




Speech By
Jon Krause

MEMBER FOR SCENIC RIM

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

Second Reading

 **Mr KRAUSE** (Scenic Rim—LNP) (4.42 pm): As legislators and members of the parliament in Queensland, we have a great duty to protect those who are vulnerable in our community, especially children. From listening to the contributions on this bill by members of parliament of all persuasions, it is clear that the bill has wide support and the concepts embodied by this bill are agreed upon—that implementing this register through Daniel's Law will improve safety for the most vulnerable in our community. It has been a priority of our government to bring this bill forward in a timely manner, within the first year of a new government. That reflects our strong priorities to not only put victims of crime first but also take steps to protect the most vulnerable in our community.

I rise to give my strong support for this bill, which will be known as Daniel's Law, and to commend Bruce and Denise Morcombe for their long period of advocacy that has brought us to this moment. I also reflect on the fact that throughout the previous term of government this bill was not brought forward, despite that long advocacy. I am so glad to be part of a government that has made it a priority for the first year in office. That reflects the way we think about protecting Queenslanders and victims of crime.

This legislation, modelled on the Western Australian scheme that has been in effect since 2012, is a significant and welcome step in the protection of our most vulnerable people, our children. It establishes, as other members have noted, a three-tier public child sex offender register in Queensland. The first tier will enable a publicly accessible webpage for reportable offenders who have failed to comply with their reporting obligations. It will have photographs and other details about those people. It will be available to all members of the public. That will enable more information to be shared about people who have already been identified as child sex offenders but who are not complying with their obligations to report and any other obligations that were imposed as a result of them being declared a child sex offender. Tier 2 has application-based mechanisms for parents or guardians to view images, but not full identifying details, of high-risk offenders living in their suburb, locality or adjoining areas, depending on where it is. In rural and regional Queensland it might be more than one locality or a larger district, reflecting the different make-up of those communities. The third tier is a disclosure scheme allowing parents or guardians to inquire if a person who has or will have unsupervised contact with their children is a reportable offender.

The purpose of this bill, for which we have heard broadscale support from across the chamber and the community, is to equip parents, carers and communities with more information and thereby improve protections around children. As the Premier said, this is about putting the rights of victims and parents ahead of the rights of offenders. In a state with a growing population and a society that is growing in complexity, we are faced with the terrible reality of child sexual exploitation. This is a very meaningful reform in that context.

I note that some people raised concerns about the civil liberties of offenders and their rights, but the sad reality of our society is that we do see sexual abuse against children. It can be committed by people living right next door to us. It can be committed by people who are across the street or who are involved in our local clubs and communities. I have heard in the debate and in other committee hearings over the years that often it is committed by those who are most close to the victims—family and close relations—but we also need to guard against those people who are in the community at large, and the provision of information through this bill will help with regard to that.

This bill bears the name ‘Daniel’s Law’ in honour of 13-year-old Daniel Morcombe, who was tragically abducted and murdered in 2003. His kidnapping and his murder shook our nation, but from that tragedy arose purpose for Bruce and Denise Morcombe, who clearly transformed their grief into a resolute public mission for the reform of laws. For more than 20 years they have led advocacy through the Daniel Morcombe Foundation—not just advocacy but also education for our young people about the dangers that face them in the community and in their daily lives. They have also supported victims and relentlessly pressed government to do better. As we heard from the member for Mudgeeraba, that was one of the things that led our team in parliament to make a commitment to implementing this law not only before the last election but also before the 2020 election, when the member for Mudgeeraba was in a different role as a shadow minister.

We need to acknowledge the strong work that the Morcombes have undertaken. They pushed on. They had the courage to keep speaking publicly, despite the unimaginable personal loss they had endured. They did not accept any complacency—they still do not—in our child protection systems. They had a focus on ensuring other children are safer because of what they had gone through and the terrible tragedy that occurred to Daniel. I say to Bruce and Denise: thank you. Your advocacy stands as a tremendous example of how persistence can shape policy for the betterment of all society.

No law can eliminate all risk when it comes to the danger posed by child sex offenders and potential child sex offenders, but this bill does have several practical improvements, which we have touched on. It is about people being more informed. It also has the concept of more accountability being placed on offenders who are already subject to reporting obligations because there will be a system set up to expose to the public when they are not complying with those obligations.

The tiered structure enables disclosure to be made in an appropriate fashion for appropriate circumstances—not just a blanket system but a calibrated approach. There are also safeguards built into the legislation in terms of how people use the information when they obtain it and penalties apply for the misuse of it. With any major reforms there are concerns, but those safeguards that have been put in place by the parliament through this bill address them in a straightforward manner.

As I said, no system is perfect. This register is a tool, not a guarantee. As Bruce Morcombe himself said, no system will ever be perfect, but at least it is a level of security that people can access for information when they choose to do so. The task for us as legislators and as a government will be to make sure that the system is well resourced and robust and evolves with time, and if changes need to be made to the mechanism of the register in the future to better serve the purposes for which it was set up then those changes are made. We must support this bill wholeheartedly and simultaneously work to ensure its proper functioning in practice both now and into the future. By passing Daniel’s Law we affirm for Queenslanders that we will not allow predators to lurk unprotected. In doing so we honour the memory of Daniel Morcombe and the tireless work of Denise and Bruce Morcombe. I commend the bill to the House.