




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR STRETTON

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

 **Mr MARTIN** (Stretton—ALP) (12.44 pm): I would like to start by acknowledging the member for Caloundra. Sharing that story must have been very difficult. Thank you. It was obviously timely and very powerful to listen to in support of the safety of all Queensland children.

I rise to contribute to the debate on the Community Protection and Public Child Sex Offender Register (Daniel's Law) Bill. This legislation, known as Daniel's Law, is named in honour of Daniel Morcombe, a young Queenslanders who we are all familiar with and whose tragic story has profoundly shaped our state's commitment to the protection of children. On the 20th anniversary of the Daniel Morcombe Foundation, I want to pay the highest tribute to Bruce and Denise. Their courage and resilience in the face of unimaginable grief is extraordinary. Out of heartbreak they created hope, dedicating their lives to keeping other children safe. Through their advocacy, their education programs and their unwavering determination, they have no doubt saved many young lives in this state.

The passage of Daniel's Law marks a deeply meaningful and significant moment for the Morcombe family. It reflects their tireless efforts to create a legacy of protection, awareness and accountability. This Friday is Day for Daniel, Australia's largest child safety education and awareness day. Each year more than two million Australians participate, wearing red and learning how to stay safe online and in their communities. The foundation's work extends well beyond that day. This year, to commemorate its 20th anniversary, it released a 30-minute documentary titled *Don't Waste It*. It is a powerful education resource designed for teenagers aged 13 to 15, helping them understand personal safety in real-world situations. It highlights the foundation's journey in child protection and shows exactly why the Morcombes' advocacy has national significance. The Queensland Labor opposition will be supporting this bill. The safety of our children must always come first and this parliament must contribute to keeping kids safe.

This bill establishes a three-tier system to increase community awareness and enable carers to access information about certain reportable offenders where this is appropriate. Tier 1 will include a public website listing missing or noncompliant offenders, along with their photographs and vehicle details; tier 2 will allow Queensland residents to apply to temporarily view photographs of certain reportable offenders in their local area; and tier 3 will allow parents and guardians to check whether a person with unsupervised access to their child is a reportable offender. Civil liberties are critical to a democratic society, as is the appropriate use of information. On that basis, to ensure this information is not misused, the bill also includes strong offences to prevent the misuse of information, with penalties of up to 10 years imprisonment for harassment and to prevent vigilante justice.

While this bill represents an important step forward, the work cannot end with its passage. For Daniel's Law to deliver what it promises it must be properly resourced. The Queensland Police Service will carry the responsibility for administering the register, processing applications, ensuring accuracy, monitoring compliance and managing public inquiries. This is a significant undertaking. Through the

parliamentary committee process the QPS indicated that only a handful of staff—four or five—will initially be assigned to get the scheme underway, with ongoing needs still to be assessed. It is concerning that no ongoing funding has yet been provided for the operation of the register, only for its establishment. The Queensland Labor opposition calls on the government to ensure that the QPS has the ongoing resources it needs to manage this register safely and effectively. That includes additional funding, sufficient staff, appropriate technology and the training and oversight required to prevent mistakes and protect both community and victims.

We know from the experience of other jurisdictions that such a register is not simple to operate. It requires constant monitoring, updates and checks to ensure the accuracy of information and the privacy of those affected. The system being developed to administer this register must be built carefully, properly tested, secure and robust, and it must not be rushed. Stakeholders, including the CCC and the Queensland Law Society, have highlighted that there is limited evidence globally about the effectiveness of registers in reducing offending and that is why education and awareness are so critical.

Education helps parents and children to understand that most offenders are not strangers. Sadly, often they are people close to the victim. The register is one tool in our toolkit, but it must be part of a broader holistic approach to child safety that includes education, prevention and early intervention. The Queensland Labor opposition urges the government to ensure that any education campaign supporting Daniel's Law is substantive and practical. It must explain clearly how the system works, what information it provides and, just as importantly, what it does not. Parents must not be given a false sense of security.

During the committee process the QPS advised that, of more than 3,200 reportable offenders on the child protection offender register, fewer than 750 will be captured under tier 2 of the scheme. That is less than 25 per cent. It is critical that families understand these limitations and that the government closely monitors how the scheme operates to ensure it achieves its intent without unintended harm. The legislation includes a statutory review after five years. We believe that review should occur earlier and more regularly to ensure any emerging issues are addressed swiftly and effectively.

Queensland Labor has a proud record of strengthening child protection laws. We introduced the toughest monitoring framework in the nation, doubling the periods for which child sex offenders were subjected to police oversight. We permanently integrated Task Force Orion into the Queensland Police Service's Child Abuse and Sexual Crime Group and, since 2015, we almost doubled the resources allocated to the child protection offender register with a commitment to further double those by 2030. We expanded police powers to inspect digital devices, required offenders to disclose anonymising software and created new penalties for failing to comply with reporting obligations. Those are all tangible, nation-leading reforms that make Queensland safe, and Daniel's Law builds on that legacy. However, laws alone are not enough. For the system to work, for parents to have confidence and for victims to be respected, it must be appropriately resourced, monitored and continually improved. Every victim matters, every child deserves safety and every Queenslanders has a role to play in protecting our children.

Again, I wish to pay tribute to Bruce and Denise for their strength, compassion and unwavering commitment to child safety. Daniel's legacy lives on through them, through those lives that have been saved and through the millions of children who are safer today because of their bravery and commitment to change. The Queensland Labor opposition supports this bill because it reflects our shared determination to do everything possible to keep Queensland children safe. I commend the bill to the House.