

STATUTES AMENDMENT (DOMESTIC PARTNERS) BILL

7 December 2006

The Hon. D.G.E. HOOD: I rise to indicate that Family First will oppose the amendments put forward by the Hon. Ms Kanck. The problem with her amendments, as we see it, is that the opt-in option—if I can put it that way—for domestic co-dependants has not worked. There is a strong example of that in Tasmanian law which has an opt-in facility, if you like, for domestic co-dependants and, to date, not one single couple has opted in. That shows that the amendments are flawed, and for that reason we will oppose them.

The Hon. D.G.E. HOOD: I rise to indicate Family First support for the amendments. The argument put forward by the Hon. Mr Lucas is persuasive to us; that is, the durability of a relationship that lasts for a five or six- year period, as the amendments suggest, is more reflective of an ongoing relationship, which is what this bill is all about. So, I indicate Family First support for the amendments.

The Hon. D.G.E. HOOD: I will briefly place a few thoughts on the record before the bill passes. From our perspective this is a vastly improved bill on the one presented to the council last year. We wholeheartedly commend the government on its approach to find a middle ground and a very workable bill for both sides of the argument. Sometimes the middle ground is the best way, and we commend the government for its approach on this matter. Marriage has been kept between a man and a woman and the bill does not touch on IVF or adoption rights for homosexual couples. The group we have come to call domestic co-dependents, that is, those in non-sexual relationships, are not discriminated against, which we see as a significant improvement. Rights are not granted on the basis of sexual relations. In fact, homosexual relationships are not specifically mentioned, except with respect to superannuation. Family First sees the bill as a vast improvement and we commend the government on that.

The final issue of superannuation is still a sticking point, and it is difficult for Family First to comprehend that we should go so far in recognising the relationships of domestic co-dependents in all regards except with superannuation, as outlined in sections 160, 175, 197 and 207. In those sections the rights of domestic co-dependents remain unrecognised and, in that sense, albeit in a smaller part of the bill, it remains discriminatory. For that reason alone Family First will not be able to support the bill.