




Speech By
Shane Knuth

MEMBER FOR HILL

Record of Proceedings, 12 October 2023

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

 **Mr KNUTH** (Hill—KAP) (12.54 pm): I rise to give my contribution to the debate on the Criminal Code (Serious Vilification and Hate Crimes) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. While I understand the reasons behind the bill and believe it has been put forward with good intentions, I also passionately believe in freedom of speech. Our grandfathers and great-grandfathers fought and died for our freedoms, and when we start to weaken this right we are heading down a path of control and dictatorship. Of course, we all despise the fringe dwellers of our society and the radical views of those on the ultra extreme right and left, but, as the submission from the Queensland Council of Civil Liberties points out about freedom of speech—

The test of whether you support freedom of speech is not whether you support it for those with whom you agree, but whether you support it for those with whom you most disagree.

This is a fundamental right in our modern, free society, which is full of different views, ideals and beliefs, but our true test is supporting the rights of those we disagree with. This is what the bill attacks, regardless of whether it is well intentioned.

In South Africa, the Springboks Rugby symbol and colours were considered a symbol of hatred and white supremacy. To heal the wounds, the great Nelson Mandela, after being jailed for 27 years for challenging the white minority-led apartheid system, had to first acknowledge and address the widespread pain and division apartheid had wrought. Black South Africans wanted to destroy any symbol of the apartheid regime and high on the list was the Springbok symbol, which had been the Rugby Union team's mascot and the sport's emblem of apartheid's National Party since 1906. However, instead, Mandela sought a conciliatory strategy that would allow Afrikaners to keep their treasured emblem as a means to an end, which was bringing the nation together. Then, in 1995, the Springboks won the Rugby World Cup wearing the springbok symbol and colours, which united black and white people across the nation. This is a stark example of the symbol of hatred being tolerated and, in fact, embraced, forgiven and used to unite people with vastly different beliefs and views.

Not many people these days can tolerate hearing an opposing view or a controversial theory from others that is inconsistent with their own. Instead, we try to pass the buck by legislating and hiding behind it to oppose any views different to our own. This week's event at the Opera House should be a clear warning against this type of legislation. To the Palestinians, the Jewish symbol incites hatred in their people. However, for the Jewish people, it is a symbol of national pride, hope and inspiration. My point is: are we to outlaw the Star of David because one group of people see it as offensive and contend it incites hatred?

In this day and age of the constantly outraged, it is very easy to take the easy road and try to legislate and erode our freedom of speech and expression, rather than trust Queenslanders to think for themselves and show tolerance and acceptance of the views of others. The KAP will be opposing this bill as it is a threat to our freedom of speech and expression.