




Speech By
Hon. Mark Ryan

MEMBER FOR MORAYFIELD

Record of Proceedings, 11 May 2017

**CHILD PROTECTION (OFFENDER REPORTING) AND OTHER LEGISLATION
AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Hon. MT RYAN** (Morayfield—ALP) (Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services and Minister for Corrective Services) (5.05 pm), in reply: I begin by thanking the members of this House for their contributions to the debate of this bill. I acknowledge that this bill has bipartisan support and the support of those on the crossbenches. This bill will enhance protections to the most vulnerable members of our community, namely, our children. Child safety is of such importance that it transcends politics. I appreciate the meaningful debate entered into by members of this House and the recognition of the good work performed by the Queensland Police Service.

I also recognise the dedicated members of the Queensland Police Service, particularly members within the Child Safety and Sexual Crime Group, including Task Force Argos members and the regional child protection investigation officers, who are tasked with the monitoring of child sex offenders in our community. These officers perform a very difficult task in which they are exposed to the most disturbing aspects of offending against children in this state. Their contribution to the monitoring of reportable offenders and reviewing the risk that those people may pose to our children is greatly appreciated by me personally and also by the government as a whole.

I also take this opportunity to address a specific issue raised just recently in the debate. The member for Buderim has raised the idea of giving the public unfettered access to registers that would hold the details of certain people's criminal histories. Determining whether this concept would be of benefit to Queensland would require extensive policy development and community consultation. Many issues would need to be addressed including whether this concept would promote vigilantism, drive offenders underground or undermine the positive gains our police have been making in this area for many years. I will always take operational advice from the Police Commissioner concerning this issue. A policy of this kind must be evidence based.

In contrast, I am confident that this bill will deliver on the fundamental commitment of this government to community safety in respect of child safety. The Palaszczuk government has provided and always will provide our police with the tools they need to ensure they can continue to perform their work in monitoring child sex offenders to enhance the safety of children in Queensland.

Police who are required to investigate and monitor child sex offenders do a fantastic job in very difficult circumstances. This bill enables them to perform their role more efficiently by amalgamating two complex acts into one more efficient piece of legislation that not only meets the recommendations outlined in the Crime and Corruption Commission's review but also provides appropriate powers, penalties and safeguards.

Child safety has long been a strong mandate for this government, and providing adequate provisions to enable our police to monitor reportable offenders more effectively is paramount. I make no apologies for getting tough on child sex offenders. Enabling police to ascertain the whereabouts of

offenders or view their storage devices is vital, especially as technology advancements provide offenders with significant opportunities to engage in high-risk behaviours or surreptitious online activities. The inspection provisions in this bill are cutting-edge.

This government is leading the way and is providing the toughest and most comprehensive police powers in the country in terms of examining reportable offenders' electronic and storage devices. Our children deserve to be protected from these predators. The community demands it and this government is delivering on it. This government will not stand by and allow reportable offenders to manipulate the system in order to offend against or revictimise more children. That is why we have reduced reporting time frames regarding offenders leaving or entering Queensland from seven days to 48 hours. Police need to know where these people are and who they are travelling with or intending to visit. That is also why this government will no longer allow self-represented offenders to cross-examine their victims, even in circumstances where the victim is now an adult. Their suffering does not end with an arrest or a conviction. They deserve to be protected from revictimisation and further trauma. The Palaszczuk government recognises their ongoing suffering and is committed to protecting and supporting these victims regardless of their age at the time of giving evidence.

In developing this bill, our government consulted widely with experts in the field and considered the views of the community. The Palaszczuk government listened, evaluated and responded. I will share with members of this House some of the comments made about this bill. Denise and Bruce Morcombe provided the following comment in respect of this bill—

Daniel was murdered by a twice convicted paedophile. Being on the front foot to protect children is vital. These planned measures are tough on predators and that is a good thing. It allows suspected child exploitation activity to be investigated swiftly, potentially reducing harm to our youngsters.

Hetty Johnston from Bravehearts provided this comment in respect of the bill—

I think these amendments reflect contemporary necessities in law enforcement to ensure greater community safety. The online domain is the new front line and our police certainly need to be in a position to monitor what known offenders are doing in that space. These changes meet not only community expectations but logistical necessities around how we protect our children and I commend you for their introduction. It is critical that police and other authorities have effective tools to properly monitor those people we know pose a risk to our children and as such I believe the raft of changes proposed are to be commended.

I take the opportunity to thank, on behalf of the government, Denise and Bruce Morcombe and Hetty Johnston for their comments. Their contributions that they have made not only to our community but also in their commentary of this bill have been invaluable and we are very thankful for their work to make Queensland a safer and better place for our children.

I conclude by emphasising this very important point: this bill enhances children's safety and police effectiveness in the monitoring of child sex offenders. It delivers on the Crime and Corruption Commission's recommendations and it makes the reporting obligations of child sex offenders more rigorous. I also want to place on the record that this bill will receive bipartisan support as well as support from crossbenchers and is a core example of the Queensland parliament working together to enhance the protection of children. This bill is essential to keeping our children safe and we make no apologies for cracking down on child sex offenders. I commend the bill to the House.