

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

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

**PeakCare's Submission to the Justice,
Integrity and Community Safety Committee**

10 September 2025

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Introduction

PeakCare Queensland Incorporated (PeakCare) welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Queensland Parliament's Justice, Integrity and Community Safety Committee to support its consideration of the Community Protection and Public Child Sex Offender Register (Daniel's Law) Bill 2025. We acknowledge that several provisions in the Bill respond positively to matters raised in our earlier submission to the Queensland Police Service (28 July 2025). However, significant gaps remain in relation to evaluation, prevention, accessibility, oversight, collaboration, and transparency.

About Peakcare

PeakCare is a not-for-profit peak body for child and family services in Queensland, providing an independent voice representing and promoting matters of interest to the non-government sector. Across Queensland, PeakCare represents small, medium, and large local, state-wide and national non-government organisations which provide prevention and early intervention, generic, targeted, and intensive family support to children, young people, families, and communities. Member organisations also provide child protection services, foster care, kinship care and residential care for children and young people who are at risk of entry to, or who are in the statutory child protection system and youth justice systems.

A large network of associate members and supporters also subscribe to PeakCare. This includes individuals with an interest in child protection, youth justice and related services, and who are supportive of PeakCare's policy platform around the rights and entitlements of children, young people and their families to safety, wellbeing, and equitable access to life opportunities.

Peakcare's Submission

Limits on public identification

PeakCare believes there are serious risks involved when children or adults whose only offending occurred during childhood are publicly identified on a sex offender register. Public disclosure can have lifelong consequences for reintegration, including barriers to education, employment, housing, and community connection.^{1 2} These consequences can in turn increase the likelihood of further offending, undermining the protective purpose of the scheme. Where courts have made non-publication orders, these orders must be respected to uphold judicial authority and avoid secondary trauma to children and families.

The Bill aligns with our views by excluding children and people whose only offending was as a child from public identification, and by upholding court non-publication orders. This approach reduces the risk of disproportionate harm, supports rehabilitation, and aligns with evidence that public shaming does not reduce reoffending.

¹ Fix, R. (2022) 'The harms of placing kids on sex offender registries', *Johns Hopkins Public Health Magazine*. Available at: <https://magazine.publichealth.jhu.edu/2022/harms-placing-kids-sex-offender-registries> (Accessed: 8 September 2025).

² Pickett, J.T., Mancini, C., Loughran, T.A. and Siennick, S.E. (2024) 'Making a Bad Situation Worse: Current and Potential Unintended Consequences of Juvenile Sex Offender Registration', *Archives of Sexual Behavior*. Available at: <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10508-024-02860-2> (Accessed: 8 September 2025).

Anti-vigilantism protections

In implementing a public sex offender register in Queensland, we are concerned about the risk that unrestricted public access to offender information can encourage harassment, intimidation, or vigilante actions. Such conduct threatens the safety of individuals on the register and also risks collateral harm to family members, neighbours, and communities. Importantly, these behaviours undermine trust in justice processes and can divert law enforcement resources away from effective prevention and monitoring.

The Bill addresses this issue by creating specific offences for harassment, intimidation, and unauthorised republication of identifying information. These provisions are a necessary safeguard to ensure that the register does not become a tool for vigilantism and supports informed community safety measures within lawful limits.

Victim and justice considerations

At PeakCare we advocate for victims' rights. It is important to ensure that victims are not further harmed by the operation of a public register, and that live court proceedings are not prejudiced by premature or inappropriate disclosures. Victims of sexual violence may experience re-traumatisation if offender information is released in ways that bring unwanted attention or compromise their privacy. Likewise, publication of information during live proceedings may jeopardise fair trial rights or influence outcomes.

The Bill responds appropriately by requiring the Commissioner to take into account the potential impacts on victims and on ongoing proceedings when deciding whether to publish or provide information. This provision introduces an important safeguard that helps balance the aims of transparency and community protection with the rights and wellbeing of victims and the integrity of the justice system.

Evaluation from day one

In our earlier submission to the Queensland Police Service, PeakCare emphasised that any scheme as far-reaching as a public sex offender register must be accompanied by action-based research and continuous evaluation from the outset. This ensures the system is evidence-led, adapts to emerging issues, and does not inadvertently cause harm. International evaluations of public registers, such as those in the United States and Western Australia, demonstrate that without rigorous, ongoing monitoring, registries can fail to meet their stated goals while creating unintended negative impacts.^{3 4 5 6 7 8}

³ Australian Institute of Criminology (2018). *What impact do public sex offender registries have on community safety?* AIC Trends & Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice No. 548.

⁴ Levenson, J. S., D'Amora, D. A. & Hern, A. L. (2007). Megan's Law and its Impact on Community Re-entry for Sex Offenders. *Behavioral Sciences & the Law*, 25(4), pp. 587–602.

⁵ Zgoba, K. M. & Mitchell, M. M. (2021). A meta-analysis of the effectiveness of sex offender registration policies. *Criminal Justice Policy Review*, 32(2), pp. 129–152.

⁶ Veysey, B., Zgoba, K. & Dalessandro, M. (2009). *Megan's Law: Assessing the Practical and Monetary Efficacy*. New Jersey State Police.

⁷ Australian Institute of Criminology (2018). *What impact do public sex offender registries have on community safety?* AIC Trends & Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice No. 548.

⁸ Western Australia Police Force. (2018). *Review of the operation and effectiveness of the public notification scheme established by Part 5A Community Protection (Offender Reporting) Act 2004*. Government of Western Australia.

The Bill currently provides only for a single independent review after five years, with no interim requirements.

Recommendation: Amend the Bill to mandate earlier staged reviews (e.g. at two and five years) and annual public reporting of outcomes, unintended consequences, and rights impacts. This would create transparency, support accountability, and enable corrective action before harms become entrenched.

Prevention and community education

PeakCare has consistently highlighted that prevention cannot be achieved by a register alone. A sustained, inclusive education strategy is needed to build community knowledge and resilience. This must include resources in multiple formats and languages, as well as deliberate partnership with disability peaks, so that all families and communities are empowered to protect children. Community education should extend beyond online channels to schools, community centres, and culturally safe spaces. The Bill is silent on prevention and education, providing no framework or requirement to funding and deliver this essential component.

Recommendation: Insert a statutory requirement for a Government-led Prevention and Community Education Strategy, with measurable targets, funding commitments, and cross-sector delivery.

Accessibility and equity standards

Our submission stressed that public information about child safety must be equitable and accessible. If disclosure systems are not designed with accessibility in mind, people with disability, people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities, and people with limited literacy may be excluded from vital information. Accessibility also includes compliance with digital standards, and provision of Easy Read formats, Auslan interpretation, and translation into key community languages. The Bill does not include any obligation for websites, disclosure processes, or secure portals to meet accessibility standards.

Recommendation: Embed minimum accessibility standards and equity obligations in the primary or subordinate legislation, ensuring inclusive access to all public-facing systems.

Transparency and oversight of discretionary decisions

The Bill grants the Commissioner significant discretion in deciding when and how information is released. Without safeguards, this discretion risks inconsistency, bias, and reduced public trust. Our earlier submission called for clear operational guidelines, consultation with stakeholders, and review mechanisms. Transparency in decision-making is essential given the sensitive and potentially life-altering nature of register disclosures. Currently, there are no review rights beyond jurisdictional error, no requirement to publish operational guidelines, and no duty to consult.

Recommendation: Require publication of guidelines, formal consultation with child protection stakeholders and disability peaks, an internal review pathway with rapid timeframes, and de-identified annual reporting of discretionary decisions.

Interagency collaboration beyond policing

PeakCare emphasised the need for joined-up work with schools, child protection, health, and community services. Policing alone cannot prevent child sexual abuse or address risk factors; prevention requires coordinated responses across systems. Collaborative frameworks would allow early identification of risks, better referral pathways, and wrap-around supports for families and communities. The Bill creates no statutory mechanism for such collaboration, apart from one limited reference to Corrective Services.

Recommendation: Establish legislated interagency collaboration and information-sharing protocols that embed prevention, referral, and support as core functions of the scheme, alongside enforcement.

Human Rights override transparency

The Bill proposes a five-year override of the Human Rights Act for this part of the scheme. This is an exceptional measure that should be approached with caution. Overrides reduce accountability and transparency, and risk undermining public trust. If Parliament determines that an override is necessary, stronger safeguards must be in place to ensure it is temporary, justified, and closely monitored.

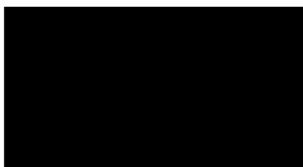
Recommendation: Require a public statement of reasons for the override, introduce periodic reporting on its rights impacts, and replace the blanket five-year period with a staged or earlier sunset linked to evaluation milestones.

Conclusion

PeakCare acknowledges and welcomes the Bill's alignment with several of our earlier concerns, particularly in relation to reintegration harms, anti-vigilantism protections, and victim considerations. However, the absence of early evaluation, prevention and education measures, accessibility standards, independent oversight, interagency collaboration, and stronger transparency around the Human Rights override risk undermining the Bill's effectiveness and legitimacy.

PeakCare strongly recommends the Committee strengthen the Bill by adopting the above recommendations, ensuring that Daniel's Law enhances community safety without compromising rights, equity, or evidence-based practice.

Yours sincerely,



Mr Tom Allsop

Chief Executive Officer