




Speech By  
**Brittany Lauga**

**MEMBER FOR KEPPEL**

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Record of Proceedings, 6 March 2024

### **HEALTH AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL (NO. 2)**

 **Ms LAUGA** (Keppel—ALP) (4.10 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Health and Other Legislation Amendment Bill (No. 2) 2023. It is Queensland Women's Week and tomorrow is International Women's Day. What better time to present this bill which represents an historic expansion to women's rights and access to health care in Queensland. I am proudly pro choice. Those in the LNP are anti choice. They do not support a woman's right to choose. The Leader of the Opposition has previously said that they do not want debates about issues such as abortion in the lead-up to the next election. We will be having those debates because the women of Queensland are terrified about the prospect of the right to choose being taken away from them.

We have heard what those opposite have said before about access to termination of pregnancy in Queensland. We know what those opposite will do to this kind of legislation if they get into government. We will see the same kinds of changes and the repeal of legislation by stealth that we are seeing in other parts of the world. That is what the women of Queensland are terrified of.

I thank our fantastic Health, Environment and Agriculture Committee and our committee chair, the member for Thuringowa, for their careful consideration of the bill. Most of all, I thank the dedicated stakeholders across Queensland for their incredible advocacy on the important issues covered in this bill and for the submissions they provided in the consultation process. The Minister for Health, Mental Health and Ambulance Services and Minister for Women has already outlined the major amendments in the bill, but I am pleased to take this opportunity to highlight our amendments to the Termination of Pregnancy Act 2018—an act of parliament that I proudly stood in this place and voted in support of to give Queensland women the right to choose and the right to have control over their own bodies.

It was our government that removed termination of pregnancy from the Criminal Code—a resounding win that gave Queensland women the right to choose for the first time in our state's history. Since then, I have been labelled a murderer. There have been trucks with my face on them driven around town accusing me of being a murderer. This is all because I voted in support of a bill that gives women the right to have control over their own bodies. We have heard from women in regional and rural communities such as Yeppoon and Rockhampton that there are unacceptable inequities in women's access to crucial reproductive health care.

**Mr Head** interjected.

**Ms LAUGA:** I stood up for women in my community. I would actually love to know what the member for Callide thinks with respect to women having control over their own bodies in Central Queensland, because when I stood up against the closure of the Marie Stopes termination of pregnancy clinic in my community, I did not see the member for Callide there. It would have been great for him to stand side-by-side with the women of Central Queensland to say, 'I support you. I back you. I support your ability to have control over your own body.' What on earth does the member for Callide know about having a baby? I would love to know what the member for Callide knows about having a baby.

As the proud representative of a regional community, I will not accept this and our government will not accept it. That is why this bill amends the Termination of Pregnancy Act 2018 and makes consequential changes to the Criminal Code.

**Mr Head** interjected.

**Ms LAUGA:** It will be interesting to see how the member for Callide votes. I hope the party does not threaten to disendorse the member for Callide after he votes in support of this bill.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Ms Bush): Order, members!

**Mr Mander** interjected.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Everton!

**Ms LAUGA:** That is why this bill amends the Termination of Pregnancy Act 2018 and makes consequential changes to the Criminal Code to allow additional health practitioners to perform medical terminations of pregnancy. Nurse practitioners, endorsed midwives and certain registered nurses and midwives with additional qualifications and training will be authorised to perform early medical terminations of pregnancy, giving greater access to care for rural and remote Queenslanders, including the women of the electorates of Keppel and Callide.

Currently in Queensland, medical practitioners—doctors—are the only health practitioners who can perform medical terminations of pregnancy using the TGA approved MS-2 Step. MS-2 Step is approved for use up to nine weeks, which gives women a limited time to decide whether they want a medical termination of pregnancy at home or close to where they live. After nine weeks gestation, they must attend a hospital or a clinic to have a termination of pregnancy. This medication has been a game changer for women in regional and remote parts of Queensland. The reality is that often women in rural, remote and regional areas need to travel long distances to access termination at a hospital or a clinic, which is a major disruption to their lives and employment. It is a financial burden that many women cannot afford. We saw the real impact of that when the Marie Stopes clinic in Rockhampton closed down and women were having to travel long distances in order to access termination of pregnancy.

Many members in this place know that travelling for health care and being admitted to hospital can be a stressful experience. That stress is undoubtedly compounded for someone travelling to seek termination of a pregnancy. I believe it is important to note that some women seeking terminations are also experiencing compounding circumstances such as domestic and family violence, financial hardship or complex health and social needs. That is why these amendments have been proposed so that as many women as possible in Queensland have access to the local, accessible and timely support they need. That is the principle that we apply to our view of health care right across the state—the best quality health care possible as close to home as possible.

This bill will authorise nurse practitioners and endorsed midwives to prescribe, give a treatment dose or administer MS-2 Step to a person who has an intra-uterine pregnancy up to 63 days gestation. It will also permit registered nurses and midwives who are authorised to work under an extended practice authority to give a treatment dose or to administer MS-2 Step. Other health practitioners including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners as well as students on clinical placements will be authorised to assist nurses and midwives who are performing medical terminations using MS-2 Step. The involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners and students recognises how critical it is to build a workforce that is skilled in providing this important health care now and into the future.

In May 2023 the Senate committee report *Ending the postcode lottery: addressing barriers to sexual, maternity and reproductive healthcare in Australia* was published. If this bill passes, Queensland will be leading the way in responding to the Senate committee's recommendation to relax the restrictive regulations on MS-2 Step by broadening the range of health practitioners qualified to prescribe the medication. This is a landmark moment for Queensland and it is a landmark moment for Queensland women. Thanks to the hard work of the committee and this government, Queensland will be a proud leader in driving reforms that expand and protect a woman's right to choose. Access to safe termination-of-pregnancy care is a human right and essential for reproductive freedom. This bill safeguards that. What is more, by enabling Queensland's wonderful nurses and midwives to deliver safe and contemporary sexual and reproductive health care to Queensland women, this bill will help deliver better health care closer to home no matter where people live. I commend the bill to the House.