

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

WEDNESDAY 24TH FEBRUARY 2016

STATUTES AMENDMENT (GENDER IDENTITY AND EQUITY) BILL

Second Reading

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from 10 February 2016.)

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (16:28): I rise to speak to the Statutes Amendment (Gender Identity and Equity) Bill 2016, which is a bill for an act to amend various acts to remove discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer South Australians. People may not be surprised that I will not be supporting this piece of legislation. I come from a Christian upbringing in a very conservative area in a conservative electorate, and even from hearing just the first couple of presentations today, I am wondering if this is just one step closer to legalising gay marriage by the back door.

Ms Hildyard: You just want the mangle to stay, don't you? Bring back the mangle!

Mr PEDERICK: You've had your go. I appreciate the briefing that the member for Reynell offered to members. I do not know about being happy to go along, but I was interested. Before I went to the briefing, I was probably going to give a fairly short appraisal of this bill, but now that I have been to the briefing, whether I am confused or confronted or both, I do appreciate the opportunity to ask questions and try to get some answers.

The legislation deals with changing 'a woman' to 'a person' in relation to giving birth, which I find confronting, I will be frank, and I will go into that further. Where it deals with gender self-identification, I think a whole gamut of issues will come up in the future. There have already been issues in the past between different genders in the sporting field. My wife was an under-19 state hockey player and there was a woman who played in another team who had to have a doctor's certificate to prove she was a woman. That is fine; that cleared it up, but I think there is going to be a fair bit of confusion when someone who is clearly male turns up and wants to be part of the hockey team or the women's soccer team and says, 'Well, I'm a girl, let's go.'

What sanctions are in place? Hopefully, I can find out when we go into committee, but I think this raises a lot of questions. Olympic committees would have looked at this as have other sporting bodies, but that is just one field where I think there are a lot of questions about how this will really work in the real world. Quite frankly, I do not believe you can just self identify. One thing I was intrigued to learn was about men being able to have babies. If this legislation goes through, the wording in the appropriate bill will change from 'a woman' to 'a person'. I was intrigued, so we did a bit of googling.

Members interjecting:

Mr PEDERICK: Google, google, google. Google's answer to 'Can a man have a baby?' says:

An unidentified man is the first in Europe to give birth to a baby after becoming pregnant through a sperm donor —

but here is the catch—

The unidentified man who was born a woman delivered the baby boy at home with a midwife in the poor Neukoelin district of Berlin.

I want to talk more about men allegedly having babies. An article in *The Daily Telegraph* states:

Men have given birth to 54 babies in Australia over the past year according to official Medicare statistics which now allow patients to nominate their own gender.

In an echo of the case of Thomas Beatie, a transgender man who preserved his female organs—

note that—

and was billed as the world's first pregnant man in 2007, Aussie men are now also having babies, C-sections and abortions. The surprising statistics have been confirmed by Australia's Health Department.

According to the Medicare data, there were 16 men who gave birth in [New South Wales] last year, 22 men in Perth, seven in Victoria, one in Tasmania and two [right here] in South Australia.

No men gave birth to babies in the Northern Territory—

I am assuming with all the crocodiles up there, they are real men.

The men involved are likely to be people who were born female or with female sex organs who identified as male, or commenced gender reassignment surgery, but retained the physical capacity to give birth.

That is interesting. The article continues:

The men were mostly aged 24-36, with 32 of the babies being born from males in that age group. One man aged 55-64 also had a child. No male births were recorded in the Australian Capital Territory or the Northern Territory—

as I indicated before—

according to the Medicare statistics.

The Australian Department of Health, as I said, confirmed these statistics to News Corp, and the department is aware of cases of persons identifying themselves as male having pregnancy-related treatment which can be claimed under Medicare. 'Previously these items could not be paid to male patients,' a

health department spokeswoman told the *Herald Sun*. In addition to men giving birth, they have also been accessing abortions, although exact figures on this are unclear as they are tallied under the same code as a dilatation and curettage.

Transgender Victoria spokeswoman Sally Goldman told the *Daily Mail Australia* the statistics do not come as a surprise, and she supported the decision by Medicare to allow people to record their own gender. She comments:

People need to be their true self in relationship to gender identity and gender expression...I'm not really surprised.

As for whether she believes this will be something we see more often in the future, Ms Goldman predicted that we will see the number of transgender males giving birth increase: 'I think it will...people are saying well we've got a right for life, so yes it will increase.' She added that, while she understands that while people's relationships with their body and gender identity run deep and may differ, people have the right to simply be themselves. 'We're not just two groups of three and a half billion each, we are all different people,' Ms Goldman said.

I think we are getting onto very dangerous ground. In a 2012 *New York Times* op-ed, biologist Greg Hampikian declared that: 'Women are both necessary and sufficient for reproduction, and men are neither,' which is an interesting quote. The provocative title was 'Men, who needs them?' but, in light of a new discovery from Cambridge researchers that sperm and eggs could potentially be created from skin cells, there is no telling what human reproduction will look like by the end of the century or how gender will matter, if at all. I am just quoting this piece:

Forget everything you know about making babies. In the far future, gay male couples could be having biological offspring without a surrogate and women could be having children in old age.

As *The Guardian* reports, a team of researchers led by Azim Surani at The Gurdon Institute in Cambridge developed primitive forms of artificial sperm and eggs known as primordial germ cells out of skin tissue. These PGCs are genetically matched to the tissue donor, which would hypothetically allow couples suffering from fertility issues to have their own biological offspring instead of resorting to the use of a sperm or egg donor.

One comment about the declaration by Hampikian that men are irrelevant to reproduction is that it may have been decidedly premature. Surani tells *The Guardian* that women's skin cells can only produce eggs because they typically lack a Y chromosome, but that skin tissue from men, who have both X and Y chromosomes, could hypothetically produce both eggs and sperm, although such an outcome seems unlikely at present.

I just want to talk about something a bit further fetched, if we can keep going down this path. Complete male reproductive independence would also hinge on artificial womb technology—and I became aware of this technology yesterday—also made headlines in 2014. Ectogenesis—the technical term for the artificial womb—has been in development for over a decade, and futurist Zoltan Istvan

predicts that it will be available and used widely within 30 years. In an email to *The Daily Beast*, Istvan added that:

It's very possible that natural birthing will start disappearing over the next 25 to 50 years because of advancing technology.

So far, goat embryos have been carried to term in these artificial wombs, but human embryos have only been grown for 10 days due to current restrictions on human cloning. If it turns out that viable sperm and eggs can be produced from male skin tissue, the existence of artificial wombs could hypothetically allow two men to create both kinds of sex cells from their skin, fertilise the egg with the sperm in vitro and grow the resulting embryo outside of a human womb. No women would have to be involved at any point. So, we have had both sides of the argument, and one argument says that we do not need men and the other is saying that we do not need women. I guess that we might need a person though.

Mr Duluk interjecting:

Mr PEDERICK: Indeed. For the first time in human history reproduction could become a boys' club. Surani cautions that it is far too early to imagine it happening any time soon. He told *The Daily Beast*:

I should stress that this work is at a very early stage and there is much basic work needed first before even contemplating that possibility.

It is interesting because there has been some work done with mice, and still such an outcome would not be unprecedented in mammals. *The Daily Beast* article further states:

Male and female mice with two biological fathers have already been produced and the process will not work the same with humans, of course. However, Surani's team may have just taken a very early step toward allowing gay men to reproduce without having to rely on a donor or a surrogate.

I think that we are starting to go down a very slippery slope. If I thought I was confused and confronted at the briefing, I was confused and confronted when I got this information off Google, I can assure you.

An honourable member interjecting:

Mr PEDERICK: No, fair enough. This highlights another issue which has come up recently in regard to the Safe Schools program which is managed at a federal level. It was a federal Labor issue that the Coalition has been looking at, and thankfully yesterday Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull requested an investigation into a taxpayer-funded program aimed at helping lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and/or intersex school students. The Safe Schools education program is set to be reviewed following fierce criticism from some Coalition backbenchers.

According to its website, the Safe Schools Coalition offers resources and support to equip staff and students with skills, practical ideas and greater confidence to create a safe and inclusive environment for same-sex attracted, intersex and gender diverse students, staff and families, but some Coalition MPs have been

agitating against the program saying that it raises several issues that are inappropriate for teenagers and young children.

Education minister Senator Simon Birmingham has written to state and territory education ministers asking them to confirm that parents are being consulted before schools introduce the scheme. The review of the program's material and its use is expected to be completed by mid March, little more than a year before its funding agreement with the commonwealth expires. In a statement Senator Birmingham said that homophobia 'should be no more tolerated than racism, especially in the school environment'. Then he states:

However, it is essential that all material is age appropriate and that parents have confidence in any resources used in a school to support the right of all students, staff and families to feel safe at school.

Then we come to my good friend Senator Cory Bernardi and his comments in regard to this program. 'The program is indoctrinating children', Bernardi says. Senator Cory Bernardi told the ABC that the program was seeing children 'being bullied and intimidated into complying with a radical program'. He has called on the government to withdraw funding for the program saying:

It's not about gender, it's is not about sexuality. It makes everyone fall into line with a political agenda. Our schools should be places of learning not indoctrination.

As I indicated earlier, the program's federal funding was allocated by the federal Labor government in 2013 when an \$8 million investment was announced for the program convenor, Foundation for Young Australians. It also received some state funding, with the Victorian government allocating \$1.04 million in its 2015-16 budget. The Safe Schools Coalition Australia's government website described the program as follows:

...the first funded by the Australian government aimed at creating safe and supportive school environments for same-sex attracted, intersex and gender diverse people by reducing homophobic and transphobic bullying and discrimination in schools.

I just want to read a few comments from my good friend Senator Cory Bernardi. I am quoting from an article he has written:

This morning the media asked for my thoughts on a story on the front page of *The Australian* about a taxpayer-funded 'gay manual' introduced to schools.

The program, written by homosexual activists and supported to the tune of \$8m by the federal government, encourages children as young as 11 to become advocates for the homosexual cause.

The course materials make all manner of ridiculous claims. They insist that asking about the gender of a newborn reinforces a 'heteronormative worldview' and promotes homophobia. To utilise the same terminology against these fools; they are clearly being heterophobic!

Further, the producers of this propaganda claim that ten per cent of people are same-sex attracted and a further 4 per cent are transgender. These figures stem from the discredited research of Alfred Kinsey in the 1940s and are not supported by either US or Australian statistics.

In fact, they overstate the truth by many multiples. Like so many other 'causes du jour', the truth matters little to the advocates.

The program also isolates students in front of the entire class if they don't comply with the mantra demanded of the homosexual activists. This is bullying on a grand scale and the fact it is in any way sanctioned through federal funding is a disgrace.

The government has hidden behind the claim it's an optional program but that statement conveniently ignores the fact that the Victorian government has made it mandatory for their schools from 2018.

Perhaps the most alarming aspect of the program is the part where 11-year-old children are asked to imagine themselves as a 16-year-old going out with someone of the same gender that 'they are really into'. What sort of an education system asks that of pre-teen children?

At a time when too many of our schools are failing to maintain teaching standards, when the literacy and numeracy rates of students are falling, when demands for school funds climb ever higher, why would any government even contemplate supporting such a desperate political agenda targeting our schoolchildren?

The homosexual lobby demand tolerance and truth but their actions, including by virtue of this school program, demonstrate the polar opposite.

Not satisfied with pursuing religious figures through the legal system over their support for traditional marriage, activists are now seeking to co-opt innocent children into their agenda of intolerance.

Of course, like every other Australian, homosexual activists are free to pursue their cause among the adult community in whatever manner they like, within the bounds of the law. But they should have the decency to leave our children and our education system out of it.

That is the end of the quote from Senator Bernardi. I am concerned. I happen to have an 11-year old child at school and I have not heard of this happening at his school but, if I do, there will be a couple of phone calls being made fairly quickly, because I do not believe that children aged 11 should be taught about chest binding or hiding your penis. I think it is absolutely outrageous and there is no way it is something the education system should tackle. In regard to a constituent enquiry about the Safe Schools issue, I quote:

Dear Mr Pederick

I am horrified at the content of the Safe Schools Programme: chest binding for girls, unisex toilets, cross - dressing, gay and lesbian sexual techniques etc.

Apparently its intent is to stop bullying but if that was the case all forms would be addressed, not just the harassment of gay/lesbian students. Bullying based on race, appearance and disability is far more prevalent than that of sexual preference.

With deep concern

I have deep concern, too, and I will certainly be voting against this legislation because I think we are on a very, very slippery slide.