




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR BURLEIGH

Record of Proceedings, 29 October 2025

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

Second Reading

 **Mr VORSTER** (Burleigh—LNP) (8.05 pm): I often reflect on lines that I have picked up on my journey, both professionally and in public life. I like to think that politics is the mechanism by which we can not only have a contest of ideas but also translate ideas into action and action into outcomes and, in a meaningful way, change futures for the better. There is a line by a French novelist—I forget their name—that often sits with me. It is—

Now, in every human question, there is something more powerful than strength, than courage, than genius itself: it is the idea whose time has come.

Reflecting on this legislation and this important reform, I have had an opportunity to wonder: at what time did the justification, the need, for this reform arrive? What was that moment? At times I have wondered: did that moment come when a parent received that god-awful phone call or knock at the door? Did that moment for the reform come when that family was afflicted by that news? Did the moment come when a state became captivated by the story of a young boy taken at a bus stop on the Sunshine Coast, wondering where he was and whether it was possible he could be returned safely—clinging on to dear hope that he could be reunited with his family? Did the moment arrive when Queensland was confronted by what had happened to that family? Was it in this parliament, not so many years ago, when the LNP opposition stood up and said, 'Enough is enough. We need now in the state of Queensland a mechanism to prevent further abuse by empowering parents to make decisions, better decisions, for their children about who would be in their orbit, was it that moment?

I did not sit in the parliament in that season, but many of our current members of the 58th Parliament did. I took a moment to reflect on the debate that unfolded in the parliament. What I saw was an LNP opposition that, not for prideful reasons and not for boastful reasons but for constructive reasons, brought into this place a proposal to keep children safe. I would have thought, reading that debate, that the moment for action had well and truly arrived, but what we had was a callous and dismissive Labor government that was not prepared to contemplate that perhaps circumstances demanded action. They voted against the LNP opposition proposition that it was time to act in the interests of children and to stop further abuse. They questioned whether there was evidence to take action. They demanded evidence. Do you know what? The evidence was laid bare in the horrific story of Daniel Morcombe. That was the evidence, and the former Labor government refused to see it as such.

In the previous parliament we had the member for Nicklin make an incredible contribution—a contribution not only as a champion of the vulnerable, not only as a champion of child victims, but also as somebody who worked hard to find justice and to put lives back together. He made an incredible contribution, as did the member for Toowoomba North and my colleague the member for Southport. I want to draw the House's attention to a comment that was made by the member for Nicklin. He was

reflecting on the opposition of the then Labor government to our view that the time had arrived for a public sex offender register. He reflected on how the then member for Maryborough had opposed our suggestion. He said—

Hopefully, the member for Maryborough will get a chance to have a say on this motion, because I understand that he has supported it in the past. However, I fear that the LNP is the only party that will protect our children.

He was right on two accounts. The first account is that only the LNP government will look after our children because it took the election of an LNP government to introduce this bill. The other matter that he was correct on is that the member for Maryborough will sit in this place and make a contribution to secure these changes. I want to thank the chair of the committee for not only an incredible report that will help secure the passage of this legislation but also a fight he has fought in a professional capacity and during an earlier season in this parliament.

I think what is really important—and it has to be made clear to the public—is that it did take a change of government to make this happen because we took to the election a commitment to deliver this. It was not a commitment shared on both sides. It was a commitment provided by the LNP, endorsed by the electorate, who wanted us to stand in this place and effect change. Some of those opposite have made a contribution, trying to get in on the action, as it were, but really their contribution rings hollow because not so many years ago they voted against what we are proposing today, including the member for Gaven. The member for Gaven voted against a public child sex offender register in the state of Queensland, and her party leader, the Leader of the Opposition, has so far refused to stand up, do a mea culpa and back it in this time. They are hopelessly divided on this issue, as they were when we originally brought it into this House.

Not only could the Queensland public not trust them to implement this law, but they could not trust them to look after children in their own care. I really want to pay tribute to Minister Camm, the member for Whitsunday, for the incredible job she has done to help launch a commission of inquiry into Queensland's broken child safety system. For me, this shows the difference between the two sides of the House. While one side of the House, the Labor side of the House, voted against a public child sex offender register, they also presided over a system where, according to a 2024 census, 11 per cent of children in out-of-home care had been sexually abused. Children in the care of the state, under the former Labor government, had been sexually abused. They care not for children at risk of sexual exploitation. They refused to back in these reforms when their time had come. For those children in their care, they turned a blind eye.

I will say this to the House: our commission of inquiry will expose a rotten system, and it will help drive the reform we need, not only to heal people but also to prevent further abuse so that every child in this great state of Queensland—every child—can be whole and reach their potential because only then can the state reach its potential. Our greatest assets are our children. Let's make sure we give them the future they deserve.