




Speech By  
**Joseph Kelly**

**MEMBER FOR GREENSLOPES**

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## **CHILD PROTECTION REFORM AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr KELLY** (Greenslopes—ALP) (4.19 pm): I would like to start by saying that I support the bill in its entirety. I acknowledge the hard work of the minister in bringing this bill before the parliament. It is a great privilege to sit next to the responsible minister and get deeper insight into not only this bill but also a whole range of issues in relation to keeping our kids safe in this state. It is a complex business, if you want to call it that. It requires a complex approach. It is many faceted and it is something that we need to be ever vigilant about and forever look to improve systems. That is what this bill does.

I also acknowledge the members of the committee, particularly the chair. I acknowledge the fine contribution she made earlier. It displayed her long and deeply held commitment to empowering and educating young people. That certainly came through in the report that was prepared. I also thank all of those people who made submissions to this inquiry.

On Saturday I had the great privilege of attending a fundraiser for the Small Steps 4 Hannah Foundation that was being organised by the Holland Park Hawks. There was a confluence of issues that relate to this bill on display there. We now hopefully can feel somewhat safe that those good people who step forward to coach junior sport and to play really important leadership roles in the lives of young people—helping them to develop physically, mentally and emotionally—are not people who are there to try to do those children any damage. Our robust system of checking and screening allows us to do that.

I note that provisions in this bill relate to domestic violence and allow for interstate checking. The reality is, as we have seen over the last couple of years, that Australians are a pretty mobile people. We move around a lot. I know that you, Deputy Speaker, would know that in your neck of the woods, being the border electorate—

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Lister) interjected.

**Mr KELLY:** Indeed. I do not think I can take an interjection from the Deputy Speaker! Having said that, that mobility of Australians is there nonetheless, so these sorts of provisions are incredibly important.

I come back to the event held last Saturday. We saw today the announcement by the Attorney-General to support the move to deal with coercive control, which has long been an objective of the Small Steps 4 Hannah Foundation. I think any parent who steps forward to volunteer in an organisation starts to build an understanding of just how robust our systems are and how important they are.

A few years ago my wife and I signed up as volunteers for our local scouting groups, where our kids were involved. I am still on the management committee to this day. Every year I have to do an update on my child safety education. It is not onerous but it is informative. I also have to make sure my blue card is up to date. Whilst sometimes in a busy day these things can be a bit of a pain, the reality is that I know that things like this are helping to keep Queensland kids safe.

I want to turn to the parts of the bill that talk about the strengthening of children's voices in decisions that affect them, because I think that is a really important provision in this bill. Without straying too far into the territory of the Mental Health Select Committee's report, we did have the great pleasure of having the Queensland Family and Child Commission youth delegates come and speak to the committee, not once but twice. We were so very impressed with their views around particularly child and youth mental health, but mental health generally, that we wanted to hear from them twice. The role of people with lived experience in the mental health sector, the alcohol and other drugs sector and the suicide prevention sector is really important and valued. A great deal of emphasis is placed on making sure that people who are actually involved in the service have a huge role in designing and delivering the service. I think that holds true across to children and young people.

Like many members of parliament, I have a youth forum going in my electorate. It really is interesting how much young people are enthused to try to make a difference in society, how much of an opinion or views—often evidence based views—they have around how we can improve things, and how much they are really looking for opportunities to make a contribution. Through designing programs where children's and young people's voices are put front and centre, we are really making sure we are harnessing the full breadth of capacity in our community.

I also want to turn to the parts of this bill that deal with the definition of 'kin' and the requirement for active effort in the placement of children. To put my thoughts into context, I think about the bill enacting safe nurse-to-patient and safe midwife-to-patient ratios. When we were going through that bill, many people said, 'It's something we already do. It's something we already strive and aim for.' That is potentially quite true, but placing a legislative requirement on that means it is now something that actually happens all the time. If there is an exception, there is a process for dealing with that.

I think that would be fairly true of this situation. I think the many hardworking and very dedicated child safety workers in our state and people in the NGOs would go to great lengths to try to find appropriate connections for people, but if those connections present challenges and you have to do a significant amount of work going forward it would be easy to say, 'This is near enough; it is good enough.' This legislation makes sure that those people who work in this field make the active effort to place people.

Again coming to the mental health inquiry, I guess I have always had a sense of it but it has become particularly clear through the many submissions and the hearings we have had that this issue impacts people of First Nations communities. We had submissions and heard from people on Thursday Island, in Yarrabah, in Hervey Bay, in Bundaberg and here in Brisbane as well. One of the things that comes through very strongly is this sense of intergenerational trauma that First Nations people feel. Therefore, the need to place a child in out-of-home care, given the history of this country and past governments' decisions, which rightfully have been apologised for, has huge implications to re-traumatise this community.

Ensuring that the definition of 'kin' is correct and ensuring that people make active efforts to place people goes a long way to making what is a difficult situation less difficult. These are small things. They may not mean a lot to somebody who is sitting in Coorparoo going about their daily business, but for First Nations people the provisions in this bill are extremely important. The minister and her team are to be commended for pushing these provisions. With those words, I commend the bill to the House.