




Speech By
Hon. Shannon Fentiman

MEMBER FOR WATERFORD

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BIRTHS, DEATHS AND MARRIAGES REGISTRATION BILL

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Health, Mental Health and Ambulance Services and Minister for Women) (3.55 pm): I am so proud to rise in support of the Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Bill 2022. I am very pleased to once again be able to acknowledge the trans and gender-diverse people and their allies who are in the gallery today to see this bill pass. It was such a privilege to work with so many fantastic advocates while developing these reforms, and I look forward to continuing to work with each of them in my new portfolio of health. At the core of this bill is ensuring that Queenslanders' legal identity can match their lived identity. We know that for too many trans and gender-diverse people their identity documents can be a source of great angst. These reforms will improve the lives of so many Queenslanders and remove barriers to engaging in society as their full selves.

It was such a privilege to meet with so many community members during the development of these reforms and to hear their personal stories. I want to thank everyone who I met with, who emailed my office or who made submissions as part of the committee inquiry. To Roz, Emily, Hugo, Krissy, Joe, D'Arcy, David, Jeremy, Ymania, Jennifer, Charlie and everyone else who shared really personal reflections and stories, thank you so very much. These reforms are the result of your advocacy, and these reforms are for you. Queensland will be a better place with these changes in effect. It will be a safer, more inclusive, fuller place.

I am proud to be contributing to this debate as the first Minister for Mental Health in Queensland. We know that LGBTIQ+ people experience worse mental health outcomes than the general population, and trans and gender-diverse people experience worse outcomes again. This bill will not fix all of the complex issues that lead to mental health challenges. This bill is not a panacea. No-one is saying it will be, but it is not an exaggeration to say that this bill will help save lives. We know that gender affirmation is one of the most impactful ways to improve mental health outcomes for trans and gender-diverse people. By giving people a genuine avenue for legal affirmation without the need for medical affirmation, we will change lives.

This bill is not focused on medical transition or interventions for trans and gender-diverse people. In fact, it is about removing the need for surgery to restore trans people's bodily autonomy. While medical options are not appropriate or necessary for everyone, for some they are vital. Queensland Health is dedicated to supporting trans and gender-diverse Queenslanders in line with best practice approaches. This includes through the Queensland Children's Gender Service—a statewide service that works with young people and their families. The Queensland children's gender clinic provides life-saving health care, and I am so excited to be able to work with the team there. I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge the stakeholders who have spoken with me about a boost to resources for the gender service. I am committed to working with groups like Transcend and PFLAG to reduce wait times for young people so they can access gender-affirming care sooner.

Much has been said about what these reforms will mean for women. I want to be clear that I define a woman as someone who identifies as a woman and that the Queensland government defines a woman as someone who identifies as a woman. Despite repeated claims to the contrary, there is no evidence from any jurisdiction to suggest that women will have fewer rights or be less safe as a result of these changes. Trans people have been able to access single-sex spaces for over 20 years, and the sky has not yet fallen in. Nowhere else where similar reforms have passed has seen an increase in women experiencing violence.

In fact, the place where most women in this country experience violence is in their homes, and transwomen experience domestic violence at a far higher rate. These reforms will in no way ruin women's rights. They will not impact women's safety, but they will increase the rights and safety of our trans and gender-diverse Queenslanders.

I am beyond proud to be contributing to the debate on this bill. I want to again acknowledge all of the amazing trans and gender-diverse people and their allies who have been a part of this reform journey. From the activists and advocates to those who engaged in consultation and to those who shared their stories, thank you so much for taking a risk and putting your lives up for public scrutiny and debate.

I also want to acknowledge the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee for their consideration of the bill and working through the many submissions received during the inquiry, and the hardworking staff at the Department of Justice and Attorney-General who have been working on these reforms for many years. This bill is about improving legal recognition of and protections for LGBTIQ+ Queenslanders. Today we say to trans and gender-diverse Queenslanders right across our big state that the Palaszczuk government sees you, we hear you and we stand with you. I commend the bill to the House.