




Speech By  
**Hon. Mark Ryan**

**MEMBER FOR MORAYFIELD**

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Record of Proceedings, 8 September 2020

**CRIMINAL CODE (CHILD SEXUAL OFFENCES REFORM) AND OTHER  
LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Hon. MT RYAN** (Morayfield—ALP) (Minister for Police and Minister for Corrective Services) (3.07 pm): Queensland has the strongest laws in the nation when it comes to child sex offenders. One year ago this month the government made our laws even stronger. Those changes mean reportable child sex offenders continue to be monitored, even after their supervision orders have been expired, and in some instances those offenders will be monitored for the rest of their lives. We backed our tough laws with more than \$27 million for monitoring and enforcement and, as a result of this funding and our tough laws, 150 child sex offenders have been charged with over 350 offences but, more importantly, 16 children have been rescued from harm.

There are more than 500 Child Protection and Investigation Unit officers working across Queensland and they work closely alongside child protection offender register coordinators to manage reportable offenders. This government recently announced a boost in the number of these specialist coordinators, from 22 to 40, almost doubling the number. On top of that, we are also providing them with extra vehicles to support their good work. These specialist investigators and the Child Protection and Investigation Unit officers are supported by officers from all over the state, State Crime Command, detectives, intelligence specialists and general duties officers.

The bill we are debating today builds on the work of this government to protect vulnerable children. This bill comprehensively reforms the criminal justice response to child sexual abuse through a range of amendments that implement recommendations of the *Criminal justice report* and the Queensland Sentencing Advisory Council.

One key recommendation is that anyone who becomes aware of concerning conduct towards a child has a responsibility to report the matter to the authorities. There has been a lot of debate about this requirement, especially in relation to confessions made to the clergy, but let us be clear about one thing: the requirement and, quite frankly, the moral obligation to report concerning behaviours towards children applies to everyone in this community. No one group or occupation is being singled out. It applies to everyone. After all, child protection is everyone's responsibility.

Another key recommendation to be implemented relates to sentencing. This amendment stipulates that, when sentencing offenders for historical child sexual offences, the court is to sentence in accordance with the standards at the time so that the sentence does in fact reflect contemporary community expectations. Another important element of this bill is to exclude alleged good character as a mitigating factor. Quite clearly, this is common sense. Someone convicted of a child sex offence can hardly rely on their alleged good character to be taken into account. That is quite clearly an absurdity.

The bill will also create a new offence of failure to protect a child from institutional child sexual abuse. Of course, we all accept that this is critical. We all have seen the damage done over decades to thousands of individuals who have been betrayed by institutions that were supposed to protect them.

I now turn to new offences relating to child abuse objects. These are lifelike child replicas used for sexual gratification. It is, quite frankly, disgusting. The bill amends the Criminal Code to create two new offences criminalising the possession, supply and production of dolls of children intended to be used for sexual interaction, child abuse objects. The offences applying to child abuse objects will carry 14 years imprisonment, increasing to 20 years imprisonment for supply or production done for a commercial purpose.

Further, the serious organised crime circumstance of aggravation, carrying a mandatory minimum of seven years imprisonment, will also apply to new offences. I particularly thank the Attorney-General for including this amendment. I know that it has been raised by the Queensland Police Service's child sexual abuse team with her department previously. To have this now in law will not only support the good work of police but ultimately protect children by catching people who are engaged in these quite dangerous activities which could escalate into further danger towards children.

These are just some of the amendments but they convey the serious intent of this bill to protect children from harm and, of course, the seriousness with which this government considers these matters. This government has a track record of putting in place laws that keep the community safe. Our laws are amongst the strongest in the nation. They protect children, they hold those people who harm children to account and, ultimately, they improve the safety of our community. I commend the bill to the House.