



Speech By
Hon. Meaghan Scanlon

MEMBER FOR GAVEN

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**FIGHTING ANTISEMITISM AND KEEPING GUNS OUT OF THE HANDS OF
TERRORISTS AND CRIMINALS AMENDMENT BILL 2026**

 **Hon. MAJ SCANLON** (Gaven—ALP) (4.29 pm): What a cluster! The LNP have spent the last three weeks saying that these laws that gave the Attorney-General the most extreme powers in the country to criminalise speech on whatever she thought was offensive were great, and now we have last-minute amendments being made that we have not even seen. The Premier was out there gloating about the fact that these were going to be nation-leading laws, so he knew—

Mrs Frecklington: They still are.

Ms SCANLON:—that they were the most extreme—and I take the interjection. They still are the most extreme laws, apparently, in the country, according to the Attorney-General.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr J Kelly): Pause the clock. I am sorry to interrupt, member for Gaven. I was taking some advice. You have used some unparliamentary language. I would ask you to withdraw.

Ms SCANLON: I withdraw.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: You can continue.

Ms SCANLON: Hasn't the division been on show? We had the Attorney-General out there saying that they were going to prescribe words by regulation and then we had the police minister out there saying—

Mrs Frecklington interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, member for Nanango!

Ms SCANLON:—that, in fact, those words were going to be banned in this House by legislation. Either he was in charge of the revolt inside the cabinet or he had no idea what the laws that he introduced actually said. Given his track record of not reading the commission of inquiry, I suspect it is the latter. It is pretty alarming that we have a minister who did not even understand what was in the bill. All week we have been hearing LNP backbenchers saying that they were going to cross the floor and vote against the Premier's gag on freedom of speech.

Government members interjected.

Ms SCANLON: I hear the laughter from those opposite. If it is not true, why are you coming in here making last-minute changes? The member for Mackay did it last week. He crossed the floor because he did not agree on the Premier's gag on abortion.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member, I will bring you back to relevance to the bill.

Ms SCANLON: Now we have, at the eleventh hour, complete changes to the bill that we have not even seen. Shadow ministers are having to debate without actually seeing the reform we are being asked to vote on.

Mrs Frecklington interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Nanango is warned.

Ms SCANLON: Then we had the most bizarre speech from the first law officer of this state, who said that they are amending their own laws to stop a future attorney-general from making or adding phrases. That is literally the point we have been making. Clearly, this was just an admission that you stuffed up, because—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Pause the clock. Member, you have used unparliamentary language. I would ask you to withdraw.

Ms SCANLON: I withdraw. As I said, we have had members of this side debating laws that are about to be completely changed at the last minute. What is so disrespectful is that we actually wrote to those opposite offering to work on these laws in a bipartisan way, and those opposite completely disregarded and trashed that offer of working in good faith. Now they want to make these last-minute changes. That just demonstrates how chaotic they are when it comes to law reform in this state.

I want to be really clear about what this bill says versus what they are now saying in the media. We have not been able to go through a calm and methodical approach of examining these reforms in the committee process. In fact, members of the committee asked the deputy director-general specific questions about the phrases and they were told that we could not ask those questions because they were not in the bill. That is despite the fact that David Crisafulli said that they were in the bill 'in black and white'. We have learned that his words mean absolutely nothing, so that is hardly surprising.

The problem is that words actually do mean something when it comes to these reforms—literally two years imprisonment if you say them or recite them. Submission after submission raised concern about the fact that there were a whole range of issues around the constitutional validity of these laws, about the attack on free speech. Organisations that I do not always agree with—the Institute of Public Affairs, the Anglican Church archdiocese, unions, civil liberty advocates, peak law bodies—and even the Premier's mentor, Campbell Newman, who, again, I do not usually agree with, were all saying that there were serious issues with this bill, yet we just heard the member for Thuringowa say that our statement of reservation was some sort of cynical exercise. I would encourage her to go and say that to the 90-plus submitters who raised serious concerns around these laws. She was sitting on the committee, but evidently she was not listening to any of them because they all fronted up—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Direct your comments through the chair.

Ms SCANLON: They all fronted up to that committee and said that they had huge concerns with a number of the elements that were incorporated in this bill. The member for Thuringowa also said that we are nitpicking and asked why we did not do something when we were in government. We actually did. In fact, we brought in changes that strengthened serious vilification laws. Of course, it was the Labor government that brought in the Racial Discrimination Act that those opposite were against at the time, from memory. We brought in the respect-at-work and discrimination law reform that those opposite have now put on pause. That went through a nearly four-year consultation period, but those opposite have paused it because they said, 'No, we need to do some further work on it.' Now we are here debating laws that went through a 17-day process and that are about to change again, and apparently that is not too quick. Well, save me the fake outrage. We had the Queensland Law Society and the Bar Association—incredibly important organisations—raising very significant concerns, and neither of them will now be consulted about the nature of the changes in this bill.

I turn to some of the gun law reform measures. We have always said that we support action on gun law reform. We do not think this bill goes far enough. We are particularly frustrated that this bill does not address the recommendations from the coronial inquest that looked at the Wieambilla shooting. The families of Matthew Arnold and Rachel McCrow asked for those inquest recommendations to be considered by government and the LNP have ignored them. They have clearly bowed to the gun lobby, who they got donations from, and bowed to the hard right of their party to basically look like they are doing something when they are not doing anything. We are disappointed that these laws do not include the recommendation around mental health checks, but it is hardly surprising when you look at where the money to those opposite is coming from.

This entire process has been completely trashed through the committee hearings. The government said that they were going to be calm and methodical and that they wanted to be respectful to multicultural communities. This whole process has been a slap in the face. There are so many multicultural organisations that submitted that they want to see strong law reform but they cannot understand why some of the words that they might find offensive were not included while others were. These are questions that we were not able to ask because, of course, they were not prescribed by legislation but apparently now they are. Again, we cannot ask those questions. There are a range of other reforms that they would like to see come into effect in the respect-at-work laws that have been put on hold, yet those opposite have not articulated why they are not progressing. I suspect I know why.

This was an opportunity for us to unite Queenslanders. Instead, this bill has caused division. It has caused division in groups that I never thought would see eye to eye. When you have respected individuals and organisations saying that this bill takes us back to the dark old days under the Bjelke-Petersen government when people were being locked up for genuine protest, I think the government needs to listen to those concerns.

Mr Molhoek interjected.

Ms SCANLON: I can hear the muttering from the member for Southport. There are many multicultural organisations in his community who are concerned about the fact that they were not consulted on these laws, who are concerned about the attack on free speech and who are concerned about the fact that some of the things they would like to see are not being progressed by this government. I see lots of Gold Coast MPs rock up to multicultural events. They say one thing and then come into this House and do the complete opposite.

I look forward to seeing people like the member for Scenic Rim vote on these laws, because he has a track record of saying that he did not believe in section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act, yet these laws would go much further than the Racial Discrimination Act goes because they would criminalise speech. The Racial Discrimination Act is a civil protection which he at the time thought went too far. Now, suddenly, he has changed his mind. I say to all of those Nationals and all of those conservatives over there who once were outraged at attacks on freedom of speech: I look forward to you crossing the floor on this bill. Otherwise, that was all fake outrage. I look forward to you justifying all of that to the IPA and all of your conservative groups in the future.

I want to end by making it very clear that the Labor opposition obviously thinks that the acts in Bondi were atrocious. We will always condemn acts of hatred and violence. We do not believe that people should make remarks that are offensive to individuals, but we need to have sensible law reform. Unfortunately, we have had a chaotic process by this government that said they were going to be calm and methodical. We have seen the complete opposite.