




Speech By  
**Bruce Saunders**

**MEMBER FOR MARYBOROUGH**

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**WORKING WITH CHILDREN (RISK MANAGEMENT AND SCREENING) AND  
OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr SAUNDERS** (Maryborough—ALP) (4.45 pm): I rise to speak about the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill as a member of the Education, Employment and Small Business Committee. I echo the words of the members for McConnel and Cairns about the committee chair and members. I acknowledge all of the stakeholders who appeared at the public hearings. I thank the Attorney-General's departmental staff who answered our questions. There was a lot of toing and froing with the Attorney-General in the process of finding out more about this bill, and I can say that her office was absolutely outstanding in ensuring all of the facts were given to us.

The bill will deliver on the government's no-card no-start election commitment. On 14 November 2017 it was announced that a re-elected Palaszczuk Labor government would introduce a no-card no-start policy which would require all applicants to hold a blue card before commencing work in regulated services. No-card no-start is a core safeguard that strengthens the system by ensuring all persons working in child related environments have been issued with a working with children clearance prior to commencing work. This election commitment is consistent with recommendation 20 of the blue card review report, where the QFCC recognised that, if processing time frames can be reduced for applications with no or simple criminal history, a no-card no-start approach will provide a stronger safeguard and build on the blue card system's long history of mitigating risks to children.

The bill removes the requirement for a person to have an agreement to work with an organisation before they can apply for a working with children check. This allows people to become job ready before engaging in child related employment. The bill streamlines the application process to provide sufficient flexibility so that the applications can be made manually or through an online process. That takes us into the digital age. The bill also enables communication and notifications between organisations and BCS to be made through an online organisational portal. It also introduces photographs to the working with children card. I think that is a great move. We have photographs on our licences and everywhere, so putting photographs on blue cards is a fantastic move.

I think everyone in this House has the safety of children as their No. 1 priority. Those on the other side of the House think they have the mortgage on that, but the safety of children and youth comes first for all members of this House. No-one in this House exemplifies that more than the Attorney-General. I thank her for that.

As a parent myself, although my children are now getting to the age where they are not children but young adults, the Queensland blue card system is one of the best systems in Australia, if not the world. The member for Toowoomba South said that there have been changes to the blue card system. Yes, there have been changes because changes have to be made to reflect the community now. We are not driving EH Holdens anymore! We have moved on in terms of advancements in motor vehicles and households, so of course there are going to be changes to this legislation over the years because

it has to reflect community expectations. The community is changing. Things are changing daily, if not hourly, in the community. I echo the sentiments of the chair of the committee in that I am proud to be part of this government which always puts the safety of children first at all times. I commend the bill to the House.