




Speech By  
**Hon. Leanne Linard**

**MEMBER FOR NUDGEES**

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

 **Hon. LM LINARD** (Nudgee—ALP) (4.18 pm): As many before me have, I want to start my contribution by acknowledging Bruce and Denise Morcombe's contribution and their tireless dedication to child safety through the extraordinary work of the Daniel Morcombe Foundation. Their strength and compassion in the face of unimaginable tragedy have inspired millions of Australians and driven meaningful reform for two decades.

The Daniel Morcombe Foundation's reach is immense. Day for Daniel, which will be held this Friday, is now Australia's largest child safety education event with more than two million participants each year. Beyond that single day, the foundation leads national advocacy and education programs all year round. The foundation's new documentary, *Don't Waste It*, released for the foundation's 20th anniversary, speaks directly to young people about personal safety in real-world situations. These are not easy conversations to have with our children, but they need to be had, and the Daniel Morcombe Foundation has courageously initiated that conversation in schools with our children over a long period of time. As a parent, I thank them for their service to keeping our children safe. As a former child safety minister, I had the privilege of getting to know Bruce and Denise and, like every child safety minister before me and, no doubt, those who came after, found their warmth, generosity and resilience humbling.

Whether in government or opposition, Labor will always support laws that make children safer. Keeping our children safe is a principle that sits above politics. When in government we consistently delivered the toughest monitoring framework in the nation for child sex offenders. We doubled monitoring periods from five to 10 years for first-time offenders and from 10 to 20 years or life for repeat offenders. We permanently integrated Task Force Orion into the Queensland Police Service's Child Abuse and Sexual Crime Group. We almost doubled the resources of the child protection offender register since 2015 and committed to doubling them again by 2030. We introduced new digital device inspection powers, reporting requirements and offences for failing to produce electronic devices—all to ensure police have the tools they need to monitor offenders effectively. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the officers and staff of the Queensland Police Service, particularly those working on the front line of such incredibly difficult areas—CPIU, CPOR and Argos teams.

The reforms we introduced brought about important improvements to keeping children safe in Queensland, but it is work that should never stand still. We should always be vigilant and willing to move forward in continuing to improve protections, because the safety of children is paramount. That is the intent of this bill and that is why the Queensland Labor opposition will be supporting the bill.

The bill before us proposes to establish a framework for a three-tier public register in Queensland. Queensland currently has a child protection offender register managed by the Queensland Police Service, though not public-facing. This is, of course, not the first time a public register of this nature has been debated in this House. As in previous debates, I acknowledge that there are a wide range of views from stakeholders, both on what this bill will achieve and what it will not. I similarly acknowledge that stakeholders have raised several unintended consequences during the committee process that are

worthy of this House's consideration. Chief among them is the false sense of security that can result for parents and guardians of children who access the scheme. This is a concern that I have raised in each of my previous contributions on this subject because I do not want a false sense of security to befall any parent or family. It is critical that the community understands that this bill will not capture all reportable child sex offenders and it does not capture all offenders in the community who are subject to the Dangerous Prisoners (Sexual Offenders) Act. It will capture an estimated 25 per cent or less and, of course, it will not capture those who are yet to be brought to light and justice.

We must remain vigilant as parents, as families and as communities and, however uncomfortable it is to acknowledge it, particularly with those known to us. Safeguarding mechanisms within familial or institutional contexts remain the greatest protection we can provide our children. Too many have known the devastation that such events cause. The wounds are deep and lifelong and I acknowledge all of the survivors of such offences. My family is no stranger to those wounds. Gratefully, my children are. That is why I have always spoken in debates on this issue and I always will. While both of the offenders whom my family or I had the misfortune of coming into contact with were brought to justice, neither of them would be caught by these amendments or listed on the register. Again I say: we must remain vigilant, and parents and the community need to be made aware of the kinds of gaps that exist to reduce any false sense of security that could result.

As I said earlier, our duty as legislators is to never stand still but, rather, to always keep improving our systems and protections. It is also to ensure the laws we introduce are free of unintended harm. During the committee process, the Crime and Corruption Commission questioned whether there is clear evidence that public registers of this kind deliver measurable safety benefits and warned about resourcing shortfalls within the Queensland Police Service to manage the scheme. The Queensland Law Society echoed those concerns, noting the absence of empirical studies demonstrating that public access to offender information necessarily improves child safety. Voice for Victims, while strongly supporting the bill, raised important cautions including the risk of secondary trauma for survivors, the possible public identification of victims and the danger of false reassurance for parents. They called for mitigation strategies such as better victim support services, opt-in notification protocols and education campaigns to ensure the register is used responsibly. Legal Aid Queensland, Queensland Council for Civil Liberties and the Queensland Human Rights Commission raised the importance of the government ensuring the policies it enacts are evidence-based and limit human rights no more than necessary to achieve their purpose. Those very real and legitimate concerns were canvassed in their submissions and those of other submitters. Conversely, the Queensland Family and Child Commission in their submission state—

I acknowledge the debate about the civil liberties and rights of offenders who have served their sentence for child sexual abuse who may be identified through this mechanism; however, this cannot override the importance of protecting children from the indelible harm of child sexual abuse.

No child should suffer abuse because authorities failed to act on information they held.

These alternative perspectives do not oppose the bill; they remind us that good intentions must be matched with good implementation.

The Labor opposition will support Daniel's Law because its intent to keep children safe is one that we all share, but we call on the government to: properly resource the QPS for ongoing operation, not just establishment; educate the community honestly and fulsomely about not only where this register serves a purpose but also where the gaps are and about the need to continue to be vigilant, to prevent and reduce a false sense of safety; ensure victims are supported and not retraumatised; and monitor the scheme closely to address any unintended consequences quickly and transparently.

Daniel's Law carries the hopes of countless families who simply want their children to be safe. It must be implemented with care, accountability and compassion worthy of Daniel's name and the legacy his parents have so selflessly built, worthy of all who have experienced the cost of child sexual abuse and worthy of every Queensland child who deserves the very best protection that this House and our community can afford.