



Speech By

Donna Kirkland

MEMBER FOR ROCKHAMPTON

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DEFAMATION AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Mrs KIRKLAND (Rockhampton—LNP) (12.42 pm): I rise to speak to the Defamation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025. This is an important bill that amends and modernises legislation that is over 20 years old. With technology moving at an incredible pace, it is important that we as a government keep step with legislation that supports those advances. As I read through these amendments, I could not help but notice that this is yet another amendment bill that could have been and should have been delivered by those opposite. I wondered why it is that there are so many pieces of legislation that the Crisafulli government has had to amend and why it is that we keep finding errors, oversights and cumbersome legislation left by the previous Labor government for our state to try to work with. Then I realised that it is because the previous Labor government was a government that delayed, deferred and denied Queenslanders sensible, practical governance and protection such as the Reportable Conduct Scheme. I am honoured to be a part of the Crisafulli LNP government that develops, drives and delivers good governance and protection for Queenslanders.

We find ourselves living in a world where many people are scrambling to keep up with technological advances and then fighting between the democratic right to speak your mind and the exercise of assassinating someone's character online without consequence. It is incumbent upon a government to take measures that protect victims from serious and harmful acts of defamation. All states and territories are part of the Model Defamation Provisions. Attorneys-general from across Australia formed the intergovernmental agreement that underpins those provisions. As early as 2021, discussions began around the Model Defamation Provisions and resultant papers were released for public consultation in August 2022, with a wide range of stakeholders participating in that consultation. All recommendations were approved by the Standing Council of Attorneys-General in 2023 and yet again Queensland remained one of the last states to step up and implement changes that would potentially save lives.

The Crisafulli government is determined to keep Queenslanders safer, and this is another piece of legislation that works towards that goal. The bill introduces greater protections for victims to remove the threat of defamation proceedings when reporting to police. It offers a new defence for administrators of online community forums and social media pages where defamatory comments from a third party have been made. The bill also gives courts new power to order the removal of defamatory content, even if a platform is not part of a legal case. The introduction of this bill ensures Queensland defamation laws remain uniform with other states and territories. It is imperative consistency exists in law where publications do extend beyond our jurisdictional boundaries. These reforms offer an opportunity for platforms to make amends where defamatory digital matter has occurred and there is allowance for platform administrators to take steps to remove or prevent access to that matter.

Because Labor failed to deliver these reforms in a timely manner, the Crisafulli government is now acting quickly, allowing for this bill to commence seven days after receiving royal assent, ensuring changes commence as soon as possible while still providing the necessary time to advise the courts, key stakeholders and, of course, the public.

As politicians, we are all too familiar with the defamatory comments that arise on social media and other forms of electronic communication, but this is not about us; this is about the people of Queensland. It is about my constituents in Rockhampton and Gracemere. It is about mums and dads. It is about children. It is about business owners. The bill is about protecting victims. It is about keeping Queenslanders safer and delivering a fresh start.

This bill is another example of the Crisafulli government mopping up the mess of the previous Labor government. The people of Queensland deserve to have legislation that is modern and up to date, working for Queenslanders and not against them. The Defamation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill works towards achieving that. I commend the bill to the House.