




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR SOUTHPORT

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CRIMINAL CODE (NON-CONSENSUAL SHARING OF INTIMATE IMAGES) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr MOLHOEK** (Southport—LNP) (12.15 pm): Today I rise to speak to the Criminal Code (Non-consensual Sharing of Intimate Images) Amendment Bill 2018. I would like to suggest to the House that perhaps a better title for this bill would be protecting our young people or our kids from themselves. As the father of four sons, I get to spend a lot of time with many young people and often have large groups in my home and some of the topics that are discussed amongst young people these days are interesting. Sadly, when you mix the enthusiasm of youth with a few drinks, sometimes our young people do not always think straight. On one occasion a friend of one of my sons shared some images on Facebook which he later came to regret. On that occasion they were not revenge porn as such, but they were stupid images of himself acting in a fairly inappropriate manner. There was a video and on that occasion the school counsellor was involved, so that is why I think this legislation is so important. We all know that prevention is always better than cure.

This bill seeks to send a very strong message not just to young people but to everyone that using the internet—using all forms of social media or other channels of media—to try to seek revenge or to try and make a point is simply not appropriate. I certainly support the objectives of this bill, and I support the need to introduce these new offences regarding the distribution of intimate images and threats to distribute intimate images or prohibited video recordings. I particularly support the objective that introduces an offence requiring some form of rectification or the power to introduce a rectification order.

One of the things that I often speak to young people about at high school graduations when I am invited occasionally to attend, and I usually score a few points with the parents, is the need to live a life of no regrets. A few years ago when I was first elected I would talk fairly openly about this topic and we would talk about the fact that your words have power and that once you have said something it is very difficult to take it back. I like to stress the importance of not being a person who lives to regret their words. Now in this era of modern technology, it is not just your words that you cannot take back. As we heard from the member for Caloundra, it is also very difficult to take back images that are shared in a moment of haste or out of a sense of revenge or anger. My hope is that this legislation will send a very strong message to young people in Queensland to take a breath and to think, to pause and to exercise due care before they rush out and do something impulsive in a moment of rage or, sadly, in a moment perhaps of passion when they have had a few too many drinks and they think it is a great idea but they later come to regret it. It is difficult to take those things back.

Like many others in this House have done today and yesterday, I want to acknowledge some of the great organisations in my community that are doing so much work not just with young people but also with victims of domestic violence and which provide support services for people who have been victims at some point. You do not need to spend too much time with Di Macleod and her team at the Gold Coast Centre Against Sexual Violence to understand how passionate they are about this subject.

In this day and age, domestic violence is not always just physical; it can be exercised through many other formats. More and more we are seeing pressure on our young people and others through pornography, revenge porn and cyberstalking. On many occasions we hear stories about predators

who will make repeated requests for sexual photos. Again, I concur with the comments of the member for Caloundra. It is sad that we even have to rise in this House to talk about something that should just be common sense. It is sad that we need laws to send a message to people about appropriate behaviour. I also want to mention the great work of the Domestic Violence Prevention Centre on the Gold Coast, led by Rosemary O'Malley and the team. They, too, deal firsthand with issues of this nature and provide tremendous support to young people and other victims of all forms of violence.

As many members of this House know, I have had a longstanding commitment to Bravehearts. I have been on the board of Bravehearts for 12 years. Bravehearts also helps to prevent child sexual assault and assist victims of child sexual assault. As well, Bravehearts runs an incredible program for school-age kids to empower them by providing them with personal safety skills. It would be remiss of me not to again take the opportunity to commend Hetty Johnston and her team for their great work in supporting young people across Australia not just in regard to sexual abuse but all forms of sexual assault. Indeed, revenge porn is just a new form of sexual assault.

During my time with Bravehearts I have learned that, as a community, we are dealing with children and young adults becoming more sexualised at a much younger age than they were before. Gone are the days of pinching dad's *Playboy* magazine for an education. These days, young people can access anything and everything on the internet and some of that stuff is pretty scary. Pornography is now becoming an unofficial sex education for many young people and it is shaping their sexual preferences. The statistics show that more than half of all 11- to 16-year-olds have seen online pornography at least once, with the vast majority having viewed it before the age of 14. Girls and young women aged between 10 and 14 years experience the highest rates of sexual violence in Australia. People aged 19 and under make up around 60 per cent of all sexual assault victims in Australia. The number of sexual assault offences perpetrated by children and young people aged between 15 and 19 years of age has been increasing steadily. Combined with the prevalence of technology and social media, this sexualisation at a younger age results in young people being peer pressured to create intimate content. Problems such as the non-consensual sharing of sexual images are not going to go away on their own. I reiterate that I welcome this legislation, which seeks to protect Queenslanders, but particularly our young people who are at much higher risk of being victimised.

A Bravehearts report refers to research conducted in 2014 by Barnes and Josefowitz which listed the following outcomes that have been seen in victims of child sexual assault and, indeed, in victims of revenge porn and other forms of assault: psychological difficulties such as depression, anxiety, sleep disorders, personality disorders and psychotic disorders; behavioural problems such as substance abuse, self-harm, eating disorders, conduct disorders and antisocial behaviour; as well as relationship difficulties, poorer physical health and poorer educational and occupational achievement. It would be fair to say that these outcomes would be relevant to young people who have been a victim of their intimate content being shared publicly.

Although I support absolutely the reforms contained in this legislation, it is a shame they cannot go further. The difficulty in life is that we can legislate for only so much. Although enacting legislation to act as a strong deterrent is an important function of this parliament—and, as I said, prevention is better than cure—sadly, we cannot legislate people's values or morals. We cannot dictate the heartbeat of a person. However, at the very least we can send a very strong message that, as Queenslanders, we do not condone revenge porn, as it is known, we do not condone the use of social media and the internet for seeking revenge or seeking to embarrass others. It is a shame that this legislation cannot go further.

(Time expired)