



Speech by

**Jarrod Bleijie**

**MEMBER FOR KAWANA**

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## **DANGEROUS PRISONERS (SEXUAL OFFENDERS) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

**Mr BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (3.48 pm): I rise this afternoon to speak on the Dangerous Prisoners (Sexual Offenders) and Other Legislation Amendment 2009 introduced by the honourable Attorney-General. May I say that this may well and truly be the last bill that is introduced by the honourable Attorney-General as the Attorney-General before he moves on to bigger and better things in the Premier's office.

The Dangerous Prisoners (Sexual Offenders) Act, which this bill amends, has been altered some six times in its seven-year life span which illustrates the Beattie and Bligh Labor government's attitude towards dangerous crimes committed in this state. What this says to the community is that there is no certainty—no clear message—that if one is considering committing a heinous act the appropriate punishment will be the ultimate deterrent. But I say to members on this side of the House that, given some six amendments in its seven-year life, God knows what it is going to be like now that the government has admitted that it is going to start listening to Queenslanders. No doubt before the next state election this legislation will be amended many more times over now that the ears of the government members are open and listening, because they have admitted that for the past 12 years they have been closed.

The bill before the House is as a result of a review instigated by the Bligh government in November 2007 of its own laws relating to public protection. The stated primary objective of the bill is to increase flexibility for the management of offenders under the act and enhance the ability of the court to make indefinite sentence orders under part 10 of the Penalties and Sentences Act 1992. The review came on the back of growing concerns about the high risk of sick and vile sexual and violent offenders roaming freely in our community. The amendments to the act over recent years have been as a result of the persistence from certain lobby groups, the stance by the opposition and general pressure from the broader community. It was the opposition that managed to pass amendments to the act that would allow victim impact statements to be tendered to the court when deciding orders. This continues our approach to a justice system in this state which puts the focus back on the rights of the victims as opposed to the rights of the alleged offenders, and it is about time that offenders took responsibility for their actions.

However, I feel that the balance in the criminal justice system is still skewed towards the offender and does not have the appropriate balance of punishing criminal acts and protecting the victims of crime as opposed to the slap-on-the-wrist approach of consecutive Labor governments. When I say that, what would one expect from Labor governments when the future deputy leader of the Labor Party, the member for Brisbane Central, debating a bill last night said that it could serve as a mitigating defence if a person is 'slightly intoxicated' when they seriously assault a police officer? The treatment of sex offenders is an issue that always stirs up great debate in the community. While I am not for vigilante justice as in the rule of a mob over our judicial system, there is—

**Mr Shine:** You sure?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I am definitely sure. There is an underlying feeling that has crept into society because the community has a general mistrust of our court system, particularly when it comes to crimes committed

by sex offenders. The simple, harsh reality is that when governments are dealing with dangerous sex offenders they have to remember that they are a continual risk to the community and need to be dealt with in an appropriate manner with this fact in mind. Anyone who has committed a heinous act always, in my opinion, bears the risk of reoffending and the safety of the community needs to be placed ahead of the interests of the offender.

The bill before the House has several flaws which even the Attorney-General has realised, with the foreshadowing of several amendments. I support the statements outlined by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and shadow Attorney-General in terms of the supervision order and the length of time a court could impose a supervision order on dangerous sex offenders of no longer than five years after the offender's release date from prison. As stated in the explanatory notes, the highest risk period for offenders is the first few years after their release from custody. However, this is not a predetermined time period and each offender is different from the next. It is always important to err on the side of caution, particularly when these offenders have a history of violent criminal behaviour.

I believe that judicial discretion is fundamentally paramount to each individual case and should be the overriding precursor to any such decision on the term of a supervision order that is imposed. This policy-on-the-run backflip by the Labor leader-in-waiting, the Attorney-General, is capricious at best and just further illustrates the Labor state government's attitude towards protecting the community from violent sexual predators. It could not do it in 2007 when the corrective services minister relocated a dangerous sex offender to a street where children lived, as the honourable member for Mudgeeraba indicated. It cannot even do it in 2010. That stupidity initiated the review which this amendment legislation came from, and that is the approach by the Bligh Labor government towards the relocation of sex offenders back into the community.

The problem with this government is that it always, as I have said in this place before, wants to appear to be tough on crime but does not want to allocate any additional funding or resources. So it tinkers around the edges as if to give the impression that it is initiating great reform. But—as usual—it is more talk, it is more spin; there is no substance and there is no real action. In the various community forums, meetings and in discussions with constituents in my electorate, the same theme and the same points are continually raised in relation to the Queensland justice system. People have had enough of the slap-on-the-wrist approach and softly, softly approach of Labor governments. They are calling out for a criminal justice system that punishes those who commit crimes and restores protective measures for people who do the right thing and not those who are doing the wrong thing. The bill before the House in its current form does nothing to restore any of the public's faith in the system and continues this Labor government's approach to policy which is made on the run and shows no leadership whatsoever. But, in conclusion, what would one expect from the real Premier and the real Labor Party?