



Speech By  
**Melissa McMahon**


**MEMBER FOR MACALISTER**

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Record of Proceedings, 27 March 2019

**MOTION**

**Child Sex Offender Register**

 **Mrs McMAHON** (Macalister—ALP) (5.35 pm): I rise to speak against the motion. This government will always put victims first. We will stand with victims, we will stand with the community and we will stand up against anyone who preys on our children. This government has made our tough laws on child sex offenders even tougher. We have the toughest monitoring regime in the nation. We have the most stringent reporting conditions in the country. We have the strongest laws for the police and the courts and we will always put victims first.

It is important to note in this debate that Queensland already has a child offender register and that all details of registered sex offenders in Queensland are kept on a national child offender register. Police are kept well informed about sex offenders. Their whereabouts and their personal details are known by police in this state. A crucial component of this register is the requirement for any reportable offender to comply with strict conditions. If they move address, they must tell police. If they change their appearance, they must tell police. If their personal details change, they must tell police.

Good policy is based on evidence. I am an evidence kind of girl—we are on this side of the House—so let us look at the evidence. A recent review by the Australian Institute of Criminology concluded that public sex offender registers do not reduce recidivism. A 2011 US paper compared research on offending rates of sex offenders who appear on public registers and those who do not. It detected little difference in the rates of reoffending between the two groups. Further, these registers can have other unintended consequences that include creating community panic and vigilante attacks.

The evidence shows that police are best placed to monitor reported offenders and with our tough laws—the toughest in the nation, I might add—Queensland police are leading the nation in tracking down child sex offenders. This government's new organised crime legislation allows for police to further crack down on online child sex offending and exploitation. The reputation of our very own Task Force Argos continues to grow here and internationally. Task Force Argos continues to target and prosecute people who would offend against our children. Police who work in this internationally recognised task force have helped rescue 358 children nationally and worldwide through their sheer determination and backbreaking analysis of seized data from over 69 million media files. Queenslanders can rest assured that our state has the toughest post-conviction monitoring system in the country.

It is populist policy on the run for the opposition to announce plans for a public register while a proposal is currently under investigation by the federal government. In 2014, the Child Safety Legislation Action Network commented that a public register would create a false sense of security in communities and see offenders going to ground. That is the worst possible scenario. The Western Australian Police Union president said—

Once their name is on a database and available to the public, they will go underground. They will move to different locations, won't make contact with police and the only time we would come into contact with them is when they re-offend.

I ask members to think about that. As a former police officer and as a mum, I know full well what that means. I know that, since 2005, the Queensland Police Service has managed Queensland's Child Protection Offender Register. I know that a key component of that register is the requirement for any reportable offender to comply with strict conditions. I know that police rigorously and stringently monitor reportable offenders in the community. I know they are doing their job and I will back them in doing their job. I know that we have given them the toughest, strongest legislation in the country to put victims first and keep communities safe. Therefore, I oppose the motion.