



Speech by

Lindy Nelson-Carr

MEMBER FOR MUNDINGBURRA

Hansard Wednesday, 24 November 2004

CHILD PROTECTION (OFFENDER REPORTING) BILL

Ms NELSON-CARR (Mundingburra—ALP) (2.24 p.m.): I rise to support the Child Protection (Offender Reporting) Bill. The page 1 headline in the *Townsville Bulletin* on Monday of this week summed up the contents of the paper's lead story in just one word. That word was 'predators'. The subheading read, 'North girls target of sexual attacks'. The report said that girls under 14 are the north's highest risk sex victims according to the latest statistics and the most common predators are men aged 30 to 49. Most offences took place in a residential dwelling, with 81 per cent of offenders known to the victim. In the northern police district, including Townsville and Mount Isa, there were 158 rapes and 396 other sexual offences last financial year. Of those victims, 159 were girls under 14, which was more than any other female age group. There were 43 boys under 14 who were sexually assaulted, making that the leading age group for male victims. They are absolutely shameful statistics.

Anybody who doubts the need for mandatory registration of offenders should carefully consider that report and reports of a similar nature about other regions. No doubt arguments about civil rights will be trotted out, but what about the civil rights of the victims? They have so often been callously overlooked in the past. Surely the victims warrant more rights than the perpetrators, and the community deserves as many safeguards against sexual predators as Queensland can muster. I find it shocking that since mandatory registration of offenders as opposed to court ordered registration was introduced in New South Wales in 2000 at least 36 of that state's child sex offenders moved to Queensland. Another 64 went to other states. Queensland must have an automatic—not a discretionary—court registration system to ensure that all known offenders, whether they be from Queensland or elsewhere, routinely go on to the register—no ifs or buts. Perhaps it may also discourage sex offenders from interstate moving here.

I am very pleased that the new scheme of registration, Queensland's commitment to the national model of the Australian child offender register, will be much more thorough than is currently the case in keeping tabs on offenders who pose a risk to children. Because of its travel reporting requirements, the new registration system will also prove effective against those offenders who disgrace Australia by travelling to Thailand, Bali and other parts of the world specifically to engage in under-age sex. I agree with Minister Spence that those who commit offences of a sexual nature against children should automatically lose some of the rights that citizenship engenders. Constituents in the Mundingburra electorate and throughout north Queensland would, I believe, agree overwhelmingly with the need to take every measure possible to protect our children and young people against sexual and other abuse. Of course the offenders themselves would be bitterly opposed to this bill, as they would be opposed to anything that seeks to curb their depraved activities. I welcome this legislation and look forward to it coming into force.