




Speech By  
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**MEMBER FOR MOUNT OMMANEY**

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## **CRIMINAL CODE (SERIOUS VILIFICATION AND HATE CRIMES) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Ms PUGH** (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (3.50 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Criminal Code (Serious Vilification and Hate Crimes) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill which makes it a serious offence to vilify someone on the basis of race, religion, sexuality, gender or gender identity. Other speakers have already spoken extensively about the committee report and the legislation itself, so I will start, as members have often noted that I do, with a story.

The week that this bill was introduced a really disturbing incident took place for my community and involved one of my beloved Centenary Stormers soccer teams at one of their away games. For context, many of the players at the Stormers—it is coming up to about half of the players now—have come to the club from a wonderful local charity called Pushing Barriers. Members of the House may be familiar with its work, but I am very proud to say that it originated in Mount Ommaney.

Pushing Barriers provides the opportunity for migrant families, specifically refugees, to play sport by helping them with fees and most importantly for a lot of these families it provides volunteers and a car for the children to get to the games using a volunteer service which is growing year on year. Of course, many of these parents do not have a car to drive their kids or they are busy with other commitments. In the case of some of the young adults they do not have their own car yet, so they cannot get to the games easily. I am pleased to say that the charity and its volunteer base have grown significantly over a relatively short period of time. As I said, the total proportion of Stormers players who are refugees has increased significantly because there are now so many volunteers willing to drive these kids. It is wonderful—it is brilliant—to have an organisation that understands the importance of helping new Queenslanders to integrate into our community through the unifying medium of sport, because sport is the great equaliser, as Queenslanders know.

When I heard this story, I was horrified. According to the account of the Stormers coach who was there that day, the opposing club—and I will not say who—called the Centenary Stormers team players all manner of vile racist names. They were abused based on their race and it was very obvious. None of the terms that were used were even remotely parliamentary and they deeply hurt the young players. As members might imagine, it caused an incident because these young players spoke out about being spoken to that way and they were not happy about it. I was contacted that day by one of the coaches of the team who was heartbroken about the disgusting behaviour that they had experienced. This legislation goes to the heart of incidents like that and says loudly and clearly that it is just not acceptable. This legislation will also protect other vulnerable groups including our trans community and other groups that are at risk of being marginalised or vilified.

I cannot protect my community from having people think these thoughts, but we can protect members of our marginalised communities from people being allowed to say them. In curtailing people from saying these hateful things, we then of course stop people from hearing them, from absorbing them and then potentially thinking that it is reasonable to say these things. I was speaking with my good friend the member for Caloundra, who is on this committee. We were reflecting on this legislation and I

was talking about how the principle of the Overton window comes into play, and that is part of why this legislation is so important. For members and people listening who might not be familiar, the Overton window is the range of policies that are politically acceptable to the mainstream population at a given time. It is also known as the window of discourse. I was reflecting, as I am sure all members of this House were, on world events this week with the tragedy that is unfolding and I know that all of our thoughts are with the people of Israel.

For me it really brought to mind the work of internationally renowned researcher Brene Brown. I am sure that there would be members of the House who are familiar with her work—I know a number of members have read her work—and in particular her observations about the dangers of dehumanising language which this legislation covers off on really beautifully. Brene covered the topic of dehumanising language in her book *Braving the Wilderness* which I read earlier this year, but I will give a brief run-down from her website because I think it really goes to the heart of why this legislation is so important. Brene writes—

David Smith, the author of *Less Than Human*, explains that dehumanization is a response to conflicting motives. We want to harm a group of people, but it goes against our wiring as members of a social species—

the human race—

to actually harm, kill, torture, or degrade other humans. Smith explains that there are very deep and natural inhibitions that prevent us from treating other people like animals, game, or dangerous predators. He writes, 'Dehumanization is a way of subverting those inhibitions.

Dehumanization is a process. I think Michelle Maiese, the chair of the philosophy department at Emmanuel College, lays it out in a way that makes sense, so I'll use some of her work here to walk us through it. Maiese defines dehumanization as 'the psychological process of demonizing the enemy, making them seem less than human and hence not worthy of humane treatment.' Dehumanizing often starts with creating an enemy image. As we take sides, lose trust, and get angrier and angrier, we not only solidify an idea of our enemy, but also start to lose our ability to listen, communicate, and practice even a modicum of empathy.

Once we see people on 'the other side' of a conflict as morally inferior and even dangerous, the conflict starts being framed as good versus evil. Maiese writes, 'Once the parties have framed the conflict in this way, their positions become more rigid. In some cases, zero-sum thinking develops as parties come to believe that they must either secure their own victory or face defeat. New goals to punish or destroy the opponent arise, and in some cases more militant leadership comes into power.

**Mr Hart:** It's a bit like the parliament, isn't it?

**Ms PUGH:** Indeed, member for Burleigh, it can sometimes sound a little bit like the parliament. I thought it was really important to frame it in that way because dehumanisation is what we are trying to prevent here, because it starts with language, as Brene says. Dehumanisation starts with language and it evolves from there, but we are trying to stop it at the start with this legislation.

It is really timely that we are debating this legislation this week with the Voice vote just days away because proponents on both sides of the debate have been exposed to dehumanising language. This is not just undignified; it is dangerous. Dehumanising those we disagree with leads to a breakdown in the social fabric, and the Voice debate sadly has been a horrific example of this. Whatever the outcome on Saturday, dignity and decorum in the debate have been damaged, and that is to the detriment of every single one of us. No-one benefits when hateful voices in a debate are elevated. I should be able to stand, as I proudly do in this House, and say that I support the Voice and anyone in my community or Australia should be able to respectfully do the same. I am so lucky that in my life I have not personally experienced many of the kinds of discrimination that this bill seeks to prevent. I am very privileged in that regard. However, from the testimonies to the committee it is crystal clear as to why this legislation is required. As I think I have outlined quite clearly, when hateful ideas are allowed to take hold in our communities, our community becomes more dangerous for everyone.

In the time I have left I want to reflect on the contribution of the former member for Stretton, our good friend Duncan Pegg—my good friend and yours, Deputy Speaker. I had the privilege of working for Duncan when he was in his first term and he would proudly tell anyone who would listen that he represented the single most multicultural electorate in the whole of Queensland and he had a fabulous array of restaurants to prove it. Duncan was a true champion for legislation protecting multicultural communities. I can remember many times when he stood in this House to call out racism when and where he saw it. I know that he would be so proud of this legislation. I commend the bill to the House.