



Speech by

Hon. M. FOLEY

MEMBER FOR YERONGA

Hansard 9 December 1999

CRIMINAL LAW AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. M. J. FOLEY (Yeronga—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for The Arts) (6.49 p.m.), in reply: This Bill will provide a fair, reasoned and balanced way of collecting and releasing certain information on persons convicted of sexual offences against children. It will do so in a manner that does not let people take the law into their own hands. It will do so in a manner that does not involve the whipping up of hysteria, as has been seen in some places. This is an important reform for extending the range of relevant information to include addresses and changes of name. I thank honourable members for their contributions and for their foreshadowed support of the Bill. I will deal with some of the contributions.

I welcome the Opposition's support of the Bill. I note that in May Opposition members sought to move a motion in the House merely reaffirming the 1989 law. At the time, the Government took the view that this Parliament should examine and critically review the law and not be distracted by what was a political point-scoring exercise. The wisdom of the Government's view is manifest in the legislation that has come before the House because, instead of merely revisiting the 1989 law with its deficiencies, we have sought to improve the law.

Similarly, I welcome the Opposition's more responsible approach. I note that according to an article in the Courier-Mail on Tuesday, 20 July this year, when the Premier referred to this proposed change the Opposition Justice spokesperson condemned it as a cop-out. I am pleased that the honourable member has reflected and shifted his position towards a more responsible view. I welcome that change.

With respect to the transfer of responsibility from the position of Attorney-General to the Community Corrections Board, I simply say this: firstly, it puts the decision making at arm's length from the political process, and that is a desirable thing. Secondly, it puts the decision making in the hands of a professional body that is involved in the supervision and risk management of offenders within the community. That will help to make the system more effective in achieving its purpose of protecting children.

The honourable member for Logan spoke eloquently and with great conviction. In response to the honourable member for Logan, I say that my colleague the Minister for Police and Corrective Services certainly takes seriously the responsibility of providing programs within our Corrective Services institutions for the rehabilitation of offenders because it is important, where possible, to break the cycle of crime and to prevent offences from occurring. Secondly, I also say to the honourable member that this legislation will help to protect children in future. The concern, distress and tragedy that has been visited upon the honourable member's constituent is something that would, I am sure, deeply concern all honourable members.

The legislation is an important step. It seeks to strike a balance between competing interests in a way that aims to protect our children and in a way that is professional and responsible. I commend the Bill to the House.
