




Speech By
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CHILD PROTECTION (OFFENDER REPORTING) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms BATES** (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (3.50 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the Child Protection (Offender Reporting) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016. This bill confirms once again that it is the LNP that is protecting children in this state, because the bill was introduced as a result of recommendations made by a review established by the LNP during our time in government. Unlike those opposite, on this side of the House we can be proud of our record on child safety. We increased penalties for child exploitation materials. We inserted grooming into the Criminal Code. We cracked down on sex offenders who tamper with or remove their GPS tracking bracelets through the introduction of mandatory sentences. We increased maximum penalties for procuring a child for prostitution. We allowed courts to list predators as dangerous offenders. We enforced more stringent reporting conditions for offenders under changes to the Child Protection (Offender Reporting) Act.

Let us not forget that it was the LNP that established the Queensland Child Protection Commission of Inquiry after 20 years of child safety failures under successive Labor governments and it was the LNP that established the Crime and Corruption Commission review in 2013, which was finalised in 2014. Today's bill is being debated in this House because child safety was a priority for the former LNP government.

The CCC review found some very concerning trends had been allowed to occur in the half a decade the act had been in force. In the five years that the act has been in place, 48 offender prohibition orders were made in response to concerning conduct. The review found that offenders who received OPOs engaged in a high volume of instances of concerning conduct and more serious concerning conduct than any other reportable offenders. Collectively, those 21 offenders were convicted of over 100 sexual or other serious crimes against Queensland children. Seven of those offenders breached their OPOs and usually faced time in prison. Shockingly, even with an OPO in effect, one offender was known to have been able to commit a new offence against a child.

Amongst its findings, the CCC noted a concerning lack of consistency in the administration of OPOs. In the five years up to 2013, obtaining an OPO could have taken anywhere from nine days to just under three years. That largely varied as a result of the police application process as well as court processes. That was an unacceptable delay that put children at risk.

During the review process, some suggestions were raised that police may have viewed concerning behaviour near places where children congregate as possible precursor conduct to more serious offences. As a result, several applications for OPOs were based solely on concerning conduct. The rest of the applications were based on both legal and illegal conduct. This indicated that, even when an offender had committed a criminal offence, police would also apply for an OPO alongside the criminal charges. That was done with a view to prohibiting any further legal conduct that might be a precursor to a future offence. Overall, the CCC found that police were generally using the act to prohibit conduct that could be a precursor to the commission of a new offence. They also found OPOs had been made for offenders with a high risk of reoffending. In numerical terms, the data obtained for this review

showed that OPOs were not often used as a response tool, with only 21 offenders having received an OPO. That might simply indicate that the police were opting to use a tool other than an OPO to respond to concerning conduct.

In line with the 17 recommendations of our review, the bill makes changes to the act to streamline processes and keep kids safe. These reforms streamline procedures around offender prohibition orders, amend the definition of 'concerning conduct' to allow better identification by police and improve information sharing. They also broaden the scope for offenders to be considered as reportable offenders and reduce the time reportable offenders can travel in and out of Queensland without reporting back to our government agencies. They introduce new police powers related to electronic devices, through which we know grooming commonly occurs.

While the LNP's record on child safety is clear, this bill raises significant concerns surrounding Labor's commitment to child safety. Why did it take those opposite two years to implement these important reforms? Why did the CCC's recommendations sit on the minister's desk for 24 months, collecting dust when Labor knew there was a problem? Yet again, we see Labor failing to implement road maps that have been laid out for it by the LNP and that would keep Queenslanders safe. Our children deserve better than a do-nothing Labor government that, even with the solutions laid out in front of it by the LNP, sits on its hands while our children remain at risk.