

ACTS AMENDMENT (SEXUALITY DISCRIMINATION) BILL 1997

Committee

The Chairman of Committees (Hon J.A. Cowdell) in the Chair; Hon Helen Hodgson in charge of the Bill.

The CHAIRMAN: The question is that the Bill, as amended by the Committee of the Whole House on the recommendation of the Legislation Committee, be agreed to.

Question put and passed.

Report

Bill reported, as amended, and the report adopted.

Third Reading

HON HELEN HODGSON (North Metropolitan) [8.49 pm]: I move -

That the Bill be now read a third time.

HON PETER FOSS (East Metropolitan - Attorney General) [8.49 pm]: I made the Government's position clear at the earlier stages of debate on this Bill: The Government remains opposed to the Bill. It has not been improved by the amendments made to it at the committee stage. The Government is fundamentally opposed to the Bill and will vote against it at the third reading.

HON GIZ WATSON (North Metropolitan) [8.50 pm]: I feel the necessity to say a few words at the third reading stage of this Bill, which has had a long passage through this place and a lengthy time in committee. I welcome the anticipated support for the Bill from this side of the House. However, I cannot let the opportunity pass without saying that I have enormous difficulty with the position of members on the government side of the Houses who, I understand, will vote against this Bill that affects not only me but also between 5 per cent and 10 per cent of the population of this State.

Point of Order

Hon PETER FOSS: This is the third reading debate; it is not a repeat of the second reading. The question is whether what happened at the committee stage affects whether the Bill should be passed. I do not think we need to go back to the beginning again.

The PRESIDENT: The Attorney General is correct; the Bill was not amended during the committee stage, and the third reading debate gives members the opportunity to discuss the Bill as it emerges from the committee stage of our proceedings. The Attorney General is correct in saying that we do not have to go back to the beginning and start again. However, Hon Giz Watson is entitled to offer some concluding remarks to the Bill when it reaches this stage - I emphasise again - without going back to the beginning.

Debate Resumed

Hon GIZ WATSON: Members will appreciate that this Bill is of significance to me. I had expectations that perhaps some members opposite would be persuaded of the merits of the legislation for this State. Western Australia is the only State that currently does not allow for the Equal Opportunity Act to be effective in the area of sexuality.

I do not wish to prolong the debate, and obviously the third reading stage is not the appropriate time to do so. However, I put it to all members opposite that if we were debating discrimination on the grounds of race or gender, I do not believe for a minute that they would allow their consciences to oppose legislation that is fair and reasonable. The passage of this legislation would indicate modern thinking in this State on the odiousness of discrimination against gays and lesbians. The lack of legislation in this State results in a high level of suicide among gay and lesbian people. By not voting for this Bill, government members will contribute to that.

HON HELEN HODGSON (North Metropolitan) [8.53 pm]: I thank members on this side of the House for their support. The Bill has gone through a long and tortuous process. The speed of the proceedings tonight is an indication of the extent to which people have canvassed the matter in this Chamber on a number of occasions, although with lengthy gaps in between. I applaud and appreciate the personal courage shown by Hon Giz Watson when she spoke as one who is directly affected by the issues in this Bill. I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put and a division taken with the following result -

Extract from *Hansard*
[COUNCIL - Wednesday, 8 November 2000]
p2610b-2611a
Hon Helen Hodgson; Hon Peter Foss; Hon Giz Watson

Ayes (14)

Hon Kim Chance	Hon G.T. Giffard	Hon Mark Nevill	Hon Giz Watson
Hon J.A. Cowdell	Hon N.D. Griffiths	Hon J.A. Scott	Hon Bob Thomas (<i>Teller</i>)
Hon Cheryl Davenport	Hon Helen Hodgson	Hon Tom Stephens	
Hon E.R.J. Dermer	Hon Norm Kelly	Hon Ken Travers	

Noes (13)

Hon M.J. Criddle	Hon Ray Halligan	Hon Simon O'Brien	Hon Muriel Patterson (<i>Teller</i>)
Hon Dexter Davies	Hon Barry House	Hon B.M. Scott	
Hon B.K. Donaldson	Hon Murray Montgomery	Hon Greg Smith	
Hon Peter Foss	Hon M.D. Nixon	Hon W.N. Stretch	

Pairs

Hon Christine Sharp	Hon N.F. Moore
Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich	Hon Max Evans
Hon Tom Helm	Hon Derrick Tomlinson

Question thus passed.

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Assembly.