



Speech by

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CHILD SEX OFFENDERS

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (6.15 p.m.): When we are elected to this place we have a great responsibility to try to make the world a better place. In particular, we have a responsibility to look after those in our community who are vulnerable and need the protection of the law. Tonight I have watched with fascination as the members of the government squirmed their way through this debate. Their hearts are not in it because they do not believe in what they are saying. While they want to give us learned legal opinions from Labor lawyers, what they should do is go and talk to the real people. They should not tell us what the judges want or what they want; they should tell us what the people want. They need to talk to the people. Can any members opposite walk out of here tonight, after hearing the statistics that we heard before of how many people have not gone to jail—have not had a custodial sentence—for unlawful carnal knowledge, indecent dealings with underage people or sodomy with underage people, without shaking their heads and wondering how those people came to walk free and not go to jail?

One of the issues raised tonight was mandatory sentencing. People on the other side of the House have said that it is not a deterrent. I can tell the House that it is a deterrent. There are two aspects to sentencing: one is punishment and the other is deterrence and rehabilitation. Punishment is as important as deterrence and rehabilitation. Members should ask some victims of crime about that, because in many instances it is the only way that victims of crime can come to grips with what has happened to them, even though they see inadequate punishments being handed down. We should always bear that in mind when we talk about sentencing and the way that it is handed down. There are two sides to the argument, and we need to think about the victims.

We have mandatory sentencing for murder. In Queensland every murderer gets life imprisonment. That is mandatory. It is not right if members opposite reckon that it is not a deterrent. We have mandatory life sentencing for murder—

A government member: Does it stop murders?

Mr HORAN: Are government members going to get rid of it then? They should get rid of it if they do not agree with it.

I had the privilege of meeting with a constituent of mine who was a victim of Neerkol. One of the most heart-rending experiences I have ever had was when he told me about what had happened to him. The thing that hurt him so much when he was young was that when he went to people for help he did not get the support and the protection that he needed. That is what tonight's debate is about.

This parliament makes the laws. The judiciary pass sentences based on the laws made in this House. I heard the Leader of the House say that we are in line with other states and that she is quite happy with 69 per cent or 70 per cent; she thinks that that is okay. Why cannot Queensland have the greatest deterrent? Why cannot Queensland have the strongest punishment for the vilest of crimes? What is wrong with that? Do members opposite want to be second class? When an idea comes forward they will not accept it simply because it comes from the opposition.

I do not believe that too many of those opposite will walk out of this House tonight believing in their hearts that they have done the right thing in voting against this motion, because what they are voting

against is the ultimate in protection for children in this state. No matter what we do there will always be vile and evil people who will commit crimes, but if we have mandatory sentencing, stronger punishment and greater deterrence and if we can reduce the percentage of people who commit these crimes, surely we have done something worth while for the young people and families of our community and of Queensland.

This is a most important debate tonight. We have only talked about the issue of mandatory sentencing. The technicalities of the minimum part of mandatory sentencing could be worked out by sensible people, provided we agreed to the principle of having mandatory sentencing and the principle that nothing in our society is as evil as those people who sexually assault young children. The scars that those young children bear stay for life. The protection that we give them must be the absolute ultimate, and not the 69 per cent or 70 per cent as glibly quoted by members opposite. Let us have the absolute ultimate in protection.

This parliament has the chance to once and for all stand up and show a bit of ticker. We can show a bit of care and compassion. We can put aside all the legalistic arguments and do what the mothers, fathers and families of Queensland would want to protect our children in the most absolute way possible.

A government member: Sit down!

Mr HORAN: In this most important debate, I can hear a government member saying, 'Sit down!' That shows how much he cares about the protection of children. He should be ashamed of himself.

Time expired.