



Speech By  
**Hon. Mark Bailey**

**MEMBER FOR YEERONGPILLY**

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**LIMITATIONS OF ACTIONS (INSTITUTIONAL CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE) AND  
OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL; LIMITATION OF ACTIONS AND  
OTHER LEGISLATION (CHILD ABUSE CIVIL PROCEEDINGS) AMENDMENT  
BILL**

 **Hon. MC BAILEY** (Yeerongpilly—ALP) (Minister for Main Roads, Road Safety and Ports and Minister for Energy, Biofuels and Water Supply) (5.50 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Limitation of Actions (Institutional Child Sexual Abuse) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016. I acknowledge that it proposes the removal of the statute of limitations for child sexual abuse that occurred in an institution and that consideration will be given to extending the scope.

I will make a number of observations about the lineage of this bill being brought to this place. In no way do I make these comments in a partisan way, but I think it is difficult to speak on this bill without acknowledging the fact that it came from the royal commission initially established at the federal level by then prime minister Gillard, who is a controversial figure. I think this is one of her greatest achievements as prime minister.

I remember very clearly the public polling that was conducted in the lead-up to the establishment of the royal commission. I have never seen a poll in which 95 per cent of Australians supported anything. In this case they supported the royal commission. I think it shows the depth of feeling and how much the issue personally touched so many Australians that the support for the royal commission was very strong. The view was that it was very much overdue. What we are dealing with here today is a follow-on from that, as the third state after New South Wales and Victoria.

I wholeheartedly support this bill. I agree with previous speakers: this is a momentous day. This is a day on which we support survivors in every way we possibly can in terms of their process of healing from what has been an extraordinarily difficult circumstance, often at the very beginnings of their lives. We cannot change what has been done in the past, but we as a society can put out very clear signals about supporting those people who need justice. Removing the statute of limitations is absolutely necessary. In fact, it is amazing that the law was so antiquated and so restrictive for so long. To the extent that there is bipartisan support for those kinds of moves here today, I think it is a credit to this parliament.

I think this represents a generational shift in values for us as a community. The ability of people to use the curtain to abuse the power that comes with incredible positions of trust—minors have been given over to be cared for and that trust has been abused in such a basic and terrible way—will be curtailed. There is no guarantee that it will not happen again, of course, but our understanding how systematic it was and how often it happened—and for that to be commonly known—is a really important part of the empowerment of our community. We need to know how to limit the ability of those who would be perpetrators. We need to give people who might become victims the knowledge that there are allies,

that there is support in the justice system and that there are people they can go to to prevent this sort of thing from happening and to expose those people whose deficiencies as perpetrators are quite fundamental.

We need to go through a process in relation to the scar on the nation's soul that is systematic sexual abuse of minors to make sure that it does not happen again and that processes are in place to prevent the abuse of power at such a basic level. As an adult in my 40s, I am proud that in this era we are addressing this issue. It has been common knowledge in the general community that institutional abuse was not uncommon. Finally a royal commission has done the work to deal with the issue, and it continues to work. There is such a huge body of work to get through. I place on record my appreciation of all those people working on the royal commission who have to deal with incredibly difficult material every day on behalf of the nation. That work is absolutely critical. It will flow on to a better community, a more compassionate community and a more aware community—making sure that checks and balances are applied to people in positions of power to ensure the kind of systematic abuse that has happened over many generations in Australia's history is prevented. Let us be very clear: it has been going on for a long time, often by people who have professed to be the most pious in order to cover up the abuse.

I think this is a very important piece of legislation. The signals it sends out and the support it provides for survivors are very important. I am proud of this parliament for passing this legislation. I know that there are some varying points of view, but I think this is a momentous time for this chamber and for this state. I thank speakers from all sides of the chamber for their sincere contributions and the seriousness with which people have treated the topic. I am sure that people on all sides of the chamber have a variety of indirect and direct experiences in terms of this issue that have touched them. I support this bill wholeheartedly. I thank previous speakers and I commend the bill to the House.