




Speech By
Hon. Mark Ryan

MEMBER FOR MORAYFIELD

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MOTION

Child Sex Offender Register

 **Hon. MT RYAN** (Morayfield—ALP) (Minister for Police and Minister for Corrective Services) (5.05 pm): The Palaszczuk government's first priority when it comes to child sex offences is the victim. The plight of the victim guides all our thinking, all our policy formulation and all our legislating. The victim's situation provides the context, the perspective, the analytical framework when it comes to formulating laws around child sex offenders. Queensland has a child sex offender register. The expert advice, the evidence, states that a child sex offender register monitored by police or other authorities is by far the superior model. This is what currently operates in Queensland.

In 2014 Protect All Children Today stated—

It is our firm view that that the release of information via a website will not adequately protect vulnerable children.

Vigilantism may result in offenders ... going underground to protect their privacy and physical safety, posing a greater risk to the community and vulnerable children.

As this statement highlights so clearly, we must always think from the victim's perspective. We must always guard against unintended consequences. In short, the moral is that when it comes to matters around child sex offences, thought bubble policy lets down those who matter most. Ill-conceived policy based on the shaky foundations of political populism does not work.

In 2014 parliament's Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee came to precisely that view and the LNP voted accordingly. The committee said further research was needed to produce an evidence based policy. In fact, the committee and the then LNP police minister said that the preferred approach to this matter was to first wait for a review of the Western Australian register model before progressing any public register proposal in Queensland. What is interesting is that the member for Toowoomba North, the mover of this motion, was a member of that committee in 2014. He supported its recommendation not to introduce a public offender register and to wait until a review of the WA register was completed.

What has changed since 2014? I am informed that there has not yet been a review of the WA register. However, the Australian Institute of Criminology has conducted a review of registers generally and made comments about the WA model. That review says that public registers do not reduce recidivism and have little effect on levels of fear in the community. The report also says that registers like the Queensland model are effective in reducing reoffending. There is evidence a public register not only does not achieve the objectives it aims for but, worse, produces unintended consequences including driving offenders underground and having the massive potential to identify and retraumatise victims.

I am advised that the majority of child sex offending is perpetrated by someone known to the child. In these cases, a public register would contribute to a perverse outcome. To identify the offender publicly would identify the victim publicly. Such an approach does not put victims first, and that is where we always must return to: the victims. Victims will always guide this government in our lawmaking. That is why we took the strongest child protection laws in the nation and made them stronger.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Members to my left, I sat here and listened to the contribution of the member for Toowoomba North. There were strong points made and some were provocative, but there was not the same level of interjection. I ask you to extend the same courtesy to the member currently on his feet.

Mr RYAN: In September last year we changed the law to ensure that certain child sex offenders will continue to be monitored by police even after their supervision orders had expired. We backed our tough laws with a \$25 million funding boost for police surveillance and enforcement. Our laws will also make it easier for police to obtain offender prohibition orders. Under these orders an offender can be forced to wear a GPS tracker and ordered to reside at a particular address.

We understand community expectations, but most of all we always think about the victims, and I cannot emphasise that enough. Our focus as a government will always be on the victims—saving them, protecting them and delivering justice for them. Certainly we will hold to account those people who want to commit the most heinous crimes against some of the most vulnerable people in our community. It is our government's commitment to those victims that we will always put them first.