



## Speech By **Margaret Nightingale**

**MEMBER FOR INALA**

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Record of Proceedings, 28 October 2025

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

 **Mrs NIGHTINGALE** (Inala—ALP) (12.40 pm): I rise to support the Community Protection and Public Child Sex Offender Register (Daniel's Law) Bill. Before I turn to the detail of this bill, I want to take a moment to acknowledge Bruce and Denise Morcombe. Their strength over the past two decades has been extraordinary. From the worst imaginable loss they have created a legacy that has kept countless children safe and taught families across Australia how to protect their own. Through the Daniel Morcombe Foundation they built something that continues to change lives. The resources, the education programs, the school visits—they all make a real and practical difference. This week, as we approach Day for Daniel, the largest child safety awareness event in the country, it is clear how far their work has reached. More than two million Australians take part in Day for Daniel each year—two million people wearing red, talking about safety and teaching children how to recognise danger. That is an extraordinary achievement. As the foundation marks its 20th year with the release of the *Don't Waste It* documentary aimed at young teens, it is clear that the Morcombes' work will keep making an impact for many years to come.

The Queensland Labor opposition will be supporting Daniel's Law. We do so because the safety of children is, and always must be, the highest priority of any parliament and any government. Every child deserves to grow up safe from harm. That is our collective responsibility in this place. I believe that every member in this place feels that duty and that there is a shared goal across this chamber to do just that. Daniel's Law seeks to strengthen that protection by giving parents and communities greater access to information. It provides another means to help families stay alert and to prevent harm before it happens. However, support for this bill also comes with responsibility. We must make sure that what we pass here today works in practice, not just in principle. That means ensuring the law is properly resourced, carefully implemented and regularly reviewed.

During the parliamentary committee process a number of important issues were raised, and we simply cannot ignore them. One key concern was the potential for a false sense of security among parents who access the new register. I note that the Attorney-General just said that parents will now know if an offender is living in their neighbourhood, but this is exactly one of the concerns that was raised—that is, the potential for a false sense of security among parents who access the new register.

The Queensland Police Service advised that, of more than 3,200 reportable offenders currently on the child protection offender register, only around 749 will appear on tier 2 of the public register. That is less than a quarter. That could well be a false sense of security for parents. While this register is an important step, it will not catch the majority of offenders. Parents must understand that reality—that this tool will not tell the whole story. That is why transparency and communication are so critical. If we do not explain clearly what the register includes and what it does not we risk families assuming their children are safe simply because a name does not appear online.

Time and again, experts have made it clear: the best way to protect children is through education and awareness. Any public information campaign that accompanies this law must be practical, factual and focused on safety, not politics or PR. It should explain how the system operates, what information will be available and what its limitations are. It must also reinforce an uncomfortable but vital truth: most sex offenders are not strangers; they are people known to the victim and their family. If we want to make real change we must talk honestly about that. The Morcombes' work is a shining example of how to do it right. They have shown how education combined with community involvement can save lives. That is the model this government should follow.

Labor has always taken the protection of children seriously. It was a Labor government that introduced the toughest monitoring laws in the country for child sex offences. We doubled the monitoring period for first-time offenders from five to 10 years and for repeat offenders from 10 to 20 years or for life. We established Taskforce Orion as a permanent part of the Queensland Police Service's Child Abuse and Sexual Crime Group, ensuring officers have the specialist capability to track predators both here and overseas.

Since 2015, Labor has almost doubled the resources available to the child protection offender register, with a commitment to double them again by 2030. We strengthened police powers, allowing officers to inspect digital devices, requiring offenders to disclose hidden or anonymising software and creating new offences with penalties up to five years imprisonment for failing to comply. Labor's record is consistent, tough and effective. It is somewhat of a contrast to what happened under the former LNP government and a cabinet in which the now Premier sat when they changed the law and removed around 1,700 convicted child sex offenders from the register overnight. That decision weakened safeguards and eroded community confidence.

If this law is to work, it has to be backed by real resources. During the hearings the deputy commissioner confirmed that just four or five officers would initially manage the register. That is only a few people to oversee a statewide system covering thousands of offenders. There is no ongoing funding in the forward estimates, no permanent staff and no commitment to the resources needed to maintain it. This kind of scheme is estimated to take up to 100 full-time staff. Without that investment, we are setting the Queensland Police Service up to fail and risking the effectiveness of a law that is meant to protect our kids.

We also heard about plans to use automation to fill some of the gaps. It might sound efficient, but that too raises significant questions. How will this artificial intelligence play a role and who will take responsibility if mistakes occur? Those questions remain unanswered. In a system dealing with child safety and criminal histories, mistakes can have a lasting and significant impact and often cannot be fixed later.

Another area of concern is how the government plans to communicate with victims. It is unreasonable that victims should see the names of their perpetrators online without any prior alert. Police told the committee that victims receive a fact sheet at the time the offender is charged. That is not meaningful engagement as that may have happened years and years ago. Victims deserve better. There are also concerns around whether the technology supporting this scheme is ready. If it is not, that also raises serious implications. The system must be built properly. It must be tested thoroughly and resourced adequately before it goes live; otherwise, we risk confusion, data breaches and a loss of public trust.

Finally, Daniel's Law must be reviewed and monitored closely once it is in operation. The current plan is for a review after five years. That is too long. We should be assessing it far earlier to make sure it is achieving its purpose and to address any unintended consequences quickly. Daniel's Law represents more than just another piece of legislation; it represents the persistence of two parents who refused to let tragedy define them and have instead made Queensland a safer place for every child. Their work reminds us that child protection must never be about politics; it must be about people.

The Queensland Labor opposition supports this bill because it shares that goal: keeping children safe. We know that for this to work properly it must be properly funded, implemented carefully and reviewed regularly because Daniel's Law must work and it must endure. That is what Queensland families deserve and that is what our children deserve, and that is what it takes to keep them safe.