




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR BARRON RIVER

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COMMUNITY PROTECTION AND PUBLIC CHILD SEX OFFENDER REGISTER (DANIEL'S LAW) BILL

 **Ms JAMES** (Barron River—LNP) (5.45 pm): There is nothing more sacred than the innocence of a child, and there is nothing more important than our duty to protect it. When a child is harmed, it shatters more than just one life. It ripples through families, through communities and through our collective sense of safety. I have spoken often about youth crime and the loss of people's property and peace of mind, but when a child's innocence is stolen it is something that can never be repaired, replaced or returned. That is why the LNP are putting children first and are taking a strong and decisive stand through the community protection and public child sex offender register bill 2025, known as Daniel's Law.

We all know the name Daniel Morcombe. We know his story. Thanks to the tireless advocacy of his parents, Bruce and Denise Morcombe, we are taking decisive action to deliver stronger child safety laws. I believe this is one of the most important bills our Crisafulli LNP government has considered in the last 12 months. This bill will establish a publicly accessible register of child sex offenders in Queensland. For more than a decade, the Morcombe family called for action on a public child sex offender register. While the former government failed to act for the last decade, our government has made it a priority in our first year. I am so proud our government is doing this for the Morcombe family and other families impacted by these types of horrendous crimes against our children.

This legislation is about transparency, accountability and, above all, protection. It ensures parents and communities have the right to know when those who have committed the most serious crimes against children are living nearby. Daniel's Law is about prevention. It is ensuring Queensland leads the way in putting the safety of our children before the rights of offenders.

The objectives of this bill are clear: to increase transparency for parents, caregivers and the wider community; to empower the public with vital information about high-risk offenders, particularly when offenders breach reporting obligations or their whereabouts are unknown; and to ensure our children are protected from sexual offenders who pose a threat to their safety and wellbeing. This bill represents a promise to every child in Queensland that their safety is our priority and that every possible measure will be taken to protect them.

This bill is just one of the puzzle pieces in the Crisafulli LNP government's solution to the crime crisis we inherited from the Labor government. Since coming to office we have delivered Queensland's most comprehensive crime reduction agenda in decades as our government puts the rights of victims ahead of the rights of criminals. It began with tough new laws under the Adult Crime, Adult Time policy. The government also made Jack's Law permanent, expanding police wandering powers across public spaces.

A permanent State Flying Squad and expanded Polair helicopter fleet now give police rapid response across the state backed by new tasers, body worn cameras, tyre deflation devices and funding to recruit 1,600 new officers. Alongside stronger enforcement, the government has invested heavily in prevention and rehabilitation. Programs like Circuit Breaker Sentencing and Staying on Track provide

structured rehabilitation for repeat youth offenders while \$50 million has been committed for a secure care residential facility for at-risk young people. Monthly victims of crime data is now published to ensure there is transparency, and a dedicated ministry for victim support has been established to put victims at the centre of the justice system. This comprehensive approach is already delivering results, but we will continue to work on this for as long as it takes.

This bill, Daniel's Law, is another step in the right direction. This bill lays out the three-tier disclosure system for public access. Tier 1 is for convicted sex offenders who fail to comply with reporting obligations or whose whereabouts are unknown. This person's name, photo and year of birth are listed on the public website so the community can remain vigilant. Tier 2 is for convicted sex offenders who are considered high risk. These offenders will have their name, photo, year of birth, current location and offences committed all shared online. Parents in the neighbourhood can be aware of the presence of a convicted sex offender and take extra steps to protect their children. Tier 3 relates to moderate-risk offenders where information published will only be accessible to police, certain government agencies and organisations working with children. This includes their name, photo, year of birth and relevant details to manage the risk. Let me be very clear: every convicted child sex offender will be included in this model.

Closer to my region, a 2022 investigation into the alleged grooming and exploitation of young people in Cairns identified 48 child victims during Operation Uniform Kalahari and I suspect the actual number is much higher. The trauma that these victims face will stay with them forever. This is something we cannot change, which breaks my heart.

This new public register is the first of its kind in Queensland. Ninety-three per cent of alleged sex offenders are said to be male. Under the current law, members of the community have no access to the information stored on the restricted, non-public register. This means that schools, parents and community members are left completely in the dark about who is living in their neighbourhood, who is working with young people and whether there are risks they should be aware of.

Under Labor's watch, Queenslanders witnessed multiple cases where convicted child sex offenders were released back into the community only to reoffend—an appalling failure of protection. Not all sex offenders reoffend, but many do. Statistics sit at around 10 to 15 per cent of those convicted of a sexual offence will reoffend. When this happens, the outrage from Queenslanders is immense and the anger is always about how the laws are not protecting our children but protecting these disgusting creeps. Names like Adam Crosswell, Christopher Mackie, Andrew Vassel and Peter Buchanan are a tragic reminder of what happens when accountability and transparency fall short. Daniel's Law is designed to change that by giving parents and communities access to vital information, increasing public awareness and putting in place greater deterrence for offenders.

When offenders know the community is watching and when families are informed, we will create stronger safeguards that help prevent reoffending and protect our most vulnerable. Under the previous government, we were left in the dark about where these offenders live. Under the amendments, we will no longer be left in the dark. This bill is another step in the right direction and proof that we are a government that protects people, not criminals. Those children did not have a choice. Those who abused them did. Sadly, as the statistics show, too many of these criminals will do it again if given the opportunity. We cannot change what has happened to these victims. What we can change is the sense of fear and the sense of being left in the dark that our community experiences, unaware if someone with a history of sexual offending could be living next door.

I rise today not only as a member of parliament but as a mother and as a guardian of the next generation. I speak on behalf of every parent who deserves the right to know who is engaging with their children. Protecting the innocence of our children is not a choice; it is an obligation we all share. Sexual abuse steals more than innocence; it robs young people of trust, safety and the sense that the world is a good place. As we mark Day for Daniel this Friday, we honour the Morcombe family's tireless advocacy by finally turning their call for change into reality with this legislation. I wholeheartedly support this bill.