




Speech By
Michael Crandon
MEMBER FOR COOMERA

**CRIMINAL LAW (CHILD EXPLOITATION AND DANGEROUS DRUGS)
AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr CRANDON** (Coomera—LNP) (12.51 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the Criminal Law (Child Exploitation and Dangerous Drugs) Amendment Bill 2012. I note that the intent is to amend the Criminal Code. The explanatory notes state—

- amend the definition of 'child exploitation material' in section 207A to ensure animated or virtual images of children are caught by definition;
- insert a new circumstance of aggravation in sections 208 (Unlawful sodomy), 210 (Indecent treatment of children under 16) and 215 (Carnal knowledge with or of children under 16) where the offence is committed against a child with an impairment of the mind;
- provide a new offence of 'grooming', carrying a maximum penalty of five years imprisonment or 10 years if the child is under 12, to target adults who engage in any conduct in relation to a child under 16 years ...;
- increase the maximum penalties for the child exploitation material offences: from five years to 14 years imprisonment for the offence of possession (section 228D); and 10 years to 14 years imprisonment for the offences of involving a child in the making of child exploitation material (section 228A), making child exploitation material (section 228B) and distributing child exploitation material (section 228C);

and the list goes on.

This is a wide-ranging change to the Criminal Code and it is about time, and I congratulate the Attorney-General for his work in this area. The exploitation of a child who has mental and/or physical impairment has to be the lowest form of child abuse on the planet. No child under the age of 12, let alone under the age of 16, has the capacity to make an informed decision when it comes to their sexual behaviour. They need parental guidance as their young minds cannot fathom the degree of responsibility that comes with making these important decisions.

Material which can be easily distributed through social media and the like takes on a new dimension and can have long-lasting effects that can damage and harm a young person as they reach adulthood. The use of comic type programming is now commonplace during adult viewing times and can be confused as family-child imagery. Young adults who live in a less than normal arrangement—and certainly in my electorate I have some areas that I will talk about in a moment—and who are coerced into accepting what is abnormal behaviour from those adults who are meant to be protecting them need to be freed from this harm and protected.

I have personal experience in regard to these sorts of incidents—very close personal experience, I must say, sadly. I have only just in recent weeks been reminded of the effect that this type of action by adults has not only on the victim of the exploitation—we are now talking about the child—but also on the people around that child, the effect that that type of thing has on the whole family and the extended family of a child who has been sexually abused. The sad thing is that many of these incidents of abuse go on for years and years and years. They affect not one but two, three or even more children in a family or in a household because of an in the past unacceptable veil of silence that has been brought down. I, for one, have been an advocate of exposing people who are

choosing to go down this road of exploiting our children, affecting them physically and mentally for the rest of their lives but also affecting the rest of the family.

The personal experience that I talked about occurred some 10 years ago and I can assure the House that to this day those things that occurred are still with me. Those memories are still with me. I think of them virtually every day. My family thinks of them virtually every day. And we are affected by those actions virtually every day as a family. The individual that was involved in that activity has been punished. He deserved to be punished. He has had his punishment and he has done well. He is a changed man today I am pleased to say. It is still though difficult for family members to be accepting of that individual because of those things that happened a decade ago. So that individual will have a stigma attached to him for the rest of his life, and for the rest of the family when they think of him or when they see him one of the first things they think about is what happened 10 years ago.

It is high time that we got tougher on child exploitation. I commend the Attorney-General, as I said earlier, for his determination in raising these penalties to 14 years for the most part and to 10 years in other areas. I can tell the House that in my role as a member of parliament I am doing everything that I can to change things at the grassroots. As an example of that, there is an organisation called Life Education Queensland.

Mr Rickuss interjected.

Mr CRANDON: Life Education Queensland is a fantastic organisation. I take the interjection from the member for Lockyer. Life Education Queensland goes into our schools from prep through to year 8 currently and provides an education program for our children. I have two schools in my electorate in particular that I am assisting with funding over a three-year period. If I am fortunate enough to be re-elected at the next election, I will recommit to a further three years of funding to ensure that every child in those two schools goes through this particular program—that is how important I think it is—so that the children who have completed the eight years of the program, from prep through to year 8, will have been through a life education program that gives them an opportunity in an area that is bereft of opportunities, if you like, to see what it is that is important about them and their life; to assist them in the understanding of drugs, whether they be legal drugs or illegal drugs; and to assist them in the understanding of what is their private person and what is private to them and what other people do not have the right to do to them.

I commend the Attorney-General. I also commend Life Education Queensland on their efforts. I can assure the House that I will continue to be an advocate and continue to fund, as best I can, these types of programs in my electorate to try to make a difference at the base level for these people and change their lives forever.