




Speech By
Kendall Morton

MEMBER FOR CALOUNDRA

Record of Proceedings, 30 October 2025

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

 **Ms MORTON** (Caloundra—LNP) (12.37 pm): I rise today in strong support of the Community Protection and Public Child Sex Offender Register (Daniel's Law) Bill 2025. I would like to start my contribution today by paying tribute to Bruce and Denise Morcombe, who experienced the very worst thing that could ever happen to any of us. Bruce and Denise have joined us in parliament today, and I thank them for being here. Bruce and Denise have been an incredible part of our Sunshine Coast community. I think we can all agree that we will never be able to count the lives they have potentially saved through the work they have done. I realised just how special and effective the work of Bruce and Denise was when my own children in those younger primary school years would come home and talk about Daniel and what they had learned about being safe. They would speak about listening if they got a 'funny feeling in their tummy'—in child language, explaining how to listen to your gut in a way that sticks with both kids and their parents.

The establishment of the public child sex offender register allows parents and those with parental responsibility to access information in order to make informed decisions about who their children are spending time with. This register is about arming adults with the tools to remain vigilant in keeping our community safe. The tireless advocacy of the Daniel Morcombe Foundation in lobbying for greater publicly available information has led to this first-of-its kind register, named Daniel's Law in honour of Daniel Morcombe. The reality we face as a society is that there are bad people out there who are capable of doing horrific things to children. This bill is a significant step in the right direction. As we know, many sexual assaults of children are inflicted by people they know and that disgusting situation is something that, as parents, we should be aware of. This bill takes away a layer of questioning regarding those registered sex offenders. No, this does not capture and eliminate all risk, but it sure is a step forward.

During the summer of January 2016 my then six-year-old daughter was the victim of a sexual assault. I want to share with the chamber the impact of what that looks like in my experience and just why this legislation is so important. I did not know. With a four-year-old, a two-year-old and a newborn, I never would have put two and two together about the events of that day. There were other people around, it was broad daylight and it was not a stranger. What I did know, though, was that just four weeks later, when school returned for the new school year and she was entering year 2, she was all of a sudden terrified to be left at a place she had always been safe and thrived.

This once confident, happy little girl was, out of nowhere, hiding under desks and crying—happy at home, not happy away from home. I took her to a well-known child psychologist to figure out why I was witnessing such a dramatic change in behaviour. I was worried and still had no idea. After months of therapy, this professional described her as 'the worst case of avoidance I've ever seen' when talking about what might be wrong and concluded that she was very introverted and a bit different.

Five years later, at age 11, this beautiful, mature, super-smart, wonderful daughter of mine came to me in her quiet, no-fuss manner and described the events of that day in so much detail it was like it was yesterday. What followed from there was bouts of anxiety, sadness, questioning, a different psychologist, a therapist, GP support, school refusal at times, all whilst navigating growing up and her teenage years. My daughter is not defined by this, but it has definitely had a significant impact in different ways over time.

Victims live a battle of weighing up chasing justice versus healing themselves and the journey is individual and complex. What works for one person does not necessarily work for all. My heart goes out to all victims as it can be a lifelong battle for the victim. I would like to pay tribute to the angels at Laurel Place in Maroochydore who specialise in sexual assault counselling who, in just one session, had more impact on our family than anyone. This perpetrator was a distant relative and my daughter had not known him before and has not seen him since, but if it can happen to me it can happen to anyone.

Bruce and Denise paid the ultimate price for the dark side of society and remain my inspiration. They have the eternal gratitude of an entire country for the teaching they have given hundreds of thousands of children in a way that parents do not always have the right words for. We will all remember Daniel and his legacy will live on forever. My message is for the sake of our children: there are very few people we can trust so we have a right to know the ones that we definitely cannot. We all benefit from talking about sexual assault and sexual exploitation of children openly, as by bringing it into the open it is harder for the perpetrators to hide. At all costs let's work together to ensure no child pays the price that Daniel and his family have. What happened to Daniel was a crime of opportunity by a depraved individual who should never have been walking the streets.

I am baffled by the number of members who have chosen not to speak on this bill, but my position should be made clear: the rights of perpetrators mean nothing when compared to the safety of children. As we all remember Daniel tomorrow in the annual Walk for Daniel event wearing our red shirts, remember to take the opportunity to keep the conversation going with our children about what is not okay and how to talk about it, both around crimes of opportunity and stranger danger, and also to remain vigilant in our homes, schools, sports clubs and safe environments.