




Speech By
Shane Knuth

MEMBER FOR DALRYMPLE

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CHILD PROTECTION (OFFENDER REPORTING—PUBLICATION OF INFORMATION) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr KNUTH** (Dalrymple—KAP) (8.03 pm), in reply: The Child Protection (Offending Reporting—Publication of Information) Amendment Bill 2013 has drawn criticism here tonight because of the possibility of publication of incorrect information and the invasion of offenders' privacy. The Attorney talks about locking the door and throwing away the key, but nothing has been said about the serious offenders who have been released and who are yet to be released. As with all legislation dealing with such sensitive matters, it is important to strike the right balance between the protection of an individual's privacy and the protection of society. We have to protect the rights of individuals, but we have to balance those rights with the protection of families and children in the community as a priority.

A society is judged by how we treat the most vulnerable and disadvantaged. This bill unapologetically places a higher priority on the protection of children and places all other considerations secondary. The intent of this bill is not to increase punishment which, as the minister said before, has not always proven to be an effective deterrent, and it is not to increase reporting requirements for offenders. The sole objective of this legislation is to give parents, carers, employers and police an effective, practical tool to protect our children from being victims of horrific crimes. By introducing a public register we are saying to Queenslanders, 'We trust you to do the right thing with this information.' There is nothing more serious than the protection of children from sexual abuse, but the statistics show that we as a society are failing that responsibility. Parents, guardians and employers need access to information that will help them protect the children in their care.

Studies of public registers in other jurisdictions demonstrate that public registers are an acceptable law enforcement tool in tracking possible offenders in unsolved abuse cases. These studies also show that public registers are an excellent deterrent against reoffending. Paedophiles generally gain access to children by befriending the family or gaining the trust of the intended victim. These paedophiles are serious offenders that have been released from prison. The Attorney has introduced greater punishments which he feels are the be-all and end-all, but what we are talking about here is something that is effective. This is what society is calling for, and that is why I have put this bill forward. If the Attorney-General in Queensland adopted this bill, the LNP backbench would start to like him again. They would give him a standing ovation because they could see that he is coming to his senses, and the member for Mount Ommaney said that she would do anything. Because this is not an LNP bill, the LNP must embrace party policy and oppose it by whatever means necessary. People want good governance.

I commend the members of the Katter party who have put forward five bills in the last two years. When the LNP were in opposition they introduced four bills and they had a staff of 21. We did this with no staff because in the last five minutes before the Christmas recess the LNP government removed our party's funding. But we have soldiered on because we want to do what is in the best

interests of Queensland. That is why we put forward the Milk Pricing (Fair Milk Mark) Bill, which the LNP opposed, but which copped the wrath of the Queensland Dairy Organisation. We introduced the flying fox control bill, and I thank the environment minister for seeing the light. He gave councils the same powers that we had proposed in that bill.

We put forward the billboards legislation too. The Attorney had indicated that he would take a tough stance on rogues who put up indecent billboards in front of schools, but they still did not have the intestinal fortitude to regulate it. The reason they did not have the intestinal fortitude to regulate it is that they were in bed with the big corporates. They believe in deregulation. That is why I put this bill forward, and I commend the member for Condamine here for putting forward legislation to protect prime agricultural land because he cares for the people and the farmers, not the big corporates.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Watts): Order! Member for Dalrymple, it would be great if you could stay relevant to the bill that is in front of you.

Mr KNUTH: Derryn Hinch met with the Attorney in his quest to have a sex offender register established. That is exactly what we put forward. We put forward a very comprehensive package. We worked very hard on this, having regard to the Western Australia model and the American model. We also referred to information provided to us by Derryn Hinch.

A government member interjected.

Mr KNUTH: You might be from Victoria or somewhere—I am not sure—but I am from North Queensland.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I ask members in the chamber to direct their comments through the chair. That includes you, member for Dalrymple.

Mr KNUTH: Derryn Hinch said that he would continue to campaign for this register. We have it in front of us.

When I tabled this bill the Attorney was contemplating doing the same thing. That is why I said that if he had done the same thing government members would be giving him a standing ovation, but all I hear is murmuring in the background because government members know that this is good legislation. The government has already taken a strong, tough stance on sex offenders, but it is the ones who have been released and the ones who are about to be released that people want to know about. They want to know where they are and if they are living in their neighbourhoods. Is that too hard? People want to know whether dangerous sex offenders are working in their kindies or their schools or are involved in the BMX club. Is that too hard? It is quite simple. We have introduced this legislation to fill the gap that exists. It is important that we address this gap because if we do not then the lives of children and parents can be ruined and communities can be affected. That is why we have brought forward this legislation. We are not mucking around here. We do not propose this bill as a stunt. We have brought it forward because this is what Queensland wants.

This bill will give clarity where clarity currently does not exist. It seeks to put in place safeguards to prevent the publication of the wrong person's details, which some members said they were very concerned about. It makes the register accessible by the public. It identifies dangerous sex offenders, who are a threat to our society. It adds layers of protection for children and it gives parents a tool to access accurate information in order to protect their children. We have proposed this bill because the community wants this. Queenslanders want it. Queenslanders need it. I commend the bill to the House.