




Speech By
Brent Mickelberg

MEMBER FOR BUDERIM

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JUSTICE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr MICKELBERG** (Buderim—LNP) (2.09 pm): I rise to address the Justice and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. At the outset, I want to focus on the other part of this bill—another omnibus bill that amends 30 acts, four regulations and repeals another act. It has become par for the course for this Labor state government to roll difficult or politically contentious issues in with unrelated routine matters. That is not the practice of a government that is committed to transparency or to openness or to good government. It looks a lot like a government that is focused on the interests of their own rather than those of Queenslanders, and of the Labor Party's political objectives rather than on governing for all Queenslanders. We saw it last sitting when the government, with no notice, sought to bring in amendments to a bill dealing with the monitoring of sex offenders that would have probably had the support of all members, but with no consultation and no oversight, we see the government bringing in multiple amendments to a bill that should have been dealt with through an appropriate committee process and in a bill probably of its own standing. No doubt we will be back in here fixing the errors of those incompetent Labor ministers who have presided over that, as a consequence. It is just another sign of the rolling chaos and crisis on display by this Palaszczuk Labor government. I want to start by indicating my support for the measures contained in this bill—

Government members interjected.

Ms Boyd: Straight face.

Mr MICKELBERG: I have to work on my poker face, sorry. Returning to the bill, I want to start by indicating my support for the measures contained in this bill to make the death of an unborn child an aggravating factor for certain prescribed offences like murder, dangerous operation of a motor vehicle causing death, and assault occasioning actual bodily harm, among others. The trauma that Peter and Sarah Milosevic have endured after their unborn daughter, Sophie, was killed as a result of the actions of a drug-affected driver have been immense, but I am sure that I speak for parents right across Queensland in saying thank you to Peter and Sarah for never giving up the fight to ensure that should others find themselves in the same situation in the future—and, unfortunately, no doubt someone will—that those offenders who do the wrong thing will be correctly held to account for the pain and for the loss that they inflict. I can only imagine how difficult the years since Sophie was taken have been, but Sophie's legacy will be a safer Queensland where those who inflict harm on an unborn child will be sentenced accordingly.

I congratulate the government for listening to the Milosevics' calls, albeit slowly, but I appreciate the government have brought it in. On that note, I also want to pay tribute to my colleague, the member for Lockyer, Jim McDonald, who stood alongside Peter and Sarah during their long fight to have this sensible change implemented. I acknowledge the member for Stretton's comments, commending the member for Lockyer for his contribution. I want to stand alongside the member for Stretton's comments and also associate myself with the contribution of the member for Lockyer earlier today. I know that without Peter and Sarah's unstinting advocacy, supported by the member for Lockyer, this important and sensible change would not have been implemented. On behalf of my community of Buderim, I want to say thank you.

The bill also makes changes to the circumstances in which an adult defendant charged with a prescribed sexual offence can be identified. As we have heard, these changes bring Queensland into line with other states with the exception of the Northern Territory. Despite some of the contributions in submissions to the committee and some of the rhetoric that has been around this issue, there have been very few issues arising in other states that have already implemented this change, and the fact that people already openly flaunt the requirement as it exists in Queensland and, in many cases, are unfortunately not held to account for doing so, talks to the fact that community expectations have changed over the years and the legislation should move with that.

The change also helps to improve public confidence in the administration of justice in Queensland, and I think it balances the needs to protect the rights of victims with a desire for greater transparency where adults have been charged with a prescribed sexual offence. The issue with respect to identifying minors is a whole other issue again.

As we have heard, this was an outcome of the *Hear her voice* report, and it is important that those changes are implemented in a timely and efficient manner. My LNP colleagues and I have supported the timely rollout of the *Hear her voice* recommendations. I want to place on the record that it is disappointing that there is still considerable progress to be made in that regard.

I also want to talk to the changes in relation to the Electoral Act. That boundaries are needed to only be finalised 60 days before an election just creates more uncertainty. I acknowledge we now have a fixed date for state elections—that is a good thing—but I do not think moving the boundaries around 60 days out from an election helps anyone. I experienced this myself in 2017 when I was a candidate in Buderim and the proposed boundaries that the ECQ initially set down actually saw me taking the top half of the member for Kawana's current electorate, as it was in Buderim, and some—

Mr Whiting: They would have appreciated that.

Mr MICKELBERG: No comment. The changes saw some 7,000 to 8,000 people move. When you are trying to campaign and trying to introduce yourself, it is probably not such an issue if you are an incumbent member, but for those who are seeking election for the first time, moving those boundaries 60 days out from an election is a significant detriment for those who are trying to get to know the issues in individual suburbs, get out and speak to people in those communities, only for those boundaries to move. I think that is a bad thing, and I think it creates uncertainty. I would like to see a greater requirement for the ECQ to finalise those boundaries in a timely way.

I want to address the issue with respect to postal votes which the member for Warrego spoke about in detail. I acknowledge her advocacy in relation to this issue since the 2020 election. That 57,000 postal votes were rejected at the 2020 election should be a concern. That 30 per cent of those could have been saved had they not taken a course of action that this legislation will seek to address, but minor things like the fact that the postal vote was not in a sealed envelope but was in the outer envelope, are just ridiculous, in my view. There are plenty of seats in this House where the outcome was decided by thin margins. The member for Bundaberg is going to speak after me, by the look of it. Nine votes in Bundaberg and 84 in Nicklin—I was there for the recount for both of them. We nearly got back 11 in Bundy, but only managed to get back two. However, the point is that in both of those seats, the postal votes flowed to the LNP over Labor, and they were decided by very narrow margins. If I look at Bundaberg, 836 postal votes were rejected—836. Of those, 30 per cent could have been saved, according to the Electoral Commission, and that would have been the difference in Bundaberg, and we would have had a good local member advocating for issues in Bundaberg rather than a Labor hack, as we do right now.

In Nicklin, I pay tribute to the former member for Nicklin and the future member for Nicklin, Marty Hunt, a tireless advocate for his community, a man who served his community. He was a PCYC rep for 17 years and then when he lost the last election, he went back to serving his community as a school-based police officer at Nambour State College. That talks to his dedication for his community of Nicklin.

Mr Saunders interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Krause): Pause the clock, please. Member for Maryborough, you are not in your seat. If you want to interject, go back, or be quiet.

Mr MICKELBERG: The rejected postal ballots in the seat of Nicklin, which Labor holds with a margin of 84 votes was 654. If 30 per cent of those were not rejected, as they should not have been, and those preferences predominantly flowed to the LNP, which they did, we may very well have a good local member for Nicklin here in the form of Marty Hunt rather than a head nodder and someone who hopefully will be washed out to sea in 14 months—metaphorically washed out to sea in 14 months.

Mr BUTCHER: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order under standing order 118(b). Can I get him back to the long title of the bill and relevance? This is so not on what we are talking about today.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you for your point of order. Member for Buderim, I understand you are talking about postal voting and the changes that are being made in the bill, but I do ask, please, perhaps if you could move onto your next topic as well.

Mr MICKELBERG: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, I appreciate your guidance and I will move onto the next point. The point is that Queenslanders need confidence in the electoral system and they do not have that right now in Queensland. They do not have that because they have seen a progressive whittling down of these provisions from the Palaszczuk Labor government. We saw it when they changed the voting system from optional preferential to compulsory preferential to suit their political outcomes. We have seen it time and time again, and Queenslanders do not have confidence. That is a very unfortunate thing because it is important that Queenslanders do have confidence. I call on the Electoral Commission to do a better job of administering elections in Queensland. I think it is unacceptable the manner in which some of these approaches have been taken.

It is very clear that had a different approach been taken prior to the last election, some of these members would not be here now. That is not the will of their community I would suggest. I look forward to there being a more transparent process, a more certain process and a more sensible process with respect to dealing with postal votes at the next election in 2024.