




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR COOK

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CHILD PROTECTION (OFFENDER REPORTING AND OFFENDER PROHIBITION ORDER) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms LUI** (Cook—ALP) (4.45 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Child Protection (Offender Reporting and Offender Prohibition Order) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. This is a very important bill that demands careful consideration, especially when it comes to implementing strong measures to protect Queensland's children. As society advances, it is important that our policies and legislation keep up to date with these changes.

We all love digital technology. It is efficient, useful and brings forth so many benefits to our lives. While there are many positives associated with the advancement of digital technology, I am very aware that these platforms create a favourable medium for people with bad and evil intentions. Advances in technology have provided new ways for child sexual offenders to engage, groom and offend against children without leaving their home, and this puts our children in a very vulnerable situation.

The Queensland Police Service regularly reviews the act, with expert input from the QPS Child Protection Offender Registry, to ensure it remains contemporary and continues to meet its purpose. Regular reviews are an important step towards minimising online risks to children. It was through these regular reviews that QPS identified advances in technology that can be exploited by reportable offenders, changes in how offending is occurring as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic and opportunities to enhance the protection of children through the child protection registry scheme.

Other advances, such as masking applications, provide an opportunity for child exploitation material to be held in a vault or a black hole on a digital device without protection. The bill's proposed reforms are aimed at ensuring the Child Protection (Offender Reporting and Offender Prohibition Order) Act 2004 remains current and meets its purpose of protecting children and providing relevant information to police about reportable offenders to reduce the likelihood of reoffending. It is vitally important that the government demonstrates urgency and is responsive to emerging and changing technologies in order to protect the most vulnerable members of our communities—our children.

The objectives of the bill are to ensure the provisions of the act which underpin the child protection registry scheme reflect changing offending patterns and behaviours, and to enhance the ability of the act and the PPRA to provide for the protection of the lives of children and their sexual safety. The bill proposes to achieve this by establishing a child protection register; requiring reportable offenders—offenders convicted of sexual or other serious offences against children—to provide and update specified personal details for inclusion in the register; providing for periodic reporting and reporting of any travel outside of Queensland by reportable offenders; imposing reporting obligations for prescribed periods, depending on the number and severity of offences committed and other relevant factors; allowing for the recognition of reporting obligations under foreign laws; and allowing orders to be made against particular offenders who commit other particular serious offences against children or who engage in concerning conduct.

The bill focuses on specific measures that follows trends and patterns of reportable offenders and looks to implement strategies to minimise potential risk to children. Extending the prescribed offences relating to device inspections allows police to be proactive in identifying changes in reportable offenders' risk profiles and recognises the recidivist aspect of this type of offending.

It breaks my heart every single time I pick up a newspaper or scroll through socials and read another story about individuals in our communities committing horrific acts on children. We are never going to remove these parasites from our communities. Unfortunately, they will always be part of our society; however, we can work smarter to monitor trends and disrupt predatory behaviour in order to prevent offending.

This bill supports strong mechanisms to enhance our ability to closely monitor reportable offenders. It will help us identify changes to a reportable offender's risk profile. Recognising the recidivist aspect of this type of offending is going to keep our children safe. The bill requires that reportable offenders provide the MAC address of all devices in their possession. A MAC address is a unique code which is permanently attached to a digital device. It allows a device to connect to a network and is used as an identifier for other networks. A MAC address can also be used to find the geographical location of the device. I want to quote Bruce Morcombe, the father of the late Daniel Morcombe, who said—

The monitoring and tracking of at-risk offenders is everybody's concern, and it should be everybody's will that the police have the required powers to do that. We want to make sure that Australians, particularly Queenslanders and particularly kids, are safe. To reduce or improve the deterrent effect that tracking devices may have and the access of material that police have is a good thing. It is good for the high-risk offender because it is a deterrent. It will mean hopefully that they do not offend.

There is so much about the dark web that I, and I am sure everyone here, does not understand, and I want to give credit to the Queensland Police Service for the amazing work they do. I think that space needs to be closely monitored, and that is everything this bill is going to focus on and address. Child exploitation material offences, child trafficking, and other grooming offences have been identified by QPS as presenting the greatest risk to children in the community. This bill requires the possession of anonymising software. On the dark web everything is encrypted and it takes expert knowledge to work through all of that, so I again give credit to the Queensland Police Service for all the work they are doing.

In the brief time that I have remaining I want to make some comments about decriminalising public offences. It is some of the good work this committee has done. We have taken this inquiry across Queensland and listened to many stakeholders in many different communities. I particularly want to talk about the high representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are charged or incarcerated as a result of these public offences. I think it needs to be acknowledged today because of the social impacts relating to the high number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders pretty much being treated as criminals in this space. I have been getting a lot of feedback from communities about this inquiry and how it affects people expressing their views about communities. What is even more disheartening is that the feedback has always been with reference to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

This is an opportunity to start a different level of conversation. If we are going to move towards reconciliation, voice, treaty and truth, we need to acknowledge there is so much happening in this community that provides a layer of complexity which affects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. I firmly believe that decriminalising public offences will also bring to the surface issues around health, mental health, housing and the low socioeconomic background of these people. There are so many different layers that need to be looked at. I feel that decriminalising these public offences is going to support the conversation that needs to be had. It is also going to support better collaboration between agencies. We know there are a lot of agencies out there doing amazing work, and we met a number of them throughout the inquiry. It is probably important that we all lean on each other and give each other support. I know there is a lot of vulnerability. We talk about cost of living—cost of living also affects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are homeless on the streets and turning to these sort of behaviours. I think it is a positive step forward. I look forward to the outcomes in future and I commend the government for doing what it is doing.