




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR TOOHEY

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BIRTHS, DEATHS AND MARRIAGES REGISTRATION BILL

 **Mr RUSSO** (Toohey—ALP) (12.19 pm): I rise to speak to the Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Bill 2022. In its report No. 41, tabled in this assembly on 24 February 2023, the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee recommended to the assembly that the bill be passed. The bill establishes Queensland's life event registration system and commenced on 1 February 2004 based on model law that was designed to provide nationally consistent legislation across Australian states and territories. Since 2004 there have been many changes to the social, policy and operational environment that have affected the way the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages delivers its services.

The objectives of the bill are to: strengthen the legal recognition of trans and gender-diverse people; better recognise contemporary family and parenting structures; facilitate improvements in the operations of the registry; support fraud prevention and minimise misuse of the life event system; and clarify the information collection, use and sharing powers of the registrar. The bill proposes to strengthen the legal recognition of trans and gender-diverse people, and better recognise contemporary family and parenting structures. As part of its inquiry, the committee called for and received written submissions from stakeholders, was briefed by the department and heard evidence from both individuals and organisations at our private and public hearings.

Under the act as it currently stands, for same-sex parents there is no ability to record both parents as 'mother' or both parents as 'father', nor can both be referred to as 'parent'. Instead, one person may be recorded as either 'mother' or 'father' and the other person must be recorded as 'parent'. The bill proposes to facilitate the registration of multiple combinations of parental descriptors to better reflect contemporary family structures. A number of submitters supported the proposed amendment to change the parental descriptors, including the Queensland Law Society, the Queensland Human Rights Commission, Multicultural Australia and several individual submitters. Rainbow Families Queensland stated that a birth certificate reflecting a person's biological father and biological mother 'ignores the reality' that in Queensland for some children paternity is not known for various reasons. The views from stakeholders were diverse with some submitters raising concerns that the proposed parenting descriptors—being 'mother', 'father' and 'parent'—would reflect something other than biological parentage on the child's birth certificate.

Earlier this year at Brisbane's Youth Advocacy Centre I attended an event titled 'What's the Story?' The event featured Dame Quentin Bryce along with Trent Dalton and Craig Silvey. The audience heard from the speakers about creating safe spaces for transgender people. All of us here would know of Dame Quentin Bryce and most would have heard of Trent Dalton. However, for those who do not know, Craig Silvey is an acclaimed author. His third novel, *Honeybee*, which was published in 2020, was inspired by a real-life event when his brother and sister-in-law encountered a distressed transgender teen who was standing on the other side of a bridge railing. Craig's telling of the real-life encounter was both enlightening and horrifying. Craig said—

The young person confided in my sister-in-law the reasons they were there. The truth is that they were struggling with their gender identity. They had lost their support, their family and their friends. They had been kicked out of home and found themselves in an

anguished hopeless and helpless place. The police arrived and dragged them over the rail and put them in the back of an ambulance and that was that.

That was a catalyst for Craig to want to know more and to understand the challenges, the forces and the pressures that that young person, and others like them, face. Craig's research highlighted the high incidence of pressures, anxiety and self-harm reported by young vulnerable members of the trans and gender-diverse communities. He was heartbroken by the disproportionate rates of violence and devastated by the fact that almost half of young transpeople will attempt to take their lives. That was a very sobering statistic not only for Craig but also for all of us hearing his raw emotion as he spoke about the statistics and what he had found. I commend the bill to the House.