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POLITICS QUEENSLAND GENDER

No complaints about enforced non-gendered language, despite Katter bill

By [Felicity Caldwell](#)

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Despite attempts to legislate the right to use "he", "she" and other gendered words in the workplace, there have been no complaints to Anti-Discrimination Commission Queensland from people being forced to use non-gendered language at work.

Queensland crossbencher Robbie Katter has introduced a [private member's bill](#) to protect words like "him" and "her" and ensure workplaces did not need to install gender-neutral bathrooms.



A sticker designates a gender neutral bathroom at Nathan Hale high school in Seattle. ELAINE THOMPSON

Anti-Discrimination Commission Queensland principal lawyer Julie Ball said they had not received any complaints or inquiries from victims.

"We haven't had any inquiries about people being required in the workplace to use non-gendered language," she told a parliamentary committee considering the bill.

"It hasn't arisen in any of the public engagement that we do and it hasn't arisen in any of the training, so no we're not aware of it happening and of it being a concern."

In contrast, Ms Ball said there were complaints from transgender people.

"The only complaints that we would have is where, for example, a transgender person is being consistently referred to by the gender (that is not) the one that they identify with currently," she said.

"That may constitute indirect discrimination ... That's the only context where we have received any complaints or inquiries, certainly not about being asked to use non-gendered language."

Anti-Discrimination Commission Queensland commissioner Scott McDougall said the bill was not necessary, describing the proposed changes as "radical".

"Protecting the use of gender-specific language has the potential to be divisive and is inconsistent with contemporary objectives of fostering an inclusive society," he said.

"The Katter bill would potentially expose vulnerable people, such as those who are transgender and those who are gender diverse or intersex to increased discrimination."

In a submission to the committee, the Caxton Legal Centre also argued promoting a "right" to use gender-specific language was likely to expose transgender, gender-diverse or intersex people to increased discrimination.

Southern Downs MP James Lister said there was a bit of "scorn" in his electorate about talk about notions of an inclusive society.

"It's seen as being city-centric, you know, bleeding heart stuff," he said.

"People in my electorate regard themselves as being pretty fair, they take everyone as they find them.

"But they don't like being railroaded or they don't like smart-arses implying that they're unfair people or they're rednecks, that sort of thing."

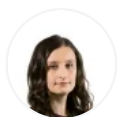
Committee chair Peter Russo said Mr Lister's remark was "unparliamentary", and Mr Lister withdrew his colourful language.

Last month, [Mr Katter said there was a "malaise"](#) and a growing trend to covertly introduce politically-correct language in society and government policy.

He pointed to gender [being removed from driver's licences](#), calls for gender-neutral bathrooms to be part of the building code and suggested changes to allow genders other than male or female to be recorded on birth certificates.

"A lot of people are going to look at this legislation and say, well it's not needed, there's no problem out there but a large part of the motivation here is to bring it to a head first in a respectful way so the issue can be discussed, debated," Mr Katter said.

"This is pre-emptive legislation."



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