



Speech by

Lindy Nelson-Carr

MEMBER FOR MUNDINGBURRA

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COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE AND CHILD GUARDIAN AMENDMENT BILL

Ms NELSON-CARR (Mundingburra—ALP) (2.27 p.m.): How often in media reports do we read, see and hear about adults who committed sex offences against children in their care 10, 20 and even 30 or more years ago? Grown-ups who are working or volunteering in positions of trust with children were committing crimes that they thought nobody other than their victims could ever possibly know about. That is still happening, but at least it is becoming a whole lot tougher to get away with it. As a government, as Queenslanders and as parents, we have become all too aware of the extent of these revolting crimes against children. No community was or is immune. I am all too familiar with offences committed in north Queensland that only came to light after the child victims grew older and could see that it was no longer considered a shame to come forward and reveal what took place.

If governments of yesteryear had been more wise and open-minded with regard to the extent of sex offences being committed against children and if there had been something like a blue card system operating much earlier, then who knows how many young people might have been spared the suffering and indignities that they were forced to endure. Let us not delude ourselves though: no matter how stringent the blue card laws, children will still fall prey to molesters. But by extending the reach of the blue card, it is going to become much harder for adults with evil intent towards children to be in work or voluntary situations where they have ready contact with them. I would like to think that the vast majority of people in paid employment or who volunteer in roles to which the blue card provisions are being extended will welcome these reforms. Some may find the formalities inconvenient, but inconvenience is a very small price to pay for shielding our children against sexual predators.

Last month I was privileged to attend an entire morning session of the Townsville Children's Court under the considerate control of Magistrate David Glasgow. The children who appeared before Mr Glasgow were there for a range of offences, some of them quite petty. I found it to be hugely enlightening and I was very pleased that I was given the opportunity to attend. On a broader basis it led me to wondering how many young people who commit crimes, whether of a petty or a more serious nature, have at some time been victims of sexual abuse. Certainly, it is common knowledge that many adult sexual offenders were themselves victims of abuse when they were children. If by extending the blue card provisions we save even a handful of children from being sexually abused, it will prove to be worth while.

We may feel frustrated by our inability to prevent the sexual exploitation of millions of children in Third World countries, but through this bill at least we can do something positive to help protect children in our home state of Queensland. I am very pleased to give the Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian Amendment Bill my unequivocal support.