




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR NANANGO

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

 **Mrs FRECKLINGTON** (Nanango—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (11.51 am): I rise to support the Criminal Code and Other Legislation (Mason Jett Lee) Amendment Bill 2019. Everyone sitting in this House will remember the story of little Mason Jett Lee. The abuse this poor boy suffered in his short life—21 months—was absolutely shocking. He was savagely beaten by his stepfather and died in agony over several days. Many in this chamber are parents. As a mum of three beautiful baby girls what happened to this little boy broke my heart. When I heard Mason's killer could be free in just six years, like many Queenslanders I was livid. The tragedy exposed the serious flaws in both the child safety system and the judicial system. Those on this side of the House say enough is enough. The Mason Jett Lee laws that the LNP propose are Australia's toughest punishments for offenders who kill children. The laws honour Mason's memory and will protect other Queensland kids from harm. They would finally bring sentencing of child killers into line with what our community expects.

The LNP proposes to increase the minimum non-parole period for the murder of a child from 20 to 25 years. We will also introduce a new separate offence of child manslaughter. This will ensure that violent offenders who cause the death of a child will face a mandatory minimum 15 years jail. We will punish those who take the life of an innocent child. We will not allow them back on the streets with a slap on the wrist. The LNP's laws guarantee no more soft sentences for child killers. Our justice system has failed poor Mason and the LNP's laws fix up that system.

I thank Act for Mason and its founder Katherine Christensen. The group has worked tirelessly to fix Queensland's child safety system. They are fighting for Mason and kids just like him because Mason's story is all too familiar. We have seen way too many horror stories of evil cowards torturing and killing our precious children. We know that the laws as they stand in Queensland are letting down our poor kids like Mason. We are elected into this chamber to fix the problems as they arise and there is a problem with the laws currently in Queensland.

The LNP's laws will punish those who inflict violence or show extreme neglect. The average length for manslaughter that involves a child is 6.8 years. Our new laws mean a person convicted of child manslaughter will receive mandatory life imprisonment. This means they will spend a mandatory 15 years in jail. We will guarantee that offenders guilty of child manslaughter will spend double the time that they are currently spending in prison. We relied upon a number of sources to guide our proposals, including reports from the Queensland Sentencing Advisory Council and laws currently operating in other Australian states and jurisdictions. Put simply, the Mason Jett Lee laws are what Queensland needs. The LNP supports stronger penalties to send a message that these types of crimes against children will not be tolerated.

I did not want to believe that the Labor Party would play politics with child killer laws, but that is exactly what we are seeing. The LNP offered to work with those opposite to support their bill if they supported ours, but a parliamentary committee, stacked with Labor MPs, voted against supporting the Mason Jett Lee laws. The LNP's tough laws must be given the support of this House. There is no place for arrogant politics when it comes to child killer laws.

The committee recommended Labor's bill be passed and we will support it, but the bill put forward by those opposite should only be passed in conjunction with the LNP's private member's bill. The LNP's Mason Jett Lee laws plug the holes in the bill put forward by the Labor Party. I take this opportunity to thank the shadow Attorney-General for his hard work on behalf of children in Queensland.

The Labor government is proposing to expand the definition of murder to include reckless indifference to human life. What we have seen in New South Wales is that it will not always result in a murder conviction. Abhorrent child killer crimes in New South Wales have led to manslaughter convictions. All too often offenders enter into plea bargains for the lesser charge of manslaughter. Labor's tricky legal change has not worked in New South Wales so therefore it will not work in Queensland. Labor are borrowing a flawed idea from New South Wales and it just does not cut it.

A new aggravating factor for child homicide also does not guarantee higher sentencing for manslaughter. Currently, sentencing guidelines are made up of dozens of aggravating and mitigating factors. Labor's new aggravating factor is just another issue to add into the mix. The simple truth is that without the LNP's proposed new laws Queensland will continue to see weak sentencing for child killers. While the LNP laws guarantee child killers face a mandatory minimum 15 years jail, the only thing Labor can guarantee to the families of victims is false hope.

The LNP supports the government's bill and the aim to strengthen sentencing practices around child homicide. We ask the Attorney-General to consider and support the LNP's bill in return. We must strengthen the child homicide framework and the Mason Jett Lee laws are an appropriate way to do so. The LNP's laws are strong and the Labor laws as they stand are weak. Unlike Labor, the LNP can guarantee that a person convicted of child murder will spend a minimum 25 years in prison. Unlike Labor, the LNP can guarantee that a person convicted of child manslaughter will spend a minimum of 15 years in prison. The LNP's child homicide offence will act as a safeguard in the event that reckless indifference does not result in a murder conviction. I will repeat that: the LNP's child homicide offence will act as a safeguard in the event that reckless indifference does not result in a murder conviction.

The objective of the Mason Jett Lee laws is to guarantee justice. They guarantee no more soft sentences for child killers. The LNP's amendments will protect our kids and they will punish the mongrels who harm them. In this House we have an opportunity granted to us by the people of Queensland to stand up for our communities, to stand up for children across this state and to introduce Australia's toughest punishments for those who kill our children. In honour of Mason Jett Lee, I urge all in this House to support the LNP's amendments. May Mason Jett Lee and all other children who have lost their lives rest in peace.