




Speech By
Jonty Bush

MEMBER FOR COOPER

Record of Proceedings, 21 May 2025

MOTION

Sexual Offences, Legislative Reform; Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders

 **Ms BUSH** (Cooper—ALP) (6.00 pm): 'He is a good bloke.' 'He is a pillar of the community.' 'He comes from such a great family,' and, 'He has never done anything like this before.' The women of Queensland have heard it all—in courtrooms, in headlines and repeated around dinner tables—excuses used to cast doubt, to downplay violence and to defend the indefensible but being a 'good bloke' does not erase a victim's harm. It does not soothe the family who is torn apart and it does not justify the actions of a person who has sexually assaulted or raped another person. Queenslanders need urgent legislative change to better support victim-survivors of sexual assault and rape, and the Labor opposition team are demanding that we make those changes here in parliament this week.

The Premier of Queensland has said that this government will put victim-survivors front and centre of their plans. We are 200 days into this new government and we have seen nothing from them to support rape and sexual assault victims, 99 per cent of whom are women. We know this government has a problem with women. It started with the gag motion on abortion when they walked in here and, in an unprecedented move, removed our right to debate the issues that are important to women in Queensland who want access to timely and safe abortions. That is an issue, and their clear disregard of women's issues has continued. They left rape and sexual assault out of their signature Adult Crime, Adult Time legislation and we are back in here this week having to fix that one up. Now we learn that the Attorney-General has been in possession of a report that recommended removing the good character defence from rape and sexual assault charges for 157 days and they have kept absolutely silent on that issue. This government promised a fresh start but it feels a bit more like spraying Febreze over a gym bag to me, trying to mask an odour of inertia.

The QSAC report made 28 evidence-based recommendations. Guess how I know that? QSAC published those recommendations, because that is what professional bodies do—they consult, they analyse, they recommend and, guess what, they publish their recommendations. The Labor opposition's motion is to follow the QSAC recommendations to remove the good character test to ensure perpetrators who sexually abuse children are held to account. Courts should not assume that just because a victim does not prepare a victim impact statement no harm has been caused. These recommendations are urgent and we should pass that legislation this week—not in three months time when the parliamentary committee has provided a report, not in a year when the government gets around to doing it. The Labor opposition has tabled amendments and we are calling on the government to get these laws passed this week.

The government had no issue with declaring their Adult Crime, Adult Time legislation urgent and fast-tracking that process. Hell, even the Trusts Bill was considered urgent by this government. They have set this precedent, so why are female victims of rape considered lesser by this government? QSAC have done all the work for the government. They have said that here tonight. They have done a

comprehensive review—data analysis, subject matter expert consultation, community expectation meetings. Over 19 months they have undertaken this work. Unlike the Expert Legal Panel, they made their findings public.

These are critical reforms for women and girls in Queensland. The government has drafted the bill, the consultation has occurred and a mature government would put politics aside and progress the bill this week. In Queensland, there are 75 rapes reported each week. That is at least 1,640 victim-survivors who will have to face their perpetrators in court between now and when these reforms actually take effect under the government's proposal. The QSAC report found from their data sample that 92 per cent of District Court rape cases involved character references and that 25 per cent of those cases relied on good character references which significantly impacted the sentencing outcome. What does the Premier have to say to those 1,640 victims who will have to live through this experience, knowing he could have intervened this week to stop that trauma? I support this motion. We have all the information that we need in this House to change these laws this week. The Labor opposition stands with victim-survivors who are calling for this reform. The question is: will the government put their words into action? Will they put politics aside and pass these laws this week?