




Speech By  
**Hon. Shannon Fentiman**

**MEMBER FOR WATERFORD**

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Record of Proceedings, 11 May 2017

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

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Communities, Women and Youth, Minister for Child Safety and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence) (4.54 pm): I rise in support of the Child Protection (Offender Reporting) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016 which was introduced last year by the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services and Minister for Corrective Services. This bill will protect the most vulnerable in our community and tighten our supervision and control over offenders, particularly child sexual offenders. The bill also streamlines how agencies interact and share information, including extending the scope of information sharing between government and non-government agencies. This is an amendment that I wholeheartedly support.

Many in this place will remember that in February of this year the Premier and I announced a \$6 million IT overhaul to allow faster information sharing between agencies about vulnerable children. It has been a strong focus of this government to roll out integrated whole-of-government approaches to child safety matters, and this bill builds on that. This bill will give power to the Police Commissioner to obtain vital information from different agencies, and in return it will allow agencies access to relevant information from the police. I also note that due to this increase in information sharing the minister has made sure that anyone unlawfully disclosing this information for the purpose of intimidating or harassing a respondent will face tough penalties, with a maximum penalty of five years imprisonment or 300 penalty units. These harsher penalties show how seriously we take the sharing of information and how it must not be corrupted or compromised.

I also strongly support the amendment which protects children from being cross-examined by an offender during any proceeding if the offender decides to represent himself. Being 16 years or younger and delving into the legal world to prove that something so hideous has happened to you would be terrifying. In fact, it is unimaginable. We want kids to speak out against anyone who violates their trust, and the possibility of being cross-examined by their accuser is an impediment to this brave decision. Protect All Children Today—or PACT, as they are known—has also commended this amendment. In a letter to the committee on 10 January 2017 they state—

PACT are extremely supportive of the amendments to preclude the cross-examination of a child.

...

In PACT's experience children and young people are extremely fearful of coming into contact with the accused throughout the court process, so any steps to minimise this from occurring should be implemented as a matter of priority.

PACT also commended the bill as a whole and informed the committee—

PACT support the policy objectives being achieved by amending the CPORA and the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000 (PPRA) to give effect to the recommendations made by the CCC ...

...

We concur that combining the Acts will streamline the legislation and the five year review period will enable any identified issues to be amended in a timely manner.

Finally, I want to highlight two other measures which will keep young people safe from offenders and their predatory behaviour. The first is the reduction in the reporting time frame for offenders travelling into and outside Queensland from seven days to 48 hours. This will keep a tighter control on the whereabouts of offenders in the community and will help keep kids safe. Secondly, I want to highlight and commend the amendment which will monitor offenders' online activity and force them to disclose to the police any passwords where police have a reasonable suspicion. Once police have gone through the appropriate checks and approvals, they will now have the power to attach software to offenders' computers which will monitor chat room activity, browsing history, images and instant messaging.

We know that as technology evolves and more children have in their possession devices connected to the internet, they are also unknowingly opening up a portal to the darker side of the web and our society. It is every parent's worst nightmare. This amendment will increase police powers over offenders' technology and keep our kids safe. I thank the committee for their work on the bill, the stakeholders who have thrown their support behind this and Minister Ryan for its passage through the House. I commend the bill to the House.