

Tasmanian gender laws: standoff on 'radical social engineering'

[Matthew Denholm](#) November 29, 2018



Archbishop of Tasmania Julian Porteous says the bill is 'a radical act of social engineering which would be rejected by most Tasmanians'. Picture: Luke Bowden

The future of Tasmania's transgender reforms is tonight uncertain, with a parliamentary stand-off and last-minute intervention by Hobart Archbishop Julian Porteous, urging MLCs to vote down "radical social engineering".

By late today, the independent-dominated upper house was yet to vote on the changes, which would require parents to "opt in" to have a baby's sex recorded on its birth certificate and allow people to change gender simply via statutory declaration.

The Liberal government had not brought the bill forward for debate, despite the Legislative Council being due to rise for the year, except for committee hearings, at the conclusion of tonight's proceedings.

Some MLCs were understood to be discussing amendments, to what are already amendments, made in the lower house last week by opposition parties with the casting vote of the Liberal speaker.

"This is just crazy stuff, unbelievable," independent MLC of 15 years, Ivan Dean, told The Australian. "I'm not sure of the government's position at all on this and that's what we (MLCs) have been seeking all this week.

"We don't know whether they are moving forward with it, or not, or putting forward amendments. We honestly do not know.

"In my view, the matter should be deferred. Given the (poor) quality of the bill, it cannot in my view go ahead. It needs to go to a committee and the Tasmanian Law Reform Institute."

That is also the government's preferred position, but it does not control the numbers in the upper house, and appears unsure of the outcome should the bill be brought on for debate.

The Australian understands seven of the 15 MLCs are expected to vote for the changes, with several others uncertain.

The bill was originally intended as a simple amendment to the state Birth Deaths and Marriages Act to end the need for people to divorce in order to change their official gender.

This is required by December 9 for state law to be compliant with the changes to the federal act following the legalisation of same sex marriage.

The government wants to meet that deadline but does not want to risk the amendments – made in the lower house by Labor, the Greens and Speaker

Sue Hickey – to become law in their current form.

Archbishop Porteous urging MLCs to simply vote the bill down. “This legislation as passed constitutes a radical act of social engineering which would be rejected by most Tasmanians,” he said in an opinion piece for The Mercury newspaper.

Labor, the Greens and Ms Hickey have all argued the changes are long-overdue, simple changes to improve the lives of transgender people.

Veteran LGBTI rights campaigner Rodney Croome called on MLCs to pass the changes as soon as possible and accused the archbishop of “doom, gloom, fear (and) smear”.

“If Jesus appealed to the best in us why do his successors like Archbishop Porteous try (unsuccessfully I hope) to appeal to the worst?” Mr Croome posted on Facebook.

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