




Speech By
Laura Gerber

MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN

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CHILD SAFE ORGANISATIONS BILL; WORKING WITH CHILDREN (RISK MANAGEMENT AND SCREENING) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mrs GERBER** (Currumbin—LNP) (2.53 pm): For my community, this bill is deeply personal. I am prevented from going into the details because the paedophile in question is currently before the courts. For my community, this state government's inaction over the last decade to fix the blue card system and neglect to implement the national child safe standards when it mattered—when it was recommended seven years ago—has meant that families in my community have paid the most horrific price.

A pile of recommendations to fix the child safety system and the blue card system has been sitting on Labor ministers' desks since 2017—recommendations that could have kept the children in my community safe. This state government failed to implement them. It has taken seven long years for this government to bring this bill before the House, and families in my community have paid the ultimate price for this state government's inaction—for its failure to implement the national child safe standards and for its failure to implement the 81 blue card recommendations from the Queensland Family and Child Commission, the QFCC.

In 2017, the Miles and Palaszczuk government received a damning report from the QFCC which made 81 recommendations to fix Queensland's blue card system. In August last year only 28 recommendations had been implemented and today 29 recommendations are yet to be fully implemented, with this bill actioning 12 of them. This government has had seven years to implement these recommendations.

Further, the Miles and Palaszczuk government received recommendations from the royal commission to legislate national child safety measures, which included establishing a reportable conduct scheme. That recommendation was given to the Miles and Palaszczuk Labor government seven years ago. Today, the government has come into this House and finally tabled a reportable conduct scheme which, if it were actioned seven years ago, as was recommended, could have kept our kids safe from predators. What is worse is that, despite waiting seven years for this government to take action on that recommendation, this scheme cannot be fully operational until July 2027.

Ms Leahy: Too late for some kids.

Mrs GERBER: I take the interjection from the member for Warrego. It is too late for some kids. It is too late for the kids in my community. Because of this state government's delay in the first place, we will have waited 10 years for a reportable conduct scheme—10 years for a scheme that could have kept kids safe. This government's failure to take action when it mattered, seven years ago, has left children vulnerable, and they have paid the most horrific price.

Desperate to look like they are getting the job done in the dying days of a government that has utterly failed to keep Queensland children safe, they have introduced this bill. In the meantime, this state Labor government have failed these kids. It was only once the media started to report on the disturbing child sexual abuse that this government decided they probably should at least look like they are doing something. For families in my community, it has come too late. The damage has been done.

Over the past few years, constituents have reached out to me, to police, to ministers and to the Attorney-General pleading for reform, pleading for action off the back of the recommendations that have been sitting with this government for seven long years. Currumbin parents want to know that their children will be safe when they drop them off at a childcare centre. The childcare centres and educators want to know that the system will do its job and catch predators.

This Labor government sat on their hands. They had the recommendations that could have protected our children. They had those recommendations for seven long years but it is only after the horrific case that is currently before the courts and reported on in the media that this government have decided to bring this bill before the House.

Good government is not about responding to a media cycle; it is about doing what matters when it matters. We hear this government talking about doing what matters, but they have had seven years to do what matters. They need to act when it matters. They need to act when the recommendations are made. That is why an LNP government will launch a full, independent inquiry into the horrific system failures that allowed the horrific paedophile case that is currently before the court. If elected in October, an LNP Crisafulli-led government will direct the Queensland Family and Child Commissioner to investigate the child protection system that should have kept Queensland children safe. Queenslanders deserve a government that will put them first and take real action when it matters to fix the child safety system. We will also keep our children safe by introducing Daniel's Law—a public child sex offender register to put the rights of children before the rights of paedophiles. The state Labor government had the opportunity to enact this meaningful legislation—they could have done it in this bill—but they failed to do it, yet again.

The LNP will create a publicly available website with the photographs and personal details of child sex offenders who have failed to comply with their reporting obligations or have provided false or misleading information to police. Queenslanders will be able to apply for a photograph of an offender so they know what they look like and they can be vigilant of the risks of high-risk offenders living in their communities. Parents and guardians will be able to inquire about a specific person who has regular unsupervised contact with their child so they can know if their child is potentially being exposed to a dangerous offender. Also importantly, new offences will be created to prevent the misuse of any information from the register to ensure any actions are handled by police, for the safety of everyone. An LNP government will protect the children and put the rights of children, victims and parents ahead of those of dangerous predators.

We have also announced our \$383 million Safer Children, Safer Communities plan to reform the broken residential care system and protect our state's most vulnerable children. Under Labor, in 2020-21 some 58 per cent of young people who were subject to youth justice supervision had contact with the child protection system in the five years leading up to their offence. These numbers make it clear that the current system under Labor is funnelling kids into a life of crime.

We will turn that around. Under the LNP, we will not allow residential care to serve as a halfway house for kids cycling through crime. Importantly, our plan will also boost child safety officer numbers by 20 per cent. Currently, the average case load for a child safety officer is over the recommended 15 case limit and in some areas we are receiving reports of case loads as high as 60. This is completely unacceptable and it explains why one-third of child safety officers leave within two years. They are being burnt out and as a result vulnerable kids are falling through the cracks and in some cases they are losing their lives. To end the skyrocketing case loads and ensure safety tip-offs about kids at risk are investigated on time, we are doing everything in our power to keep them safe.

Only an LNP government will do this. Labor have proven time and time again that they do not have a plan to reform child safety. They do not have a plan to fix the broken blue card system. It has been seven long years since the recommendations that could have kept our community safe were made and they have dragged their feet on them. They failed to implement all the recommendations. They failed to implement the national child safety recommendations made seven long years ago and our communities are paying the price for that.

The only way to fix the broken child safety system, the only way to fix the broken youth justice system, the only way to protect our Queensland kids is to elect a Crisafulli government on 26 October 2024. Show Labor the door in 2024.