



Speech by

Jack Dempsey

MEMBER FOR BUNDABERG

Hansard Tuesday, 4 September 2007

COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE AND CHILD GUARDIAN AMENDMENT BILL

Mr DEMPSEY (Bundaberg—NPA) (3.27 pm): I rise to support the Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian Amendment Bill. I thank the minister for the legislation that is before us today. Anything that we can do to protect the most vulnerable members of our community is to be commended. Like the member for Lockyer, I do have some concerns in relation to private enterprise and the issuing of the blue cards. Late last year I asked the Premier a question about the non-issuing of blue cards in relation to Santa Clauses. I was referred to the Children's Commissioner. After speaking to the Children's Commissioner, I was informed that not just Santa Clauses in shopping centres but also taxidrivers and a number of other people have no need to be issued with a blue card in relation to their business. The majority of this responsibility is taken by those industries to assess and implement risk management procedures to make sure that their risk is reduced. I feel that even though there is this legislation before the House, there may be a time in the future when legislation has to be amended to strengthen the authority of the blue card in relation to private enterprise. We seem to be putting the responsibility on these businesses. If we had had stronger legislation all the way through we would have consistency in relation to the blue card.

That comes from comments by members of my community in relation to owners of shops or employees of shops having to take the role of Santa Claus. It is a presumption—and it is a fair presumption—that 99 per cent of the time these people would not have committed an offence, but it certainly would relieve a lot of pressure on those businesses if they were able to refer back to legislation to comply with.

Today in relation to the blue card I would also like to speak of White Balloon Day. White Balloon Day was adopted by Bravehearts in 1997 as a symbol of support for survivors of child sexual abuse. It arose following a public meeting in Belgium in October 1996 when 300,000 people gathered with white balloons to show public sympathy and support for the parents of girls who were sexually abused and were either missing or murdered at the hands of a previously convicted and then released paedophile.

White Balloon Day has been held annually by Bravehearts in the first week of September during national National Child Protection Week. Tuesday, 4 September 2007—today—marks the 10th anniversary of White Balloon Day. The purpose of White Balloon Day is to raise awareness of child sexual assault in our society, send a message of support to those who are suffering in silence, demonstrate community desire for children to be protected from sexual assault, encourage survivors to break the silence and contribute to making children everywhere safer. I would like to thank Lyn Forgan from my local community for her continued work in relation to White Balloon Day.

The blue card system creates great awareness within the community. It engages public conversation in relation to child safety. When people speak freely about blue cards, it adds to community awareness. The more people speak about this—not just in houses of parliament but also at public barbecues in parks and gardens—the more it creates a perception at the back of their mind of a safer environment, and that is to be commended. However, we have to keep abreast of current technology. I ask

the relevant minister to address the concerns of the opposition in relation to photo ID and possible further changes in legislation to protect the children of Queensland. I support the bill before the House. I seek leave to table a non-conforming petition in relation to child safety and the strengthening of sexual offender legislation in Queensland.

Leave granted.

Tabled paper: Non-conforming petition in relation to dangerous sexual offenders.