




Speech By
Jim McDonald

MEMBER FOR LOCKYER

Record of Proceedings, 13 September 2023

JUSTICE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr McDONALD** (Lockyer—LNP) (11.56 am): On 29 August 2014 Peter and Sarah Milosevic were involved in a tragic crash in which their 39-week gestation baby, Sophie, was killed. Since that time, Sarah and Peter—once broken, still very damaged—have fought to see a legacy for Sophie. I have been honoured to be able to help them along that way and for that fight. I recognise Sarah and Peter here in the gallery together with Sophie, who is here in her ashes bear. I also recognise the former member for Lockyer Ian Rickuss. It has been a wonderful journey to help this once-broken and sad couple. After suffering a broken neck, a broken back and many internal injuries, they recovered to be able to harness their energy towards creating this legacy.

I first met Sarah and Peter in 2016 when I was the officer in charge of police at Laidley and a forensic crash investigator, and I knew the law well. Ian Rickuss assisted us to get some petitions together, but Sarah and Peter conducted a petition through Change.org which saw 136 petitioners sign to see the law changed and to see justice done for unborn children. In 2017 we took this to the LNP state conference and it was unanimously supported in that a future state LNP government would put laws in place to see justice done.

Since 2016, 15 families have suffered the same or similar tragedy to Sarah and Peter where their unborn children have been taken at the hands of criminals. Each time one of those babies died, Sarah would reach out to support those families and she has provided comfort to many. In 2021 when the tragic loss of Matt Field and Kate Leadbetter and their baby, Miles, occurred, Sarah again reached out to support and on this occasion on 17 February I was able to lead a delegation with Sarah, Peter and the Fields and Leadbetter families to see the former attorney-general. Fortunately, the former attorney-general listened to our pleas when somebody commits a crime like this. In Sarah and Peter's case, a drugged, speeding and drunk driver was fined \$950 and their licence suspended. Justice was not done.

We pleaded with the former attorney-general, Minister Fentiman, to see changes put in place. I thank her for listening to the solutions that we put forward. It took some time for these solutions to come before the House, but not before time they are here. The former AG gave us an undertaking that she would work on the changes and she did keep me up to date. She included myself and Sarah and Peter in the consultation and I am sure that that bipartisan approach has resulted in better laws, laws that will be the envy of the nation and other countries and laws that will be replicated—Sophie's Law—across the world.

The bill was introduced on 25 May this year. I was pleased to see many of our suggestions included in the bill. At the committee hearing Sarah described how the tragedy of losing her baby Sophie just before her due date broke her. Sarah described how she was so badly injured her child was dislodged from her womb and was no longer moving. Sophie, who was about to be delivered and welcomed into a loving family with a nursery all set up, was not moving. Sophie was soon to return home as a lovely little baby with her parents and delivered safely into their family's crib. Sophie was dead. The lovely but sad photos of those moments are a haunting reminder of the tragedy at that time

that should have been one of joy. Sarah and Peter, as I said, were recovering from their own injuries of a broken back, broken neck and severe internal injuries, but after they recovered they got to work to create a legacy.

This year would have been Sophie's ninth birthday. Every year Sarah and Peter Milosevic celebrate her birthday in a way to help them cope and to make sure that Sophie is always remembered. Every year they bake a special cake. This year Sarah and Peter travelled to Bondi Beach and placed a long-stemmed rose in the ocean. The family blew out the candles in Sophie's absence. Sarah and Peter have found a lot of different ways to remember Sophie and to help cope with their loss. Sophie has a white arbour pergola made of iron with a chandelier in a rose garden. Sophie has another scented rose garden. There is a beautiful little girl statue sitting in a prominent place on a park bench. I have visited their place many times. Sarah and Peter have a lovely kept home where there are touching memorials around. Sarah and Peter's home is regularly filled with laughter as Sarah is a family day care mum for many other families' children. These are some of the things that Sarah and Peter have done to help cope and to remember their lovely little girl.

As I said before, every time a tragedy occurs they reach out. Fortunately they have harnessed that energy and turned it towards finding justice and today we bring about the biggest sign of hope for them. This legislation will not help them, but it will help other families who lose an unborn child at the hands of a criminal. When this bill was introduced I was pleased that it included many of the recommendations we made so a family and their unborn child see justice when somebody is charged with that criminal act. Importantly, the bill includes changes so that, if the family wishes, their unborn child's name can be included on the indictment before a court. It also includes Victims of Crime Assistance Act changes so that funeral expenses can be met. Imagine at one stage believing you were going to welcome home a young baby and the next moment you are having to find the money for funeral expenses. Hope is lost. The changes also include an opportunity for families of the unborn child to put statements to the court to see sentences improved. I thank my former colleague Ian Rickuss. I will table an email that Ian has provided to us. I will read a few words—

I would like to congratulate the Milosevics for their persistence and fortitude after losing Sophie in a reckless car crash that was no fault of their own, to pursue this matter for almost a decade to have appropriate legislation finally brought before the House in relation to the death of the Long Term Unborn Child. Lockyer Member Jim McDonald who has also worked hard to have this matter brought to a resolution.

Tabled paper: Email, dated 12 September 2023, from Mr Ian Rickuss, to the Lockyer Electorate Office, regarding the Milosevic family [1326](#).

Finally, I will finish this contribution by reading Sarah's words—

I would like to thank all of those involved in making this happen. Firstly my Husband Peter Milosevic for always being there by my side and supporting me through more tears than any could know. To Ian Rickuss who was the first to truly listen. Then Jim McDonald for all the hours of work that went on behind the scenes fighting for our babies rights.

And of course MP Shannon Fentiman who is truly a supporter of woman's rights and the protection of human life for believing there was a way to write a safe law that protects our unborn babies. I thank you all for everything that has been done. Thank you to Yvett Dath the proceeding Attorney General for seeing it through the final stages.

The loss of Sophie broke me and broke my family there truly is not a day that we don't speak her name because she mattered. Because Sophie mattered and along with all the other babies before Sophie and after Sophie that died due to a person breaking the law this is for all the babies gone to soon.

This is her legacy and it's finally done. Sophie turned 9 on the 30th of August just passed. 9 years for fighting for the rights of unborn children. This is for Sophie for the legacy she could not leave herself.

For all the heart ache and pain for the love for our child. This law reform has brought peace to myself, my husband and our children. Peace in knowing the loss of her life wasn't for nothing that she counted, that Sophie mattered and that all babies matter.