




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR NANANGO

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BIRTHS, DEATHS AND MARRIAGES REGISTRATION BILL

 **Mrs FRECKLINGTON** (Nanango—LNP) (4.00 pm): I, too, rise to contribute to the Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Bill 2022. From the outset, as my LNP colleagues have also expressed, it is important that we live in a Queensland free from discrimination, where individuals are respected and are free to live safely in all of our community. I acknowledge all of the people in the gallery today who have advocated to the government in relation to this bill. Whilst the politics of politics always gets in the way of issues—and we have heard that through some of the contributions from this chamber today—we are here debating a bill that could have unintended consequences, and that is what the submitters to the committee report have submitted. It is around the unintended consequences of a broadbrush approach and the rushed approach that the Palaszczuk government has taken in relation to this bill. We all have different lived experiences and this is a standard we must all uphold during this debate.

This bill will make key changes to the Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act legislation which originally commenced in Queensland in February 2004. This legislation underpins so many of the most important facets of our lives: the births of our children, the passing of our loved ones and the celebration of marriages for our families and friends. That is why I am not surprised that this bill has created so much discussion within all of our communities because it deals with matters that will have wide-ranging implications and possibly, as I have stated, unintended consequences for many Queenslanders.

I have received a considerable amount of correspondence from my constituents sharing their views, and I thank each and every one of them who took the time to be considerate and put pen to paper or keyboard and provide their personal feedback.

What we know is that for a bill which proposes such considerable change, the consultation time was not adequate. The consultation took place over a very short time frame; in fact, over the Christmas holidays. While the Labor government say they have been consulting for many years, the bill in its final form, as we are debating right here today, is substantially different from the one proposed in the original consultation.

The bill was introduced in the last sitting week of the year, heading into the Christmas break. Then, surprisingly for a government that believes it is open, transparent and accountable, it closed submissions on 11 January. It was not just the LNP opposition that raised concerns about this short time frame. Organisations that would otherwise support this bill also raised the issue. We are concerned some groups have felt shut out from the discussions, and while we may not always agree with stakeholders, it is important to continue to hear all sides of the debate. We know that, of the 385 submissions that were received, the majority—in fact 208 of those submissions—did not support this bill.

I turn to part 5, that part of the bill which attracted the most submissions. Clearly, it is the most controversial because it removes the current requirement of the act that a person must have undergone sexual reassignment surgery in order to note that reassignment of sex on their birth certificate. Of the 385 submissions, 338 commented on part 5, and 187 of those submissions were against the proposed amendments.

The LNP opposition also believe that the current drafting of this bill may give rise to unintended consequences and, for that reason, we cannot support the legislation in its current form, in particular in relation to the framework being proposed for young people under the age of 18.

It is clear, from around the world, the approach to children experiencing gender dysphoria is not settled. In the UK, we have seen the chaos of the last few years resulting in arguments on both sides of the debate to be aired in court and through investigations. While it has been suggested the approach in this bill does not lead to the medicalisation of children, it still allows children under 16 to make significant decisions about their future which will have cultural, medical and social impacts that we cannot minimise. We want to ensure that children, all children, are given the support to thrive in an age-appropriate framework. This approach allowing for children aged 12 to 15 to be able to apply for change without their parents' permission goes too far. Given we are still learning about how to best support children experiencing gender dysphoria, it is pre-emptive to introduce this provision to children aged between 12 and 15.

I also want to mention a mum from my electorate of Nanango who has been providing me with feedback in relation to her concerns about this bill. This mum also made a submission to the committee, and I would like to read part of that submission which shares her concerns about her own personal experience with her daughter who changed the sex on her birth certificate in Victoria. She states—

The legislation in Victoria and proposed here in Queensland allows birth certificates to be re-issued with a new 'sex'.

There is no mention that the person has changed sex from that recorded birth.

This is heart-breaking (speaking as a parent) for the parents concerned, whose names appear on the document and is factually incorrect—reverse writing of history and removing all legal trace.

While this may not be the feeling of all parents of young people who wish to alter their birth certificate, it is the experience of this mum, and we must recognise that it is important to acknowledge the concerns of all. This is what we mean when we talk about the unintended consequences of these changes.

I very quickly want to share my concerns in relation to women's rights. We have heard many contributions, including one from the other side of the chamber, trying to tell me that I am not allowed to voice concerns as a female. I did not quite understand that argument, but anyhow. Rights that we, as women, have fought so hard for, for so many generations, are now being challenged through this bill—again, an unintended consequence. It does seem contradictory that on one hand we talk so much about women's safety, yet this bill once again may introduce unintended consequences in relation to safe spaces for women such as bathrooms, single-sex schools, women's refuges, prisons and other spaces. Information presented to the committee noted a lack of evidence of predators using changes in this bill for these reasons, but I think we can all agree that these concerns should not be dismissed.