




Speech By
Jonty Bush

MEMBER FOR COOPER

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MOTION

Women and Girls' Health Strategy

 **Ms BUSH** (Cooper—ALP) (6.22 pm): The member for Whitsunday speaks about the importance of all women and all women's views having a role and a place in this House. That is what is so absolutely offensive about the motion passed yesterday in this place to gag every woman in this House—regardless of party, regardless of persuasion and regardless of background and view. It was an absolute shocker—something we have never seen before and something I hope we never have to see again in this House.

In March this year the Miles Labor government released a \$1 billion Women and Girls' Health Strategy after 12,000 Queensland women and girls spoke up about their needs. They told us they want action on health conditions such as endometriosis. It should not take an average of seven years for a woman to get a diagnosis for an illness that affects one in six women. The health minister tonight has said that the health needs of women are distinct and the Premier has said that he has given his minister clear KPIs, so imagine my surprise when a brief Ctrl-F search revealed that the words 'woman' or 'women' do not appear once in the charter letter for the Minister for Health. In fact, neither the Minister for Health nor the Minister for Women have KPIs for the delivery of healthcare services for women in Queensland. It turns out that the invisibility of women in health care is not just a metaphor when it comes to the LNP in Queensland.

Labor recognises the important part that Queensland has to play in this. Women are sick of hearing, 'You're just stressed', 'It's normal to have some pain', 'Perhaps you're overreacting' or 'Maybe I should speak to your husband' and then, when things go really wrong, 'Well, you should have presented sooner.' We are sick of being silenced. We are sick of being told by practitioners that severe pain is normal, that postnatal depression is the 'baby blues' and that we are being hysterical. The gender gap in health care is obvious. In Australia there is five times more funding research into erectile dysfunction, which affects 19 per cent of men, than there is into premenstrual syndrome, which affects 90 per cent of women.

I rise tonight to support the motion. I want to ask the Premier what his plans are to address this issue. We represent 50.1 per cent of Queenslanders. We are the majority. We are 47 per cent of the workforce and contribute a trillion dollars annually towards Australia's GDP. The women and girls of Queensland are watching and relying on us in this House to speak on the issues that matter to them. They want to know if they have a place in this chamber, if they will have representation in this parliament. We here are the stewards of our electorates; we represent their voices.

Yesterday our voices were silenced in an unprecedented and shameful move by the government to place a gag order on the Termination of Pregnancy Act. It should not take a gag order against the Premier's own members to protect women's rights from the assaults from this LNP government. It

should not take a motion in the House to stop women's rights from sliding backwards. It is nearly 2025 and women are exhausted from fighting for progress, so I do not want the Premier to expect us to be relieved and give him a pat on the back simply for locking in the status quo.

This government has silenced our voices to keep fighting for women's rights in this space. Will the new LNP government at least honour the commitments that we have made under the former Labor government's women's health plan? Will the government maintain our crucial mental health outreach and reproductive health throughout the regions? Will they uphold our strong laws, including the criminalisation of coercive control and affirmative consent, and maintain our government's investment in sexual and reproductive health including publicly funded termination of pregnancy?

Overnight we have learned that the health minister has axed the workforce attraction scheme to attract healthcare workers to the regions. The regional members of this government have remained absolutely silent on this. Where are the strong advocates standing up for the regions—those members who were elected on a platform—

Mr NICHOLLS: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I take personal offence and ask the member to withdraw.

Mr SPEAKER: The member has taken offence.

Ms BUSH: I withdraw. Where are the regional members who were elected on being a strong local regional champion? Where are they now? The women of Queensland are watching, and I want them to know that Labor will not stand for their voices being gagged and their healthcare needs being ignored in this place. I support the Leader of the Opposition's motion. I call on this government to move beyond the platitudes and to maintain investments in all areas of our Women and Girls' Health Strategy.