




Speech By
Amanda Camm

MEMBER FOR WHITSUNDAY

Record of Proceedings, 13 September 2023

JUSTICE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms CAMM** (Whitsunday—LNP) (2.45 pm): I, too, rise to contribute to the Justice and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2023 and I want to speak particularly on the clauses of the bill relating to the identification of sexual offence defendants prior to committal. This change brings us into line with other states and makes progress in destigmatising sexual offence complaints, and I think for victims of sexual violence it is long overdue and welcomed. There are no similar provisions to offences such as murder. However, sexual offences have long held a different place, with people concerned for the reputational harm for the defendant. Why is it that we hold this so differently to other criminal offences?

In some cases there will be valid reasons for non-publication orders, particularly where the identity of the offender will identify a victim, and there are provisions for that—and we certainly agree and support the fact that there will be times that that is required—but we should not keep treating sexual violence as an outlier in the criminal justice system. In fact, it should be at the forefront of our minds with the under-reporting that we see across our community. Just as with other offences, we need open justice when it comes to sexual offences. While they are uncomfortable and confronting to think about—and if you have met, like I have and I am sure many members of this House have, survivors of sexual offences and sexual crime—this change is critical and is important.

While we are in favour of this change, it is also important that we monitor the enactment of this legislation. Firstly, we need the media guide produced as promised by the government. I think that that is particularly important. I certainly know after speaking with community members and those who work in the sector, as well as victims, how confronting it is when we see heinous crimes reported in the media and how across our community it is slowly starting to desensitise us as a community. We never want to see crimes such as sexual violence or domestic and family violence in particular when they are serious in nature get to the point that they no longer resonate or people can no longer stand what they are reading.

Secondly, given the views of stakeholders and concerns raised, there must be monitoring of the impact this has on reporting. If concerns are realised with regard to reporting figures, if they are dropping the government must quickly find the best way forward to protect victims and ensure offenders are held to account. I certainly encourage the government, as I will be doing, to engage with stakeholders as these changes are implemented. Women in particular, men and all victims of sexual violence need to feel that they will be fairly heard, that they will be protected from retribution and that they will not be somehow pigeonholed to being a forever victim because they speak out and speak up. We need to hear them. We need a system that is responsive, that is trauma informed, that is fair and that is open.

Sexual violence has no place in Queensland. It has no place in our community. We must take measures to ensure that when someone is violated through sexual violence they feel free and able to come forward, that they will be heard, that they will be believed and that they are able to report this to police. The opposition certainly welcomes these changes, and I note the submission in particular made by DVConnect. I have engaged with broader parts of the sector myself and I know that it also welcomes

these changes. I also want to acknowledge my colleague the member for Lockyer and the former member for Lockyer, who was in the gallery earlier. I also acknowledge Sarah and Peter Milosevic, who are in the gallery today.

What we have witnessed in this chamber—and over the last nine years—is what good legislators do, no matter from which side of the political divide they come. We have also witnessed what good parliamentarians deliver for their community and for the broader state of Queensland. I thank Jim McDonald for his service, not only to that incredible, beautiful family, but also to the families before this tragic circumstance and the families who we know will be impacted into the future.

The naming of an unborn child, as outlined in the amendments to the Criminal Code, in particular around the aggravating factor, have already been expanded on by many in this House. The complexity points to the time frame that it has taken. We know that change to legislation takes time. I hope Sarah and Peter can take a level of comfort in knowing that the loss of their beautiful Sophie was not in vain and that they have, through the loss of her life, given a great gift to many mothers and fathers who may experience the same loss. I acknowledge the respectful debate that has occurred and take this opportunity to say to members that this is, in fact, what Queenslanders expect of us as we come into this House.