



Speech By  
**Leanne Linard**


**MEMBER FOR NUDGE**

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Record of Proceedings, 27 March 2019

**MOTION**

**Child Sex Offender Register**

 **Ms LINARD** (Nudgee—ALP) (5.15 pm): I rise to speak against the opposition's motion. First and foremost, during these debates it is important to recognise the victims of sexual offending. Our public policy should be directed towards protecting the ongoing interests of victims in our community and to do all we can to prevent others from becoming victims in the future. This government will always do everything within our power to ensure the highest possible level of protection for children in this state, as successive Labor governments have done. I am no stranger to this topic. I have seen the devastation that such offences cause in families and communities—as it did in mine—and I have taken many opportunities in this House to speak on this issue, however difficult, and I will continue to do so.

On a personal note, I do not appreciate what I think are akin to threats. We just heard that statements will be made about people on this side of the House and our commitment to child protection. I say that as a member of this House and as the member of a family who has been directly affected by child sex offending.

Respectfully, this motion and this policy do not afford our community extra protection. To do that you need evidence based solutions that can achieve our goals of building safer communities. Research shows that there is no discernible reduction in recidivism as a result of public register regimes. As recently as 2018 the Australian Institute of Criminology published findings which concluded that there is little evidence that such registers have reduced reoffending amongst registered sex offenders. In fact, some studies have shown increased sex offence recidivism.

Further, interviews with key stakeholders, including police and practitioners—the very individuals who administer such schemes—have raised concerns that public registration is counter-rehabilitative and again could increase the risk of reoffending. The AIC report also pointed out that when it comes to the WA scheme—the scheme that the LNP has used as the basis for their ideas—the impact of that scheme has not even been measured. One of the most serious risks raised in the public debate of public sex offender registers is the false sense of security it can create. The register gives the impression that the safety of our children depends on a list of unknown people in the community, but the sad reality that needs to be acknowledged is that, when it comes to sexual offending, it is all too often committed by somebody known to the child or their parents. All too often it is committed by people who have established a relationship of trust. All too often the offending is intrafamilial.

When it comes to reoffending, evidence from the California reporting scheme shows that 87 per cent of people who reoffended while subject to a public register offended against a child who was known to them. It is a confronting but important conversation that needs to be had with the community. It is all too easy for the LNP to suggest that a public register of people in the community will make children safer, but the horrible truth is that all too often children actually need protection from those people closest to them.

Australia already has a child protection offender reporting scheme. The Queensland component of that scheme, managed by State Crime Command within the Queensland Police Service, requires child sex offenders and other defined categories of serious offenders against children to keep police informed of their whereabouts and other personal details to protect the community. I have great faith in the professionalism and expertise of the Queensland Police Service.

In the three years I spent prior to parliament working as the senior policy advisor for police, not once did the police ask for such a register. Not once did the very people who are sworn to protect our most vulnerable say that such a register would make children safer in this state. In fact, the opposite is true. They have raised concerns with such proposals, as have the Law Council of Australia and child safety advocates, in regard to similar calls at the federal level. Child safety advocates are speaking against such a proposal. That should be cause for concern and pause.

I started by acknowledging that we need to keep victims in the forefront of our minds in this policy area, and that is the note I will finish on. This issue is beyond politics and it should never be used as such. We must always remain vigilant in looking for ways to further strengthen the protections we have in place to keep our community safe, particularly our most vulnerable—these aims are never far from my mind and, I know, ours as a government—but this policy does not further those aims. It is little more, unfortunately, than populist policy which the community themselves do not believe will reduce child sex offences in our community, with four out of five people surveyed recently saying such. It is for these reasons and the behaviour of those opposite that I oppose the motion.