




Speech by

Freya Ostapovitch

MEMBER FOR STRETTON

Hansard Tuesday, 10 July 2012

CRIMINAL LAW (TWO STRIKE CHILD SEX OFFENDERS) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mrs OSTAPOVITCH** (Stretton—LNP) (5.04 pm): It is with great enthusiasm that I commend this bill to the House. I have been on a child safety policy standing committee for almost three years and for as many years I have heard the pleas of Bravehearts founder, Hetty Johnston, that the Queensland Labor government do something to curb the shocking statistics of child sexual abuse. We have heard the words of the Leader of the Opposition. She still carries on about petty reasons for keeping things the same. There can be no more heinous crime than when an adult takes away a child's innocence. Paedophiles are without a doubt a parent's greatest nightmare.

Hetty Johnston says that if people are a danger to the community it is the duty of those responsible for public safety—and that is all of us in this very place—to keep such people away from the general community. We can find no philosophical argument against this proposal. After all, children are not empowered to look after themselves. If we do not do it, who will?

It is clear that the community fears of child sex offenders are real. Just as real is the incredible amount of damage and harm that is caused by child sex offenders on those they prey upon. As a community we need to find ways in which to manage sex offenders and respond to those who are clearly a serious risk. Nothing is as strong an indicator of a high-risk offender as persistent offending. In order to keep our communities and in particular our children safe and protected from harm we need to find effective measures to protect our children against those offenders who demonstrate that they are a risk.

It is stated in the Bravehearts position paper that the opinion of most is that paedophilia is as much a part of one's orientation as anything else. At this point in time paedophilia is seen as a disorder that should be treated. As we delve deeper into this issue, though, it seems that it is instead part of one's orientation. It cannot be treated. If one has this orientation, it is not a question of if they will reoffend but when they will reoffend.

The number of victims is alarmingly high. The Smallbone and Wortley study on sex offenders in Queensland prisons found that 169 child sex offenders who had admitted to at least one sexual offence against a child later disclosed offences against 1,010 children—748 boys and 262 girls. Child sex offenders are opportunistic predators who ruin lives. They groom children and gain their trust before striking. These ruined lives more often than not end up costing society in one way or another.

In 1997 La Course stated that there are three main benefits of two-strike legislation. The first is the justice outcome. Justice is served for victims of crime as violent career criminals are removed from communities. The second is the prevention outcome. Crimes would ultimately be prevented as persistent offenders are detained. The third is the deterrence outcome. For fear of incarceration some persistent offenders may change their behaviours. Yes, it is true that some may not, but we cannot not try to do something.

The member for Inala spoke about the cost of this legislation. I find it inconceivable that she would complain about the cost of protecting children. But the truth is that the cost of incarcerating two-strike child sex offenders must be considered against the cost of this crime to the community, including the costs of supervising offenders in community settings. The Queensland Minister for Police and Community Safety stated in 2007 that the cost of incarcerating offenders under the current dangerous prisoners act is \$160 per day. That is less than the cost of supervising them in the community which is \$170 per day. That is from the transcript of the Queensland parliament on 10 October 2007. According to this, we actually save money while protecting the most vulnerable in our society—our children, our future. I very much commend this bill to the House.