




Speech By  
**Daniel Purdie**

**MEMBER FOR NINDERRY**

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Record of Proceedings, 16 May 2019

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

 **Mr PURDIE** (Ninderry—LNP) (12.34 pm): Before I start, mindful that we are talking about kids this morning, I have just recognised the uniform of the children in the gallery as that of Talara state school, which is not in my electorate but is a fine school on the Sunshine Coast in the great electorate of Kawana. Looking at all of those cute faces up there, it is a timely reminder of how important the bill that we are discussing today is. I rise to make a contribution to the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2018. As I said in the chamber yesterday, and as many others have said before me, the highest priority of any government is to keep its citizens safe, particularly our most vulnerable. Innocent, defenceless young kids are certainly some of our most vulnerable and unfortunately can too easily become targets for predators. That is why it is vital that governments do all they can to protect our kids.

This bill is important in helping us to do everything we can to ensure we are taking appropriate measures to do just that. I want to acknowledge our shadow Attorney-General, the honourable member for Toowoomba South, and the LNP members of the committee who examined this bill and identified glaring deficiencies and loopholes in the original proposed legislation that was tabled in this House and thank them for the sensible amendments put forward. Once implemented, the bill will expand the number of offences that will disqualify a person from receiving a blue card in Queensland. I support the parts of the legislation that improve safety through the expansion of the range of disqualifying offences. I also support legislation within the bill that creates a no-card no-start requirement, as it will help prevent people from starting or continuing employment without first obtaining a working with children clearance. It also requires an employer to ensure an employee does not start or continue in regulated employment without a clearance first.

One of my concerns lies with the time frame and the poor delivery of a promise. When will these changes be implemented so that we can better protect our kids? In 2017 this government committed to the no-card no-start policy. It is now mid-2019 and I am looking at a bill—looking at words on paper—that did not prevent blue cards from being awarded to rapists and murderers since 2017. How many blue cards have been awarded to people who would be disqualified under this bill? The answer is that even if one disqualified person is working with our children it is one disqualified person too many. In my past job I was exposed to the horrific stories of child abuse and the long-lasting negative effects it has on those victims. The negative impacts do not end there with the abused child; they continue into adulthood, negatively affecting the victim, their families and our wider community for many years down the track. One instance of child abuse can have a large effect and we do have a duty to do everything in our power to prevent even one disqualified person from being in a position of trust and authority with our children.

What is most upsetting to me is that this government has had years to enact the no-card no-start policy. In the meantime, convicted child rapists and child murderers who have failed to disclose their convictions have been able to work with children. It has been left to the police to notify Blue Card

Services of their offences. We know that at the end of last year almost 3,000 people were able to work with children pending the outcome of their blue card application. Most of these applicants would not have been serious criminals, but some of them certainly were. During the 2017-18 fiscal year, 21 disqualified offenders started working with our kids as soon as they applied for a blue card. It is those individuals who pose a dangerous threat to our children. I know I would not want any disqualified person being in a position of trust or authority with my children and I know my constituents feel the same way. However, disqualified persons and offenders with other violent convictions continued to work in settings where kids were present, and this is simply unacceptable. In addition to how long it has taken this government so far to protect our kids, I am concerned that these proposed changes do not go far enough.

A young Canadian girl has been doing some relief work in my office. She is an international student at the University of the Sunshine Coast. She told me how easy it was for her to apply and receive a blue card. She wanted to do some voluntary work. She also told me how easy it was for other people she knows from the university, who are on student visas, working visas, or other temporary visas, to get a blue card. There is no question that asks them to disclose any criminal convictions from overseas. We are taking someone's word that they have not committed an offence simply because they have lived most of their life in another country before relocating here. When it comes to the safety of our kids, it makes sense to screen temporary residents to the same standards as we screen permanent residents and citizens. As well, a number of other offences that should disqualify people from receiving a blue card were not included in the original bill. I again thank our shadow Attorney-General and the LNP team for identifying the deficiencies in the bill and working hard to plug the hole—to fix another lazy Labor bill—to protect our kids.

Although the duties in my previous role were much different from what they are now, as a member of parliament one thing remains the same and that is the duty to protect those who are unable to protect themselves. In this instance, as a member of parliament, it is protection through legislation and policy to create safer places for our kids. It is important that this bill is implemented quickly and effectively to better protect our kids. Without pre-empting debate on the proposed amendments, ideally, this government should consider the LNP's suggestion to strengthen the overseas record check requirement and extend the range of disqualifying offences. However, if it does not, it will be up to this government to explain to the victims of child abuse why a few extra amendments, which could have taken kids out of harm's way, were not considered.