




Speech By  
**Tim Mander**

**MEMBER FOR EVERTON**

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**CRIMINAL CODE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL; CRIMINAL  
CODE AND OTHER LEGISLATION (MASON JETT LEE) AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr MANDER** (Everton—LNP) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (4.35 pm): I rise to speak in this cognate debate not to oppose the government's bill but to very strongly support the bill that has been presented by the shadow Attorney-General. There is no greater crime than taking the life of another human being, but I think an even more distressing crime is when the life of a child is taken—of course, a life taken far too early. As lawmakers, one of the great responsibilities that we have is to make sure that we protect the most vulnerable in our community and that we punish those who would do what for most of us is the unthinkable and that is to take a child's life.

As you grow older and mature, you have different life experiences. I have been very fortunate to have four children and now I have two grandchildren. When you have that experience and perspective you have some appreciation of the loss that a family must go through when they lose a child. I know that I speak for many members in this House when I say that, quite simply, I cannot read news articles or finish news articles when they go into the details of the abuse a young child received which, unfortunately, also led to their death. My sympathies go to those families who have experienced this great heartache. I cannot imagine what it would be like. As I said, one of the responsibilities that we have in this House is to make sure that we do everything possible to deter anybody from thinking about, let alone contemplating, such a heinous act.

I commend the government in that it has attempted to make some changes to the Criminal Code to cover the situations that we have been talking about. I think members of the public become infuriated when they hear about these cases, when they see them on television, when they read about them, and then, when they see the judicial process take place, it often seems that people have got off very lightly, that the sentence does not fit the severity of the crime. That makes people angry and frustrated. I can totally understand that.

It is important that we have laws that reflect community standards and community expectations. It is inappropriate for members of the parliament to try to interfere in the judiciary when it is handing down a sentence, or hearing a case, but, as legislators, we can change the law. That is what I know the shadow Attorney-General is attempting to do with the bill that he has presented.

As well intentioned as the government bill may be, unfortunately it falls short. It tinkers around the edges. It looks at new definitions and increasing sentences. If I was to compare the government's proposed legislation to the shadow Attorney-General's legislation, the difference is that with the government's laws there is a possibility that there could be increased sentencing whereas with the shadow Attorney-General's laws there is absolutely an iron-clad guarantee that people will be incarcerated for longer periods of time. That is why we are bringing this bill before the House. We are not afraid to bring in minimum non-parole periods which is so appropriate with this type of crime.

The bill that the shadow Attorney-General has brought in guarantees that a person convicted of child murder will spend a minimum of 25 years in prison. Unlike Labor, the LNP will guarantee that a person convicted of child manslaughter will spend a minimum of 15 years in prison. That is double the average of what offenders are currently getting. Too many people have been getting off too easily for too long. That is why it is important that we play our role as legislators and make sure that we have laws that reflect community standards.

I cannot imagine how frustrated I would be as a parent who lost a child or a grandparent who lost a grandchild through some murderous act to see some sort of plea bargaining arrangement take place and the offender getting a sentence that is manifestly inadequate. Unfortunately we are seeing that time and time again.

I commend the government with regard to its intention to try to strengthen these laws, but our argument on this side of the House is that it did not go far enough. It is important that we can give those families that have been through these difficult times a sense that justice has been done. Nothing will ever bring their child back, nothing will relieve their pain and their anguish, but at least we can make sure that perpetrators are given the sentence that they deserve for such heinous crimes. I commend the shadow Attorney-General's bill to the House.