



Speech by

JACK PAFF

MEMBER FOR IPSWICH WEST

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CRIMINAL LAW AMENDMENT BILL

Mr PAFF (Ipswich West—ONP) (6.34 p.m.): The Criminal Law Amendment Bill is a welcome improvement to the law to promote the awareness of paedophiles within the community. This Bill is necessary for the protection of our children from these predators.

What disappoints me, however, is that this Bill is a typical Labor Party patch-up of the issue. Of late, the public has been openly in favour of Megan's law. Various news reports and articles have discussed the issue over the past six months and, apart from the obvious—namely the civil libertarians and other similarly minded minority groups—the public have generally supported the idea of Megan's law. In fact, a discussion about paedophiles at almost every backyard barbecue would disclose complete contempt for anyone capable of hurting and abusing a child in such a manner. There would be little compassion for the offender.

I have no doubt that the main reason why this Bill does not go far enough is because of Labor's continual reaction to the whining of the minority groups. The propaganda of the civil libertarians, espousing the protection of the rights of the criminal, is nonsense. What about the rights of the child—rights that were taken from the child in circumstances which will scar the child for the rest of his life.

What about the rights of children? What about their suffering, their misery and their pain which lasts for a lifetime? They will have a hard time fitting in. They will find it difficult to have a normal relationship, to love unreservedly, to trust and to believe in themselves. They will struggle to do so—if they are able to do so at all. Their misery and pain lasts an eternity and will affect not only themselves as victims, but every person close to them, now and in the future. It is little wonder that the public have no sympathy for paedophiles. Why should they? Did the paedophile have any thought or sympathy for the child whose life he destroyed? Is the paedophile only thinking of his selfish and perverted desires? There are simply no excuses for such behaviour.

I do not believe that the introduction of Megan's law would find much argument within the community if we exclude those who fight on behalf of the perpetrators. This Bill is not Megan's law. This Bill is typical of a party knowing that a tough decision is required. It is typical of a party lacking the courage to develop the strong legislation which is required to provide adequate protection for the vulnerable within our community. To avoid upsetting the loyal followers who belong to the vocal minority groups, the Government has limited the power of the Bill. It has introduced a Clayton's Megan's law.

In an attempt to look good to both sides, the Government has introduced the Criminal Law Amendment Bill—a Bill that must be commended because it is a step in the right direction, but it is a Bill that brings some disappointment because it does not go far enough in protecting our children from such sick people. As I said, this Bill does improve the current situation which presently does not legally allow the forwarding of information about paedophiles to members of the community.

This Bill allows certain information to be forwarded to certain members of the community at the discretion of the Queensland Community Corrections Board and at the request of specific people. These people include police officers, Corrective Services officers or others "claiming a legitimate and sufficient interest in having the information". I ask the Minister: what are the guidelines for determining who has a legitimate and sufficient interest? Does this allow access by the public? I am concerned that

the guidelines that the board lays down regarding the use of the information may restrict or impede the purpose of the Bill. The Minister in his second-reading speech refers to a school principal as an example of someone whom the board might consider as having a legitimate and sufficient interest in having the information.

This places the school principal in a difficult position. He might know this information but he may not be able to tell a soul—not even his staff, the people who have most contact with the children, especially at lunchtime and after school. Is it really safe to inform only the school principal and restrict that information to him? In his second-reading speech, the Minister made the following statement—

"The Court is uniquely placed to give due weight both to the rehabilitation of the offender and to the protection of the community and thereupon to make the appropriate reporting period under section 19."

I believe that some of these people are not able to be rehabilitated.

It is interesting to note the order in which a Minister refers to the court's duty. The first priority should, of course, be the protection of the community. The rehabilitation of the offender is of lesser importance, and it is a process the success rate of which is not proved. Even Professor Paul Wilson, a well-known criminologist, states categorically that the rehabilitation of child sex offenders has a very low success rate. In fact, he states that the vast majority of such offenders can never be rehabilitated. I am sure that, if members of the public were asked, they would say that they would not be pleased to be spending money on attempting to rehabilitate those people, anyway. Let us face it: who would want these people as part of our society? If they are to be released back into our community, the guardians of those at risk have an inalienable right to know that they are there.

There are many positive aspects to this legislation. However, I do not believe that it goes far enough. The right to this information should exist within the community so that the seeking of it is a matter of choice for each individual member of the public. The choice and rights of the paedophile were lost the day he stole the rights of the child by preying on that child's innocence and vulnerability. In that regard, although One Nation would support harsher legislation, it supports this Bill on the basis that it improves the current situation and is a step in the right direction in dealing with paedophiles in our community.
