




Speech By
Hon. Grace Grace

MEMBER FOR MCCONNEL

Record of Proceedings, 5 March 2024

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Gender Equality

 **Hon. G GRACE** (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for State Development and Infrastructure, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing) (9.43 am): This week is Women's Week, and it is a wonderful opportunity to reflect on the significant advancements we have made towards gender equality in Queensland, whilst acknowledging there is always more to do. This government is rightly proud we have led the nation when it comes to supporting women at work. Queensland led the nation in 2016 by passing legislation to provide the first entitlement to 10 days paid domestic and family violence leave. We also established a new portable long service leave scheme for community service workers—an industry that predominantly employs women.

Every worker should have the fundamental right to earn a living without experiencing the scourge of sexual harassment, yet regrettably many workers, especially women, continue to be subject to this abhorrent conduct. That is why in 2022 we brought in nation-leading and contemporary industrial relations protections to protect workers subject to sexual, sex or gender-based harassment in the workplace under the Industrial Relations Act. We have also improved parental leave by removing traditionally gendered divisions of parental care and giving parents more flexibility when deciding how to allocate child-care responsibility to best fit their family circumstances and needs. These reforms also provided clarification that parental leave extends to both parents for stillbirths.

When it comes to pay equity in the Public Service, we have enhanced employment security through legislating the creation of permanent employment as the default; varied all public sector awards from hours-based incremental progression to years served for part-time employees—an incredible achievement; made significant improvements to superannuation so Queensland public sector workers, including women, are able to set aside more for their retirement; and ensured the promotion of gender pay equity in the bargaining process, including the appointment of Queensland's first Special Commissioner for Equity and Diversity.

Finally, after years of inaction at a national level from the LNP, we can now support what the federal government is doing to increase wages and penalty rates for low-paid workers—the majority of whom are women—and their publication of the gender pay gaps for nearly 5,000 Australian private sector employers for the first time this week, demonstrating there is still more work to be done. The Miles government will never rest on our laurels when it comes to fighting for women's equality. I am proud of all we have achieved and I am looking forward to continuing this vital work. The women of Queensland deserve nothing less.