




Speech By
Hon. Nikki Boyd

MEMBER FOR PINE RIVERS

Record of Proceedings, 2 May 2024

CRIMINAL CODE (DECRIMINALISING SEX WORK) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Hon. N BOYD** (Pine Rivers—ALP) (Minister for Fire and Disaster Recovery and Minister for Corrective Services) (4.00 pm): How can you say, as the LNP has in their statement of reservation, ‘It is right sex workers are protected and their health and safety is paramount,’ and then take a position that does nothing but keep them in harm’s way? The very purpose of this legislation is to create once and for all a legal framework that is not only decriminalising sex work but also making it safe work, work that has rights and legal protections.

The member for Clayfield loves to give long speeches—very, very long and detailed speeches—to the House—

An honourable member interjected.

Ms BOYD: I take that interjection—about the history of particular issues on just about everything. One of the things that he admitted in his speech was that it was the work of this House in stamping out corruption and illegal acts that created a framework long ago that put vulnerable people, mostly women, in unimaginable working arrangements. That framework is not safe. It is not fair. It is discriminatory. It is full of prejudice and it forces vulnerable people in our state to act outside of the law to do things like make a phone call to a trusted person to let them know that they are safe while they are at work.

The Miles government wants sex work to be safe work. We want them to have increased protections. We want them to have at least the minimum standards of employment that are offered to other Queensland workers. We want to uphold their human rights. We know a couple of things about the industry that are just simply alarming. The majority of sex workers are vulnerable, they are exploited and they are subjected to violence. As victim-survivors of crime, three-quarters of sex workers will not report it. They are in unsafe environments. They do not even feel safe enough or protected enough to report that. Stonewall Medical Centre identified through a committee process that ‘a real, grave danger’ currently exists under the laws as they stand.

There needs to be a clear distinction between sex work with consenting adults and sexual exploitation to address coercion and exploitation. The QLRC found that the current legal framework undermined sex workers’ autonomy and their privacy and that the laws were highly restrictive and difficult to comply with. They stated that the laws created a two-tier industry where most sex work is either criminalised or occurred outside of the licensing system and that the existing framework contributes to stigma and discrimination and creates barriers to accessing health, safety and legal protections.

With all of this known, with all of this laid out, today the LNP come into this place and, instead of being part of a process of decriminalisation, at the end of his tedious speech—in the dying seconds of it—the member for Clayfield says that the LNP will in fact oppose the bill. The LNP instead want to see

this industry regulated, but they do not present a plan. They do not present a policy. They do not present amendments to this bill. Instead, the member for Clayfield and the rest of the LNP want to see these workers continue to languish. So much for their stated care and concern that sex workers' health and safety is 'paramount'. Sex worker businesses will be treated the same as any other business with the passing of this bill and sex workers will have the same rights as any other worker, because sex work is real work.

When it comes to the issue raised about public amenity around brothels, the committee heard from Professor Basil Donovan AO that this was a non-issue and that 'brothels are the quietest places in town. They have no traffic, and their customers are deliberately very discreet and quiet.' The QLRC did not hear any evidence that street-based sex work is prevalent or is an issue of concern around particular places such as schools, places of worship or hospitals in Queensland. I think that those points that the opposition raise as serious concerns around decriminalising sex work just do not stack up at all.

I acknowledge Respect Inc and the role they have played in this journey to decriminalisation. I met with them directly a couple of years ago. It was in a conversation with them then that I truly learnt just how complex, convoluted and unfair the laws of our state currently are. I am really proud of the work they have done—and I hope that they are proud of it too—breaking down the stigma and the discrimination that they work under in Queensland at the moment. I know that this is just a step in the journey and they will continue on with that work, along with a lot of other advocacy groups and sex workers.

In my closing remarks, I want to pay tribute to those workers who are very vulnerable in our community and have been placed in even more vulnerable situations because of the laws of our state. They were laws that ended up being passed that were never designed to be passed in the way that they were. I am pleased today to have a process under this Labor government where we have gone to the Law Reform Commission and we have set out the best way forward for this industry. Sex workers in Queensland will now have a fairer workplace and a safer workplace. I am really pleased to be part of that reform.