




Speech By
Hon. Laura Gerber

MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN

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

Second Reading

 **Hon. LJ GERBER** (Currumbin—LNP) (Minister for Youth Justice and Victim Support and Minister for Corrective Services) (5.23 pm): After a decade of neglect, Queenslanders have seen 12 months of delivery under the Crisafulli government. Today, that delivery takes on a profoundly personal meaning. The history of this matters. I know it has been said in this House before, but I want to start at the beginning.

On Sunday, 7 December 2003, a bright 13-year-old boy, Daniel Morcombe, waited at a bus stop on the Sunshine Coast on his way to buy Christmas presents for his family. Tragically, Daniel never came home. Daniel was last seen wearing a red T-shirt, waiting for his bus. He was abducted and murdered and, after years of searching and an intense undercover police investigation, Daniel was finally found in 2011. Daniel was a son, a grandson, a brother, a twin, a boy who loved his family, and he had his whole life ahead of him. He was taken from this world by a repeat child sex offender who never should have had the chance to harm another child.

Bruce and Denise Morcombe turned this heartbreaking story, their heartbreaking experience, into purpose. They created the Daniel Morcombe Foundation to give back to the community who supported them from the day Daniel was taken, and I know that many members of that community are in this chamber today to see this law be passed.

Bruce and Denise are committed to building a future where all children are safe from harm and abuse and where they have the opportunity to thrive. That is their mission. Bruce and Denise have spent two decades educating children, parents and communities about child sexual abuse and how to stay safe. They have turned their tragedy into a powerful program of advocacy for children right across the country, and now, because of their tireless advocacy, Queensland families have another vital tool to keep their children safe. Daniel's Law honours their son's life and continues their mission to make sure no other family has to endure the horrific loss they endured.

Daniel's Law is far from a new idea. The Morcombes have been fighting for it for over a decade, and when the LNP was in opposition we brought this very proposal to parliament. In March 2019 the LNP moved a motion calling for a public child sex offender register to empower parents and protect children. What happened in 2019? Labor voted against it. The then minister for child safety, the member for Bulimba, stood in this chamber and said, 'We are opposed to this motion because it will not work,' and that 'sex offence registers can be clouded by emotions'. Those were her words, the words of a Labor government minister who chose not to create a public child sex offender register. Instead, they prioritised secrecy for child predators over child safety. In fact, the then Labor government rejected the very idea that parents deserved to know if a predator was living next door. They dismissed it as unnecessary. During the debate, the member for Morayfield said it was a 'thought bubble policy' and

'ill-conceived policy based on the shaky foundations of political populism'. The member for Nudgee called it 'little more than populist policy', and the member for Macalister said it was 'populist policy on the run'.

Labor's position in 2019 was clear: they did not support Daniel's Law, and the record shows it. Labor members voted against our calls for a public child sex offender register in 2019, and those very same members come into this chamber today and try to take credit for Daniel's Law, to say, 'We were on this journey all along.' They had 10 years to make it law. They had 10 years to hear the pleas of the Morcombes and create a public child sex offender register. They failed to do it, and the *Hansard* of this chamber reflects that they were never going to do it. They voted against it. Under Labor, parents were left powerless, victims unseen and communities without confidence that their children were safe. Daniel's Law changes that.

At the heart of Daniel's Law is a new three-tier register designed with one clear goal: to put the rights of families, the rights of children, before the rights of predators, and it has taken the LNP Crisafulli government to do this. Each tier has a distinct purpose and forms part of a comprehensive community protection framework that makes Queensland safer.


I want to acknowledge that the Morcombes have fought for this for a very long time and that this is a legacy of the Morcombes. This brings to fruition what they have been calling for over a decade. It is a tribute to Daniel. More than that, it will ensure parents and children have the protections they need. It provides in law the ability for a three-tier system so that parents can make applications. Daniel's story has transformed child safety in Australia through the determination of his parents, who have inspired us, inspired Queenslanders and, in fact, inspired a whole nation. In fact, last year on Day for Daniel more than two million people participated in the walk itself.

We made a promise to the Morcombes before the election that we would legislate Daniel's Law. Today delivers on that promise for them. It delivers the law we promised. It gives parents access to the information they need to protect their children. We promised to put the rights of victims and families ahead of the rights of offenders. We promised to restore confidence in the justice system—a system that has a responsibility to protect Queensland children and not conceal that information from families, a responsibility to allow parents to have the information they need rather than protect the rights of predators, as happened under the Labor government.

Debate, on motion of Mrs Gerber, adjourned.

Resumed from p. 3424, on motion of Mr Purdie—

That the bill be now read a second time.

 **Hon. LJ GERBER** (Currumbin—LNP) (Minister for Youth Justice and Victim Support and Minister for Corrective Services) (7.40 pm), continuing: Before the dinner break I was going through the history of Daniel's Law and reminding this House that back in 2019, when the LNP brought it to the House, the Labor government voted against it. The whips have brought to my attention the members who so far have not contributed to this debate. I want to highlight one of those members—that is, the member for Morayfield. During the 2019 debate, when it was put up that a public child sex offender register should be in law, he said it was a 'thought bubble policy', an 'ill-conceived policy based on the shaky foundations of political populism'. He is yet to contribute to this debate. I would like to know where the member for Morayfield now stands. Another Labor member who is yet to contribute to this debate is the member for Murrumba, the Leader of the Opposition. He is yet to tell us where he stands in relation to Daniel's Law. The member for Woodridge is yet to contribute to this debate and tell us where he stands in relation to Daniel's Law. The member for Waterford—

Mr Head: She is too busy doing the numbers!

Mrs GERBER: She is too busy doing the numbers; I take the interjection from the member for Callide. She is yet to contribute to this debate. Where do these members stand when it comes to laws that protect children and put the rights of families over the rights of predators? There is a whole list of members who are yet to contribute to this debate. The member for Miller is yet to contribute to this debate. The member for Ipswich West is yet to contribute to the debate. Guess who is also on this list? The member for Springwood! I heard the member for Springwood interjecting. There is a spot on the speaking list for him. I look forward to hearing from the member for Springwood considering he voted against Daniel's Law in 2019.

Daniel's Law will create a three-tier register with one clear goal: to put the rights of families and victims before the rights of predators. The first tier targets the most immediate risk: child sex offenders who have failed to report or who have breached their supervision conditions and whose whereabouts are currently unknown. Until now, when an offender disappeared communities were kept in the dark.

The privacy of the child sex offender was prioritised over the rights of communities and children. Under Daniel's Law those days are over. Tier 1 establishes a public website displaying the photograph and essential identifying details of every missing noncompliant child sex offender, including their name, year of birth and identification number.

There are another two tiers. The second tier empowers communities to know who is living in their community. Queensland residents can apply to request photographs of certain high-risk reportable offenders living in their area. The third tier allows a parent or guardian or another person with ongoing parental responsibility to apply to police for confirmation as to whether or not an adult who has or will have unsupervised contact with their child is a reportable offender.

Daniel's Law will change lives. For two decades Bruce and Denise Morcombe have carried the weight of their loss and grief and fought for this change. I am so proud to be part of a government that is finally delivering Queenslanders a public child sex offender register. We are making Queensland safer and we are putting the rights of children, victims and Queenslanders first.