




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR SOUTHPORT

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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**

 **Mr MOLHOEK** (Southport—LNP) (5.11 pm): I am pleased to rise tonight to speak in support of this legislation. I will actually start by reading from the opposition leader's earlier statement on this particular piece of legislation. These are the words of the honourable Tim Nicholls—

The LNP believes that, by restricting the removal of the statute of limitations to only certain cases of child sexual abuse, there is an effective creation of two classes of survivors. That would be patently unfair. How could we as legislators say to a victim of child sexual abuse that they do not deserve their day in court to seek justice simply because of the circumstances of their abuse? That is why I foreshadow today that through the proper processes of this parliament we will seek to move amendments to the bill that broaden the effect of the government's legislation and extend the range of survivors to whom it will apply. It is not fair to discriminate against people simply because of the circumstances in which they suffered, and we will do what we can to provide a voice for all survivors of child sexual abuse in Queensland.

I am absolutely in support of the legislation. I note that the committee recommended the Limitation of Actions (Institutional Child Sexual Abuse) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016 be passed. My sincere hope is that when we get to consideration in detail the government will be open to some of the proposed changes in terms of extending the limitations to also include those who suffered abuse other than institutional abuse.

Just five years ago when the LNP government first came back into power after many years I was very proud to be part of a government where one of the first actions of the premier at the time, Campbell Newman, was to announce, on the steps of Government House just after he was sworn in as premier, the Carmody inquiry. At that time I was unaware that a few days later I would be appointed the assistant minister for child safety.

In response to that, I then spent Easter reading in detail the report of the Forde inquiry of 1999. I also read through the Queensland Child Protection Commission of Inquiry that was conducted back in 2008. We are all fully aware of the findings and recommendations of the Carmody inquiry. What a gruesome story was played out in those three reports. We saw many accounts of significant abuse, often times at the hands of institutions and often times as a result of government turning a blind eye to what was a very serious problem.

Around that time I asked the library to conduct some research into the history of child protection in Queensland. I was actually quite shocked to learn that it was not until the 1950s that the Queensland government introduced its first child protection act. Very sadly, prior to that previous governments used language like bastard children and children being born outside of wedlock as really not being worthy of anything more than being thrown into an orphanage or institution. Fortunately, we have come an

incredibly long way from those days. We now have a much more appropriate view of the value of the child and, dare I say it, the right of every child to have a childhood that is carefree, fun, innocent and full of lots of laughter. Sadly for many Queensland children that is not always the case.

Just a few weeks ago I received an email from a teacher on the Gold Coast. Just in case anyone asks me to table it, which I hope they will not, I have taken out the names to protect all parties concerned. They were talking about a particular child who was in a fairly precarious situation. I am pleased that on that occasion I was able to contact the minister's office and have been subsequently assured that they have taken significant action to intervene on this occasion.

It is a little graphic and shocking. I am only going to read two paragraphs from the email which is quite long. I think this needs to be on the record so that we understand that we are not just talking about some minor offence or some frivolous thing that has happened to some poor child, but talking, in many cases, about quite significant harm. I will jump in at paragraph 3. It reads—

This child has cried so often and expressed his desire to die daily because he feels unloved, trapped, abused, hated and not wanted by anyone. He says he is useless and helpless and dumb, and that this is what his so-called carers tell him every day. They call him a black dog and a poofter. They video him naked and show the videos to their friends in front of him. He says he can't escape because there's nowhere to go. He says they tell him if he talks to anyone he will be taken by DOCS and sent somewhere worse.

This child often expressed his enjoyment of school and his friendships with his peers and his teachers. He would express that he loved school, but that his dad didn't like him coming. He said, 'They hurt me all the time,' and they would do it together. He was afraid to wake dad in the mornings because dad and mum stayed up all night and slept all day. This child would say they were sick all the time and that they would go out for their medicine, which I believe were drugs.

I can assure members that they probably do not want to hear the rest of the email because some of the other allegations are quite horrific.

Victims of abuse do not just come out of institutions. The statistics in Australia are that of all the abuse that occurs about eight per cent of it occurs in institutions. Sadly, about 30 per cent actually occurs within the family home. A further 30 per cent of it occurs with neighbours, family friends and relatives. Sadly, the other third, in rough figures, occurs in places where kids should feel safe like sporting clubs, scout groups, schools, neighbourhoods and other places within the community.

I wholeheartedly concur with Karyn Walsh who appeared at the public committee hearing that we conducted. I had the privilege of sitting in for a day for one of my colleagues. Karyn Walsh made the point that all victims deserve to be heard. If you have ever had the privilege—and I have heard members talk about it—of visiting some of the facilities where Karyn Walsh and her team provide support to past victims, you will all agree that they do amazing work through Micah Projects. At the facility that they have in South Brisbane at Common Ground, there are many people there who have not just come from disadvantaged backgrounds with disability but who are trying to piece their lives back together. I am so pleased that there are people like Karyn in the community who are standing up for our kids.

There are so many other things I would love to say about this. Just today I received an email from someone in New Zealand—an Aussie citizen who has moved there—who has heard about the fact that we are debating this today. They wanted to have their moment to be heard. I can assure them that I have certainly heard their comments and I will certainly be passing them on to the appropriate person. There are so many people who are seeking to be cared for and to be heard.

One of the reasons I joined the board of Bravehearts was that some 12 years ago now I had a little old lady come to see me at my mobile office one Monday morning. She came in and said, 'I know you are the local councillor. You probably can't help, but I have been to everybody. Nobody seems to want to listen. My three granddaughters were sexually abused at a local club and I don't know who else to talk to.' Shortly after that I contacted Hetty Johnston from Bravehearts. She came out and met with the family. She worked with the police and the family. It turned out that there were 11 girls who had been sexually abused by this particular coach. She was brought to justice and charged through the court system.

Just a few weeks later Hetty Johnston rang me and said, 'Now that you understand what we do, perhaps you may like to join us on the board.' It has been my great privilege to be with Bravehearts for some 12 years now. I know that all of us involved in Bravehearts applaud this legislation. We absolutely believe it is important that every victim is heard. My sincere wish is that the government will support the proposed amendments when we bring them into the House later this evening.