




Speech By
Shannon Fentiman

MEMBER FOR WATERFORD

Record of Proceedings, 11 December 2024

MOTION

Women and Girls' Health Strategy

 **Ms FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (5.41 pm): The health minister just spent more time talking about unions than he did talking about women's and girls' health. How embarrassing. How many times did he decide to tell us all in this chamber tonight that over on their side everyone is encouraged to have their say? I do not know where the member for Clayfield was yesterday, but we were all here in this chamber to bear witness to one of the most outrageous abuses of power we have ever seen in this place. Not only was it a complete insult to our democracy and the parliamentary systems we stand to uphold but it also completely disrespected the women of Queensland.

The Premier would have us believe that his action to gag the parliament was one of kindness: he was only protecting the women of Queensland. What the Premier's actions actually spell out is that he cannot trust anyone on his own team. He cannot trust anyone on his own team to stand firm on the one question he squirmed and avoided 132 times during the election campaign. He is so concerned that his own MPs would wind back women's rights that he decided to gag this entire parliament.

Does Premier David Crisafulli really believe that the women of Queensland cannot see through this? Does he really think they cannot understand the implications that this motion will have on future advancements in women's health? If for a moment we choose to humour the Premier and indulge him in the idea that his motivations were only about protecting and supporting the women and girls of Queensland, let us assess the extent of his other policies and commitments to women and girls. That is where we hit a problem. The Premier does not appear to have any policies about women's and girls' health and there is certainly nothing in the charter letters about women's and girls' health and KPIs about measuring the success of women's and girls' health initiatives.

We only need to look at their lack of policies compared to what we achieved. There was our \$1 billion investment in the Women and Girls' Health Strategy. This incredible strategy reflects the voices of 12,000 Queensland women. We know that by allowing space for these important conversations we will continue to move women forward. When you completely gag the parliament from being able to actually progress women's health and their reproductive rights, that means women can go backwards.

During the Women and Girls' Health Strategy consultation we spoke with hundreds of women and girls—people like Balveen and her daughter, Viva, who taught us about the importance of health education. 'We need to normalise conversations about our bodies and wellbeing so our girls have the right words to advocate for themselves,' they said. How can we work towards providing more and better information on women's health issues if this parliament cannot even discuss one of the most critical issues surrounding women's health in our state parliament—that is, the Termination of Pregnancy Act?

I am so proud that the Labor government passed that legislation and took abortion out of the Criminal Code as an offence against morality. That is something that most of those opposite would like to see reintroduced. We know that is the case because the Premier cannot trust them to actually continue to advance women's and girls' health.

On this side of the House we do not shy away from conversations about women's reproductive health. We are ready to address it. We have not once doubted our caucus members' personal opinions in relation to a woman's right to choose. In fact, only earlier this year we announced over \$40 million for a Termination of Pregnancy Action Plan, to boost the workforce, introduce virtual resources and provide wraparound support to those in need. These are types of progressions that are possible when we can debate the topic of termination of pregnancy and make amendments to important legislation.

What we are most concerned about is that, by not allowing any debate on the Termination of Pregnancy Act, if there are changes to health practitioners' scope of practice or there are changes in the termination drugs that can be available, the women of Queensland will miss out. That is the point. Our government, the Miles Labor government, marked the historic moment for the progression of funding and support for Queensland women. The Premier's gag order also marks an historic moment in Queensland's history but for all the wrong reasons.

(Time expired)