



Speech by

**LINDA LAVARCH**

**STATE MEMBER FOR KURWONGBAH**

---

Hansard 26 May 1999

**CONVICTED CHILD SEX OFFENDERS; NOTIFICATION ORDERS**

**Mrs LAVARCH** (Kurwongbah—ALP) (5.43 p.m.): I second the amendment moved by the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, the Honourable Matt Foley. I appeal to all honourable members to take a step back, put aside all feelings of horror and disgust at those who would hurt or sexually abuse a child—I know that we all have those feelings—and calmly, rationally and sensibly look at the big picture of how we best protect our children. We do not protect our children if we act out of hysteria.

I appeal to all members to carefully read the wording of the motion moved by the member for Warwick and then read the amendment moved by the Attorney-General. Then they should ask themselves which motion they would prefer to have their names recorded against as showing their commitment to protecting our children. Do they want to support a motion that confines this Parliament's commitment to protecting the community from people convicted of child sex offences by giving support to only two sections of the Criminal Law Amendment Act, or do they want to support a motion which reaffirms this Parliament's commitment to protecting the community and unequivocally supporting all aspects of the criminal law for the detection and punishment of offenders and the protection of the community?

I state clearly and categorically that I am not an apologist for any convicted offender, nor would I, or do I, promote any child sex offender's rights or liberties over community safety. As a mother of two beautiful children, I would and will do all within my power to protect my own children and all children. As a legal practitioner, I know that the best way to do that is to be sensible about what laws we make and to trust the independent judgment of our independent courts.

As a legislator, I know that informed, considered policy provides better protection than does panic-driven policy. The Borbidge/Sheldon Government became the masters of panic-driven policy—policies which did nothing to protect the children of this State. I have only to remind members of how disastrously members of that Government handled the request for an inquiry into paedophilia. They panicked. If we look at their response and at how the office of the Children's Commissioner was created, we see that it was obviously not considered policy. The needs of children were left unaddressed for the sake of political expediency.

What is the motivation behind the motion of the member for Warwick? Of course, we all know that it is just political point scoring. It is rhetoric and it is an opportunity for the member for Warwick to try to whip up some mass hysteria to get some more publicity. I appeal to those community members who have taken the rhetoric of the member for Warwick in good faith to take a very good look at his proposals. They will find that sections 19 and 20 of the Criminal Law Amendment Act do not deliver what the member for Warwick would have them believe.

Under section 20, the Attorney-General has a discretion to give information to a particular person, but the wording of that section presupposes that an interested party makes an application to the Attorney-General. The section certainly does not provide that information be voluntarily given to a community by the Attorney-General and it certainly does not provide that the address of the offender be given.

If people listened to the member for Warwick and accepted what has been written in the papers, they would have a false expectation that when a child sex offender was released from prison

the neighbourhood he moved into would then be notified of him living in that neighbourhood, as would schools and the community as a whole. There is an expectation that the police would be out letterboxing and pasting on telegraph poles posters with photos and the caption "sex offender lives at No. 10". This is entirely false and creates an expectation that cannot be met. Even if it were the case, we as legislators would have to ask whether that measure really provided an extra level of protection for our children. Of course, this is not the case.

Time expired.

---