



Speech By
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MEMBER FOR PUMICESTONE

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PENALTIES AND SENTENCES (SEXUAL OFFENCES) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

 **Miss DOOLAN** (Pumicestone—LNP) (8.55 pm): I rise today to speak in strong support of the Penalties and Sentences (Sexual Offences) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025. After 10 years of neglect, the Crisafulli government is committed to delivering fair and efficient justice for victims of crime in this state. At the election, Queenslanders could not have sent a stronger message: no more excuses, no more cop-outs, no more negligence. Today the Crisafulli government yet again delivers on the people's mandate. We will put victims of these terrible sexual offences first once gain.

This bill introduces key reforms recommended by the Queensland Sentencing Advisory Council in its report into sentencing for rape and sexual assault delivered late last year. This government has listened, considered and acted on these recommendations. There exist four major legislative principles within the bill: the introduction of a new statutory aggravating factor, the reformation of good-character evidence, the recognition of the harm and trauma of victim-survivors, and the reform of the consideration of a victim impact statement. Offending against children aged 16 or 17 will now be recognised as an aggravating circumstance at sentencing. Queenslanders expect that sexual offending against children is treated as among the most serious of crimes. These reforms ensure courts reflect that expectation and deliver stronger sentences.

Under this Crisafulli government no longer will offenders be able to hide behind good-character references to minimise their own consequences for their actions. Good-character evidence will only be relevant if it relates directly to rehabilitation or the risk of reoffending. Being a 'good bloke' to some should not be an excuse for terrible actions that have sentenced their victims to a life of trauma. Queensland will be the first Australian jurisdiction to restrict good-character evidence. This government is leading the nation in its reforms, putting victims first and acting after 10 years of Labor's neglect.

Third, the bill expands the purpose of sentencing to include recognition of harm to victims. We know this harm can be profound, lifelong and devastating. Victims deserve to know that the justice system recognises the full impact of what has been done to them, and these reforms make them explicit.

Fourth, the bill clarifies that the absence of a victim impact statement does not mean there has been no harm. Every victim has a right to choose whether to provide such a statement and no offender should benefit simply because a victim exercised their right not to do so. This is about respecting victims' choices while still recognising the gravity of the harm caused.

These reforms stand in stark contrast to Labor's rushed and flawed attempts earlier this year. Labor tried to pass changes through urgency motions, cutting the community out of the process. Their amendments were poorly drafted and would have left critical gaps including limiting harm recognition to only surviving victims. That failure would have meant, for example, that offences committed immediately before a victim's death could not have been properly recognised in sentencing.

This government has ensured the framework is right and that victims are at the heart of the reforms. We have listened to communities across Queensland including my electorate of Pumicestone. I want to thank all those who contributed to the committee process, especially victims who bravely shared their experiences. Your voices have shaped this bill. The committee has recommended the bill be passed and I am proud to support that recommendation.

Beyond sentencing, this bill also strengthens protections in other critical areas. We are delivering technical amendments to the working with children legislation, often referred to as the blue card system, correcting Labor's drafting errors to ensure Queenslanders can continue to have confidence that those working with children meet the highest standards of safety. The bill also creates a new offence of falsely representing a government agency, punishable by up to three years imprisonment. In an age when misinformation spreads quickly, this reform sends a clear message that deliberately impersonating government to confuse or harm Queenslanders will not be tolerated.

Finally, the bill amends the Crimes at Sea Act 2001 to bring Queensland into line with the national cooperative scheme. These technical changes ensure we remain consistent with Commonwealth law and other states in exercising jurisdiction over offences committed at sea. This bill represents a balanced and considered approach to some of the most serious issues facing our justice system. It prioritises victims, strengthens sentencing, protects children and upholds public confidence. The Crisafulli government is delivering on its promise of a fairer and safer Queensland. I commend the bill to the House.