranoid few, including people prepared to stand alongside Neo-Nazis, who seek to deny others the right to a life of dignity. Rather than going after the real criminals in this country, the fossil fuel corporations, the real estate moguls hoarding property, the companies stealing wages and jacking up the cost of basic things like food, we have seen a reactionary minority attack other ordinary people out of fear, hate and paranoia. The big companies exploiting people, the real estate lobby profiting off the housing crisis and the fossil fuel companies destroying the planet all benefit from a world where we are divided.

For those of us who are comfortable in the gender we were assigned at birth and raised in, we get to feel joy and a sense of gender euphoria. We get to present, dress, talk, live and love in a way that reflects who we are and we have documentation that reflects that as well. When we go to a bar or travel or apply for a job we never need to think twice about how we present ourselves and what is shown on our ID. Trans people should be able to have this sense of joy and sense of self as well.

The bill also makes important improvements to documentation for intersex people. Unlike most people, intersex people are born with genitals, chromosomes or hormones that mean they do not fit into a simplistic binary categorisation of sex. Just like every one of us, they have absolutely no say in how they were born. Because intersex people do not fit into a binary categorisation of sex, many come to a different understanding of their sex and gender than that that was decided for them at birth. Some identify as trans, some do not, but it is absurd to think that anyone else would have a better idea about who they are than intersex people themselves. Just like everyone else, they deserve documentation that is accurate to them.

The bill also makes changes that allow for documents to better reflect the make-up of families. New parents are no less loving of their children if they are trans or queer and they deserve documentation that is appropriate and accurate to them, that accurately records who they are as parents and who they are as a family. For those people who will finally be able to update their documentation to properly reflect who they are, this bill will make a significant difference.

I want to share a few stories that have been generously shared with me. Jane from Brisbane says—

Living in my early 20s and not being able to change my gender identity on documentation has put barriers in my life that has put me in positions where people in positions of authority have a reason to discriminate against me.

Security guards at a venue consistently question the authenticity of my passport or drivers licence. I have applied and interviewed for jobs and been offered employment only to be given radio silence after I send through identification. This amendment will give so many people access to a safer society with less fear of discrimination.

Elisa from Moggill says—

This bill will give me and my friends the recognition we deserve. It will mean I'm recognised as a wife if I choose to marry. It will mean I'm recognised as a woman when I die and it means I'm not going to be outed every time I start a new job or apply for rentals.

I'm lucky to have supportive parents that have supported me all my life, but not all trans people do, in fact the majority don't. This bill will mean that we will be honoured in life and in death.

Again, thank you and congratulations to those who have fought for decades for these changes. I also want to voice my support for the member for Maiwar's proposed amendments to the bill which remove fees for birth certificates and other documentation services. We know how much Queenslanders are struggling with the cost of living. Eliminating these fees will ensure that everyone who needs to can make the changes they need to their documents as quickly and as easily as possible. It is an added injustice that many trans people experience disproportionate rates of poverty and homelessness and struggle to access employment. Those who most need documentation changes will be least able to afford it and least able to navigate the bureaucratic processes of applying for a waiver of fees. It costs around \$200 to change names on these documents. These fees will effectively deny some trans people the benefits of these amendments and will create further financial barriers because without accurate documentation it is harder to get employment or apply for government benefits. I encourage the government to take up these straightforward amendments from the member for Maiwar. To our trans and intersex friends, colleagues and comrades, we see you, we love you, we need you and I hope the passage of this bill makes life a little easier, a little brighter and more joyful.