




Speech By
Peter Russo

MEMBER FOR TOOHEY

Record of Proceedings, 10 September 2024

RESPECT AT WORK AND OTHER MATTERS AMENDMENT BILL; CRIMINAL JUSTICE LEGISLATION (SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND OTHER MATTERS) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr RUSSO** (Toohey—ALP) (4.12 pm): I rise to speak in the cognate debate on the Respect at Work and Other Matters Amendment Bill 2024 and the Criminal Justice Legislation (Sexual Violence and Other Matters) Amendment Bill. The Community Safety and Legal Affairs Committee, in its report No. 13 of the 57th Parliament tabled in the Assembly on 2 August, has recommended to the Assembly that the Respect at Work and Other Matters Amendment Bill 2024 be passed.

The committee's task was to consider the policy to be achieved by the legislation and the application of fundamental legislative principles—that is, to consider whether the bill has sufficient regard to the rights and liberties of individuals and to the institution of parliament. The committee also examined the bill for its compatibility with human rights in accordance with the Human Rights Act.

Discrimination and vilification have no place in a free, democratic society. Unfortunately, in some instances it is still the case that vulnerable groups within our community are confronted with barriers which prevent them fully taking part in society purely because they are identifiable as members of a particular group. A robust, workable anti-discrimination framework protects such groups and provides a process for recourse in the event of any contraventions.

This bill delivers reforms to the Queensland statutory anti-discrimination scheme—contained in the Anti-Discrimination Act—to reflect recommendations from various reports and to modernise the operation of the scheme. The bill proposes to implement recommendations from the Queensland Human Rights Commission's report titled *Building belonging: review of Queensland's Anti-Discrimination Act*, particularly in respect of expanding and updating the attributes protected from discrimination under the Anti-Discrimination Act and by introducing a positive duty to eliminate all forms of unlawful discrimination, sexual harassment, vilification and other associated objectionable conduct as far as possible.

In response to the findings of the *Respect@Work: national inquiry into sexual harassment in Australian workplaces* report, prepared by the Australian Human Rights Commission, the bill includes new prohibitions of harassment on the basis of sex and subjecting a person to a work environment that is hostile on the basis of sex. These reforms are supported by an extension to the time limit for making a complaint of unlawful sex-based harassment and expansion to the powers and functions of the Queensland Human Rights Commission to investigate those complaints and systemic issues of work related sex-based harassment. I am proud to be part of a government that seeks to strengthen protections for all workers, particularly those from diverse backgrounds.

Ms Christine Castley, Chief Executive Officer of Multicultural Australia, stated at the public hearing—

We particularly support the clauses which introduce expanded and modernised protected attributes, including expanding the definition of 'race' to include immigration or migration status; the improved protections against vilification to include both an incitement and a harm-based test; and the introduction of a new positive duty to prevent discrimination before it happens.

I will now move on to the Criminal Justice Legislation (Sexual Violence and Other Matters) Amendment Bill. The Community Support and Services Committee, in its report, recommended that the bill be passed. When the bill was introduced by the Attorney-General, the Attorney stated—

This bill further reflects the government's unwavering commitment to end all forms of domestic, family and sexual violence in Queensland and to improve the experiences of women and girls across the criminal justice system.

The Attorney went on to state—

This bill gives effect to nine taskforce recommendations, eight of which were made in the second taskforce report, *Hear her voice—Report 2: Women and girls' experiences across the criminal justice system*. This report was a continuation of the work of the taskforce and examined the barriers faced by Queensland women and girls accessing the criminal justice system, both as victims and as offenders. The report examined why women and girls withdraw complaints of sexual violence at almost every stage of the criminal justice system and contemplated how we can provide greater support to these brave victim-survivors who, by seeking to bring a perpetrator of violence to justice, play an important role in keeping our community safe. The taskforce was told that women and girls who have lived experience of the criminal justice system were angry, tired and wanted change. The Miles government has heard these calls for change and this bill is a continuation on a path to improve the experiences of all victim-survivors of domestic, family and sexual violence.

I commend the bill to the House.