




Speech By
Ann Leahy

MEMBER FOR WARREGO

Record of Proceedings, 1 May 2019

CRIMINAL CODE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL; CRIMINAL CODE AND OTHER LEGISLATION (MASON JETT LEE) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms LEAHY** (Warrego—LNP) (4.45 pm): I rise to contribute to the cognate debate on the Criminal Code and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019 and the Criminal Code and Other Legislation (Mason Jett Lee) Amendment Bill 2019, which is a private member's bill introduced by the LNP opposition. I commend the shadow Attorney-General and member for Toowoomba South for the work that he has put in to this private member's bill. I acknowledge his passion for protecting our children. I put on the record my thanks to him for the very hard work that he does to protect Queensland children. That is particularly important.

Today the House is debating a very serious matter. Children are innocent and it is the role of the legislators in this House to protect them. I listened to the shadow Attorney-General as he outlined the absolutely horrendous injuries suffered by Mason Jett Lee, in whose honour the private member's bill is named. The LNP introduced this bill to remedy the inadequacy of the punishments given to child killers in Queensland. Mason Jett Lee's killer could be eligible for parole in six years; he could be out of jail in six years. We in the LNP know that Labor does not have the stomach to do what is necessary to deliver justice for Queensland children. We should never forget the tragedy of our precious young children who are being killed, and it is particularly disturbing that that situation is occurring in Queensland.

Twenty-two-month-old Mason Jett Lee suffered from broken bones and ruptured organs. He was bruised from head to toe and covered in vomit. Blood was pooling around his neck and ears, and a bruise had swallowed his eye. This bill is rightly named in his honour and memory. This is one of the most horrendous cases I have ever heard, but what really disturbs me is that there are more. Tragically, many other precious children have been killed and their lives cry out for justice: a three year old was punched by her father and she died a slow and painful death; a four year old was punched in the stomach by his mother and he later died from abdominal injuries; a one-month-old baby girl suffered injuries including fractures to the skull, ribs and legs. It is horrendous and I can understand why the community is so outraged and why they expect more. They expect more from those of us who sit in this House. They expect more from the members sitting opposite who are in government. We have a role to play in protecting children from such horrendous crimes.

The killing of a child is a despicable crime. It will not be tolerated by the LNP or the community in Queensland, particularly when that crime involves violence or neglect. The court data tells us that offenders convicted of the manslaughter of a child are sentenced to less time in prison than offenders convicted of the manslaughter of an adult. That is absolutely crazy and we need to correct that imbalance.

It must be corrected and it is our responsibility to children and the community to do so. That is why the LNP propose these very important safeguards in this legislation. Child homicide offence will not apply to accidental deaths where a child drowns in a dam. Unfortunately, on occasions that happens in my electorate, or where a child is accidentally run over.

The LNP believes that mandatory sentencing is necessary because the courts are bound by low sentences and Queensland does not have decades to wait for precedents for change. Unlike Labor, the LNP can guarantee with our legislation that a person convicted of child murder will spend a minimum of 25 years in prison. Unlike Labor, under our legislation the LNP can guarantee that a person convicted of child manslaughter will spend a minimum of 15 years in prison. This is double the average of what offenders currently get. We have a track record of introducing a number of criminal law reforms aimed at protecting children and we are committed to ensuring the length of the sentence imposed on child killers reflects the gravity of the crime and addresses the community expectation. We believe that there needs to be stronger penalties for murder and manslaughter of a child. Under this legislation, we will see an increase in sentences.