




Speech By
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Record of Proceedings, 8 September 2020

PROTECTING QUEENSLANDERS FROM VIOLENT AND CHILD SEX OFFENDERS AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mrs GERBER** (Currumbin—LNP) (6.10 pm): I rise today to speak on the Protecting Queenslanders from Violent and Child Sex Offenders Amendment Bill introduced by the shadow Attorney-General. The objective of this bill is to strengthen the post-sentence supervision scheme relating to violent and child sex offenders to ensure that paramount consideration is given to the safety and protection of the community. This bill would rectify the Palaszczuk Labor government's weak laws when it comes to violent and child sex offenders.

The bill will introduce a framework so that court ordered supervision orders would be indeterminate rather than for a fixed term. In addition, the supervision orders would be reviewed by the Governor in Council rather than the Supreme Court. The framework would also ensure that repeat serious offenders are monitored post sentence and that any person making a decision under the Dangerous Prisoners (Sexual Offenders) Act, known as the DP(SO) Act, must give paramount consideration to the safety and protection of the community.

The bill's indeterminate supervision order will be imposed on and apply to all repeat serious sexual offenders as soon as the prisoner is released from custody or when the prisoner's supervision order expires. The supervision orders would include provisions such as these: orders that the offender cannot live within close proximity of where children commonly frequent, like schools; orders that the offender must regularly report to Queensland Corrective Services; and that offenders would be GPS monitored for life. The indeterminate supervision order would not be court sanctioned and would become relevant when all other supervision orders have been exhausted.

These amendments are necessary because repeat sexual offenders pose a degree of risk until the day they die. One only needs to look at a repeat offender's history to understand this. There should never be a day when a repeat offender is considered risk free. This is why greater safeguards need to be in place to ensure the paramount safety and protection of the community. To this end, the bill also amends the objects of the DP(SO) Act so that it is enshrined in law that the safety and protection of the community must be paramount. This reflects the principles of similar legislation introduced in Victoria by their Labor government.

There are currently nearly 3,700 reportable child sex offenders in Queensland. This number has skyrocketed by 21 per cent since 2015, but the Palaszczuk Labor government has not introduced any additional measures to crack down on child sex offenders. Under Labor, 562 reportable sex offenders were fined or imprisoned for breaching their reporting obligations in 2019, but as of May 2020 not a single one of the reportable sex offenders subject to an offender prohibition order had been required to wear a GPS tracking device. In fact, since Labor changed the laws to supposedly strengthen the

supervision requirements, not one reportable sex offender on a prohibition order has been ordered to wear a GPS tracker—not ever. In January 2019, Labor’s Attorney-General released a media statement which stated—

Queenslanders can rest assured that our State has the toughest post-conviction monitoring system in the country because of the Child Protection (Offender Reporting and Offender Prohibition Order) Act 2004 and the Dangerous Prisoners (Sexual Offenders) Act 2003.

I think the Attorney-General should retract that statement because when you go behind the legislative title, when you peel back the layers, it is patently clear that Labor’s post-conviction monitoring laws are mere lip-service to being tough on crime. That is why the LNP introduced this bill in late 2018. In response to this bill, Labor passed amendments to the child protection (offender reporting) act to try to compete against the LNP’s tough crackdown on sex offenders, but the reality is that Labor’s laws are weak and the case examples show that their soft-on-crime approach just is not working.

For example, the Palaszczuk Labor government’s laws are that weak that sex offenders must engage in ‘concerning conduct’, such as commit another sexual offence or invite a child into their home, before the police can apply to the court, which may—not must, but may—order the offender to be GPS tracked. This is in stark contrast to the LNP who would in government ensure all repeat offenders would be GPS tracked for life—no ifs, no buts. Let me say that again because I think it bears repeating: under the LNP, repeat dangerous sex offenders would be GPS tracked for life. Under Labor, they might be GPS tracked only for a short while and only if they commit concerning conduct.

To put that in perspective, this means that under an LNP government child victims of violent sex crimes, child victims whose lives have been destroyed by the offender’s conduct, would have at least some peace of mind knowing their offender is being monitored. Sharon Tomlinson, who was raped as a child at gunpoint by Robert Fardon, was outraged to learn Labor’s weak laws would not even compel him to be GPS tracked. Sharon believes the LNP’s bill should be passed. This is the least this parliament can do to help victims of these types of crimes. It is obvious to me that the Palaszczuk Labor government care more about the rights of sex offenders like Robert Fardon than community safety and victims of crime because of their soft-on-crime approach. We in the LNP believe these measures are necessary in order to crack down on the thousands of sex offenders who roam Queensland’s streets.

The LNP has a strong track record in government of dealing with violent and child sex offenders. This is important and relevantly informs this bill in this matter. In government, we introduced the two strikes policy—a mandatory sentence of life imprisonment for repeat child sex offenders with a minimum non-parole period of 20 years. We also increased penalties for child exploitation offences and other child sex offences and introduced a new offence of grooming into the Criminal Code. I myself as a former federal prosecutor prosecuted paedophiles for the offence of grooming. I know that harsher penalties protect the community, particularly when it comes to child exploitation offences.

The LNP has also committed to introducing a public sex offender registry to allow any member of the public to check for violent sex offenders who reside in their neighbourhood. Under the plan, parents can also check the background of anyone who has regular unsupervised access to their children. The LNP will always support more laws and stronger penalties aimed at child sex offenders to send a message that these types of crimes against children will not be tolerated by our community.

These proposed amendments are tough laws but they are what is needed to keep the community safe from repeat violent sex offenders. The LNP will always put community safety first and we make no apologies for it. We need to do what we can to protect vulnerable Queenslanders from the worst kind of offenders, and this bill will go a long way towards keeping our community safe from this type of offender. I commend the bill to the House.