Speech By

Dale Last

MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN

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

Mr LAST (Burdekin—LNP) (3.58 pm): If ever we needed evidence of the arrogance of this government, we just heard it then during that contribution. For this minister to come into this place and drop those amendments with no notice, no consultation, no briefing whatsoever is an absolute disgrace! It is an absolute disgrace, and we are not talking inconsequential amendments here; we are talking about decriminalising offences and we are talking about wholesale changes to a mining lease. Would it not have been nice to have some consultation on those amendments, but instead we on this side of the House are expected to now kowtow and accept these amendments and accept the minister's word that it is all aboveboard? Off the back of that contribution from the minister, the LNP opposition will now be reconsidering our position on this bill, because it is a disgrace.

Turning to the bill, the bill proposes to amend two acts and a regulation in order to ensure the provisions of the Child Protection (Offender Reporting and Offender Prohibition Order) Act reflect changing offending patterns and behaviours and enhance the ability for the act and the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act to provide for the protection of the lives of children and their sexual safety. The majority of amendments are to the Child Protection (Offender Reporting and Offender Prohibition Order) Act 2004. The effects of the proposed amendments are to require reportable offenders to provide personal details such as details of any anonymising software, vault or black hole applications they have used as well as the media access control address for any device they use. Amendments will also require reportable offenders to provide details of any residence where they stay for three consecutive days and provide relevant powers regarding this requirement to the Police Commissioner.

The exchange of information with entities such as the Australian Federal Police, the federal Department of Home Affairs and Border Force will also be enabled by the amendments, as well as making it an offence to fail to comply with reporting obligations. The amendments will also require a reportable offender who is found guilty of failing to report changes to provide those details within seven days. Amendments are also proposed to the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000 to make it an offence to not produce devices for inspection, to expand the offences that may trigger digital device inspections and to give police the power to enter the residence of a reportable offender in order to conduct a device inspection. I would ask that the minister clarifies whether all offenders living at the Wacol precinct are in fact reportable offenders and whether this applies to those persons, because at the moment, as we know, police and corrective services officers effectively have their hands tied when it comes to conducting those inspections.

With regard to the child protection elements of this bill, there are few, if any, Queenslanders who would not support actions to protect our children from the vile activities of the offenders who are subjected to this act. Let us be clear: the actions of those offenders have cost lives and in many cases ruined lives. The actions of those offenders must be condemned at every level. Those offenders must be held to account and government must ensure that all necessary steps are taken to protect Queensland children from these offenders.

On 29 November 2016 the minister introduced the Child Protection (Offender Reporting) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016 into this parliament. On 11 May 2017 that bill was passed on the voices and included in that bill was clause 34, which required the Crime and Corruption Commission to review this act after five years of operation. Would members believe that this bill was introduced just two weeks after submissions to that review opened, and the alarm bells began to ring? What we had was the minister introducing a bill amending an act that was at the same time being reviewed by the Crime and Corruption Commission as a consequence of a bill that the same minister introduced to parliament.

Just a few weeks later we found out that the alarm bells had not just rung figuratively; we found out that under this minister a major breach had occurred at a supervised facility for sex offenders at Wacol, including offences being allegedly committed against a 15-year-old. It is almost impossible to believe that the minister was not aware of this breach when this bill was introduced. It is almost beyond belief that the minister was not aware of the incident when he stood in this House and talked about the toughest laws and hunting down offenders. My challenge to the minister is simple: stand up in this House and explain to Queenslanders why it took alleged offences against a 15-year-old girl and media involvement for him to undertake works, including the clearing of vegetation around the perimeter of the precinct. Stand up in this House, which he refers to as the coward's castle, and explain why routine maintenance like clearing vegetation did not happen at the precinct where some of Queensland's most despised criminals live.

The Queensland Police Service advises that there has been a clear shift in the types of offences being committed by sexual offenders. Contact offending has decreased whilst online and device offending has increased. It is a sad fact that offenders will use the internet, social media and other technology to target victims and it is those means of contact that are being used more and more by sexual offenders. As a result of this, the LNP welcomes the steps to ensure online activities can be monitored.

It would be simply reckless to consider this bill without referring to the Crime and Corruption Commission's report titled *Protecting the lives and sexual safety of children* which, as I mentioned earlier, is a review of this very act. A total of 23 recommendations were made by the CCC. Keeping in mind that the explanatory notes for this bill state that the Child Protection (Offender Reporting and Offender Prohibition Order) Act underpins the child protection registry scheme, recommendations directly referencing the registry scheme are of particular importance. Included in the CCC's recommendations are for this government to commit to independent research on the scheme and a review of the registry data holdings to identify opportunities for improvement and identify requirements for additional tools and capabilities.

Continual improvement of the registry is needed to ensure that the protection of our children is optimised in every way. Included in the recommendations is a reference to consider the need for a routine audit or other review mechanism of Queensland's child protection register, but yet again we have seen concerns raised with regard to the reporting, retention and availability of data within the Queensland Police Service's QPRIME system. The finding of the inquest into the death of Hannah Clarke and her children identified issues with this very system, QPRIME. The Auditor-General highlighted the need for first responders to have 'readily accessible, up-to-date and accurate information in order to effectively assess risks to safety' and raised concerns regarding information not being available in QPRIME due to factors including system restraints.

Again, in the CCC review we have seen extremely important information not included in QPRIME and the CCC goes as far as to refer to Queensland Audit Office reviews and the identification of issues with data management in the Commission of Inquiry into Queensland Police Service Responses to Domestic and Family Violence. The importance of the child protection system and the need to ensure police are adequately resourced is shown by the fact that during the period of the study, according to the CCC, 77 per cent of reportable offenders had been detected for at least one criminal offence and 62 per cent had been detected for more than one offence. These are not minor offences that the CCC is referring to. They are offences including indecent treatment of children, possessing child exploitation material and rape of a child, yet today in Queensland police would receive no warning if they were to engage with a known offender at a school, day care centre and the local park where children play and take part in sport.

The CCC review notes that despite the best efforts of police the failings in data integration impacted the review to the extent that the review was 'unable to establish or estimate the protective impact of the act' and that a key outcome measure—recidivism—could not be measured. There we have it. Under this minister the data systems used by the Queensland police are that antiquated that a CCC review of important legislation cannot even estimate if the act is effective. Again, the review is a

review implemented by this minister with responsibility for those data systems. It is 100 per cent hypocritical of this minister to acknowledge the need to take technological advances into account when monitoring offenders, but to not give our police the technology they need to protect our children and victims of domestic and family violence is simply not on. The CCC review also recommends that the Queensland Police Service develops training for Child Protection Offender Registry members on the current legal framework and also highlighted that CPOR members in the regions stated that the only training provided to them during onboarding was on-the-job training. Queenslanders know that under this minister our police resources are being stretched beyond breaking point—a situation that is also impacting police being able to protect children from sexual offenders.

It will send a chill up the spine of Queenslanders that the CCC review includes references to police being unable to do proactive visits or proactive compliance, let alone the fact that the review reveals that some offenders have not been checked at all and that it can take years for registry officers to meet with some offenders. While the originally proposed amendments are a small step forward in ensuring the safety of Queensland's children, there is more work to do and the responsibility for the bulk of that work sits with the Minister for Police. Queenslanders can rest assured that we on this side of the House will hold the minister to account when it comes to ensuring we keep our children as safe as possible from those vile offenders.

I will move on to the amendments as outlined by the minister that, like all members on this side of the House, I received just as the minister stood to deliver his speech. To think that these amendments have been dropped into the debate without any overview by a committee, without any scrutiny and without any consultation defies belief and to see that you have only to look at the faces not only of the members on this side of the House but also the members opposite, and they know exactly what I am talking about here. If we are serious about debating this legislation in this House then wouldn't it have been nice if we were all informed so that we could make informed decisions having considered the evidence before us?

Mr Millar: We have 19 minutes in the chamber.

Mr LAST: There it is: 19 minutes to consider legislation that decriminalises the offences of public intoxication and begging, decriminalises public urination, repeals sex-work specific police powers and amends the Youth Justice Act, the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act and the Mental Health Act, not to mention the changes regarding the discipline process for the Queensland Police Service. However, the amendments that impact me the most are the changes to the legislation around the future of Glenden, which is a community that sits within the Burdekin electorate and a community that I hold very dear to my heart. Glenden is a community that I regularly visit. Over many years I have watched the community wither on the vine to the extent where it is now on life support. Whilst I note that these amendments will allow for a transition to the final milestone of 31 March 2029, I have a question for the minister. If QCoal decides to delay the uptake of accommodation until just before that date then I am not sure the community will survive. We are talking about potentially five long years before people and workers will move into the community. Will it survive? I do not know, but I like to think it will.

Good people live and work in Glenden. There are people who have their life's earnings invested in businesses in the community. Going forward, they deserve some surety about the future of their community. Whilst I note that this amendment is designed to do that, the fact that QCoal do not have to take up the houses until 2029 concerns me. I would like to think that they will step up to the plate. As soon as this legislation is passed—and it will pass because those opposite hold the balance of power in this chamber—I would like to think that QCoal will do the right thing by the community and immediately start to transition some of their workforce into the vacant housing, which numbers somewhere in the vicinity of 200 vacant properties, to give that community a lifeline. The people of Glenden are very keen to keep their community alive. It has so much to offer and we should be doing absolutely everything we can to ensure its survival.

However, there is a broader message here for a lot of our mining communities across Queensland: if it can happen to Glenden then it can happen to other communities. I have had conversations in many meetings, including with the Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development as well as the former minister for resources and the Coordinator-General, about ensuring that, as we go forward, we give those communities some certainty and if we grant mining approvals and licences then they should be tied to the future of those communities as well because it is important. I have spoken to Glenden residents, to mums and dads and to students at Glenden State School. It is a great little P-12 school that, at the moment, has around 60 kids. Let's think about a P-12 school with only 60 students. It goes to show how the community has bled away over recent years because of the uncertainty around their future. They did not know what the future held.

As the local member it would have been nice to have been given a briefing on this and to have been included in the discussions instead of being blindsided and given 19 minutes notice that these changes are coming before the parliament. We will consider our position on this bill but, as I said before, the fact that the minister has taken this opportunity to drop amendments of such a substantial nature into this House, without sending the bill to a committee, is an absolute disgrace. On that note, I will reserve my decision. The opposition will reserve our decision as to whether we support the bill until we have further considered the contents of the amendments and their ramifications overnight.