

Community Protection and Public Child Sex Offender Register (Daniel's Law) Bill 2025

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JUSTICE, INTEGRITY AND COMMUNITY SAFETY COMMITTEE

SUBMISSION

COMMUNITY PROTECTION AND

PUBLIC CHILD SEX OFFENDER REGISTER (DANIEL'S LAW) BILL 2025

Our son, thirteen-year-old Daniel Morcombe was abducted and murdered on the 7th of December 2003.

For almost 8 years he was listed as a missing person suspected of being murdered. Daniel's police investigation became the largest in Queensland's history.

Because of the Morcombe family's determination and the public's interest, a Coronial Inquest was conducted. It did identify key persons of interest and after an incredible covert operation, Police were ultimately successful in recovering Daniel's remains and charging a man with a variety of very serious offences including murder.

Brett Peter Cowan *a twice convicted child sex offender* was found guilty of murdering Daniel and sentenced to life in jail.

In May 2005 the Daniel Morcombe Foundation Inc was established as Daniel's lasting legacy.

It has 3 main aims:

- To educate children on ways to stay safe
- To support child victims of crime
- To support those left behind when someone is missing, particularly a child

The Daniel Morcombe Foundation has grown to be Nationally recognised as a leading not for profit child safety organisation particularly in the primary prevention space. Its advocacy work has contributed to child protection across Australia. Day for Daniel is the largest child safety awareness activity in Australia with over 2,000,000 people participating.

The Daniel Morcombe Foundation works very closely with Police, Australian Centre to Counter Child Exploitation ACCCE, eSafety, National Office for Child Safety NOCS, Bravehearts and ACT for Kids to name a few. For the past 5 years we have also had a representative on the Queensland Child Death Review Board.

As the parents of Daniel, and Founders of the Foundation we have pushed for a Public Accessible Sex Offender Register for more than 15 years. Draft legislation called Daniel's Law were introduced into the Northern Territory Parliament in 2015. That ultimately did not pass. It was however modelled on Megan's Law in the USA and that is very different to the 3 tier Bill which has been tabled in the Queensland Parliament. Of note is that we are currently being briefed on Daniel's Law in Tasmania and we are confident that will be passed soon.

The Bill before the Queensland Parliament we believe is measured in its approach yet provides the tools necessary for parents and carers to improve the safety of children in their care. It also assists the community to ultimately feel safer, and we believe it significantly acts as a deterrent against future offending.

First and foremost, the Bill puts the protection of children ahead of the right of offenders.

We understand a similar 3-tier model like this has been in operation in Western Australia for more than a decade.

Our observations and feedback of that is that it has done and continues to work well in that State.

We believe it offers little or no negative issues, yet it provides the disclosure of historic information that will protect the safety of children.

A key point is that parents and guardians in particular will be able to apply and seek information regarding a person's history of offending against children who have unsupervised contact with children in their care.

Under this Bill, Brett Peter Cowan would have been exposed in Tier 2 and Tier 3. This clearly demonstrates the measurable benefits of it when as we believe in December 2003, Cowan who was a father and husband; yet his wife, the mother of his children was completely unaware of the serious nature and his violent history of offending against children.

To underline our belief that the Bill is balanced and measured we supply the following 2 points:

- The Bill provided balance between the rights of families to protect the safety of children and the rights of perpetrators.
- We believe the Bill addresses the possibility of vigilantism.

CONCLUSION

The proposed Bill known as Daniel's Law and named in honour of our son is a wonderful gesture that is supported by the Morcombe family.

Daniel's legacy is about keeping kids safe. We believe Daniel's Law will return the balance and provide additional tools for the community to do that.

It of course is not the complete answer. As we all realise offenders of child sexual abuse who do not have a criminal record will remain in the shadows.

But absolutely we know that Daniel's Law is going to help to keep children safer.

9 September 2025