




Speech By
James Lister

MEMBER FOR SOUTHERN DOWNS

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

 **Mr LISTER** (Southern Downs—LNP) (12.05 pm): I, too, rise to speak on this bill, and it is a very important bill. It is the most important duty of the state to look after the citizens of the state, and there are no more vulnerable citizens than our children. Most of us in this chamber understand that when you have children of your own that concept takes on new focus. It is vital that the community have confidence in the blue card system. However, the honest truth is that they do not have confidence in the blue card system because we have seen failings—very prominent failings—over the years. It is important that we tighten up the system to ensure that those who ought not have access to children never have access to children.

Labor's performance in this sphere has been disappointing. We have heard speakers before me, most notably the shadow Attorney-General, the member for Toowoomba South, speak quite eloquently about Labor's persistent failure in this area: lots of talk but limited delivery. He tabled a litany of press clippings which exposed time and time again failings in the blue card system which have led to the abuse of children, and we do not want to see any more of that. We also heard the shadow Attorney-General talk at length about occasions over the past 20 years or so when the conservative side of politics have demanded improvements. What we saw, to use the shadow Attorney-General's own terms, was a papering over of the cracks. We have seen spot fire after spot fire put out, but we have not seen the wholesale fixing of the system that is required. I still have my doubts about whether that will be achieved here. Talking about no-card no-start, I have my doubts about whether the government, which has in the past shown its ineptness in introducing IT systems and streamlining processes, will be able to accomplish that here. I will wait to see the proof in the eating of the pudding.

My most serious concerns are about disqualifying offences. I note that the government introduced a number of amendments, which is a good thing. I would say that the LNP can take credit for putting those forward and the government following suit because there were serious omissions in the bill previously. We still see with disqualifying offences—

Mr Healy interjected.

Mr LISTER: I take that interjection from my good friend the member for Cairns. There are some good things in there; I acknowledge that. I look at the disqualifying offences and I see that there are some glaring omissions. Where do the disqualifying offences include convictions for incest, rape, drug-dealing offences, cruelty to children and unlawful carnal knowledge? These are glaring omissions which we feel really should—

Government members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Robinson): Order, members. You can get on the speaking list if you want.

Mr LISTER: I believe that every Queenslanders out there feels that people who are convicted of these sorts of offences should never have access to children. I am quite happy to stand in the real world outside parliament and talk about this. I know that people on the street would say that people who have convictions for those offences ought never have access to children.

We also have concerns about the international criminal history of people. Again, I have heard all of the excellent reasons why we should not look at that—all of the reasons why it would be impossible to administer and so forth. Again, I think of cases like the notorious French national with rape convictions who came out here and obtained a blue card and the concerns about the case that the shadow Attorney-General mentioned of a refugee who arrived here with no identifying documentation at all. Four years later he had a blue card and was later convicted of offences relating to his treatment of children. That is something we really should be looking at. I am sorry to see that the government has not put forward any amendments in that regard.

I will cut short my contribution because I am mindful of the guillotining of the debate. I want to make sure there is ample opportunity for consideration in detail and the discussion of the clauses. We do support the bill apart from those few matters I just mentioned.