




Speech By
Christopher Whiting

MEMBER FOR BANCROFT

Record of Proceedings, 27 March 2019

MOTION

Child Sex Offender Register

 **Mr WHITING** (Bancroft—ALP) (5.45 pm): I rise to speak against the motion. I speak in this debate as someone who wants more than anything for kids in this state to be safe. I am the father of three young children. Many of us on this side of the House are parents of young children.

When making laws in relation to child sex offenders there are two primary considerations. One is that those laws are in the interests of the victims. The second critical factor is that any new legislation be evidence based. We believe those who know best about these matters—who have daily contact with the victims and offenders and who understand how those laws affect them, who think and know more about the interests of the victims—are the police.

In Queensland, we have the strongest child protection laws in the nation. Then in September last year, we made the nation's strongest laws even tougher. We changed the law to ensure that certain child sexual offenders will continue to be monitored even after their supervision orders have expired. Our changes mean that the Police Commissioner will always know where they live, where they travel and where they work. From now on, they will be monitored for the rest of their lives and police advise that these laws are working well.

It is important to note that, as we have heard, Queensland has a child sex offender register already—one that is monitored by the experts, and that is the Queensland police. When it comes to the proposal for a public child sex offender register, the Queensland Police Service has clear views. The police—the experts—advise that community notification schemes have no clear or sure effect in improving public safety and reducing sexual reoffending, can inhibit offender rehabilitation and reintegration, and may increase fear in the community. Research also suggests that public registers drive reportable offenders underground, inhibiting the ability of authorities to adequately manage the offenders. There is a risk of victims being traumatised again and psychological harm to victims having their offender's details published that may lead to the victims being identified, especially in small communities. Community notification schemes may lead to complacency within the community due to an overreliance on this information. It could give a false sense of security without decreasing the number of child sex crimes. Parents and guardians may become less vigilant regarding the risk posed by other persons who are not included on the community notification scheme.

That is the advice from the Queensland Police Service. This motion moved by the LNP shows that its policy is clearly inferior to the government's policy. It is pure political opportunism. It is as simple as that. The LNP does not have a plan; it has a press release. This motion comes at a time when the federal LNP government is seeking views on a national register. No decision has been made and views are being sought. I hope that evidence is being sought, because the analysis from the Australian Institute of Criminology in May last year showed that public sex offender registries do not reduce recidivism. Speaking plainly, they do not stop repeat offenders.

The Australian Institute of Criminology is part of the Home Affairs portfolio and is accountable to the Minister for Home Affairs. This minister has sanctioned the reduction of 30 staff from the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission headquarters here in Brisbane. A third of the workforce is being sent from Brisbane to Canberra. They are highly skilled specialists who work in national security and child protection.

Queensland has the toughest laws in the country when it comes to protecting our children. These laws are backed by the collective might of 11,000-plus police officers. We will always protect the most vulnerable. We will always ensure that our laws are strong and workable. We will put the victims first.

I will point out quickly a problem with the issue of a public portfolio of photos: about 10 years ago my community thought they had Denis Ferguson in the community. The trouble is it was not. It was someone they mistook for him. I am concerned about where this vigilantism will go.