




Speech By  
**Hon. Meaghan Scanlon**

**MEMBER FOR GAVEN**

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

 **Hon. MAJ SCANLON** (Gaven—ALP) (5.53 pm): I rise to speak on the Community Protection and Public Child Sex Offender Register (Daniel's Law) Bill. I want to start by saying to the Morcombe family that there is no parent in Queensland and no family in Queensland who has not been moved deeply by their story. What they endured is unimaginable. What they have done with that grief—transforming it into action, into education and into protection for other people's children—is nothing short of extraordinary. They have done that not with anger but with compassion and with purpose. For more than 20 years through the Daniel Morcombe Foundation they have turned pain into prevention. On behalf of the Labor opposition and on behalf of every parent and every family who tucks their children into bed each night, we say thank you for what they have done for our community.

We recognise that the passage of Daniel's Law today will be a deeply meaningful moment for them and their extended family. As has been mentioned, the Queensland Labor opposition will always support laws that protect children and recognise that this is the intent of Daniel's Law. It builds, of course, on the work that Labor governments have championed for decades, creating one of the strongest child protection frameworks in the nation. We doubled the monitoring period for child sex offenders, we integrated Taskforce Orion into the Queensland Police Service, we expanded powers for police to inspect digital devices and almost doubled resources for the child protection offender register since 2015 with a commitment to double them again. All of that came off the back of the then LNP who, in 2014, removed 1,700 convicted child sex offenders from police monitoring overnight, a decision that was made by that cabinet, and the now Premier sat around that cabinet table.

I did not hear any outrage about that decision from the member for Whitsunday in her contribution. She is big on lecturing people on this side but short on taking responsibility herself for pressing go on the Unify system, compromising data for more than 16,000 children just so they could save money. I also did not hear the same sense of outrage when we exposed in estimates that the LNP have not, in fact, allocated ongoing funding for the blue card screening positions that in the director-general's own words are being 'carried at risk'. I repeat: blue card screening positions being carried at risk, and yet those opposite have the nerve to come in here and lecture us about child safety. The director-general went on to say—

... we were not keen to let any of the people go, but the funded positions are less than previously ...

It is very clear that that ongoing funding is not there under those opposite. The member for Whitsunday can save, frankly, all of us the fake outrage because there are decisions that those opposite are making that are completely opposite to the premise that they want to protect children in this state. If we are truly to honour Daniel's legacy we must make sure that these laws work in practice, not just in politics. Stakeholders from across the spectrum—from the CCC, the Queensland Law Society to Voice for Victims—have all cautioned about what can go wrong if this scheme is not carefully implemented and properly resourced.

Let's be clear about what this bill does and does not do. The public register will not list every reportable offender. It is important for parents and guardians to know 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 act. The Attorney-General in her remarks said that parents will know if an offender is living in their neighbourhood, but the fact is that of 3,240 offenders on the child protection offender register only 749, less than 25 per cent, will fall under tier 2 of this register. That means three-quarters of known reportable offenders will not appear on this system. To suggest, like the Attorney-General did, that parents will know if they are living next to a paedophile is simply not true.

If parents and families do not understand that, there is a real risk of a false sense of security that somehow if a name is not there a person is safe. That could genuinely lead to dangerous consequences. That is why public education has to be at the front and centre of implementation. This cannot be a self-congratulatory exercise with glossy fliers and three-word slogans. It needs to tell the truth. It needs to be explained what the register does and what it does not do. It must make clear that most offenders are not strangers in parks or shopping centres; they are people known to the victim, often close to the family and not always known to police. The register is one tool.

The second major risk is resourcing. During the public hearings the deputy commissioner advised that only four or five staff will be assigned to establish the register, with no ongoing funding allocated for its operation. That should alarm every member of this House. A system of this complexity and sensitivity cannot be done on the cheap. Experts have advised that a scheme of this nature could require up to 100 full-time-equivalent positions costing around \$17.5 million per year, yet the government has only provided establishment funding—no ongoing FTEs, no allocation in the forward estimates. How can Queenslanders have confidence that this system will be properly managed if the police do not have the people or resources to run it safely? Even more worrying is that, when asked about victim notification, police said it was impractical to contact every victim. That is not good enough. Every victim matters. No-one should find out through the media or social media that the person who harmed them has reappeared on a public register. Victims deserve to be supported, not blindsided.

We also have concerns about the technology that will underpin the register. At the time of the committee hearing no tender had been awarded, there was no proof of concept and no system had been built, so how can this government say with confidence that it will all be ready and safe and secure? The last thing anyone wants is a system that fails to protect because it was rushed through for a headline.

The opposition believes that the implementation of the scheme should be monitored closely, as many have outlined, particularly given South Australia's scheme is relatively new, to ensure unforeseen unintended consequences do not arise in Queensland. Multiple stakeholders raised concerns that the review of the scheme will not occur until after five years of operation, and the opposition implores the government to consider additional earlier and ongoing reviews to ensure the system is operating as intended and to address any unintended consequences. Again, I heard the contribution from the member for Whitsunday suggesting that if we do a review somehow it brings everything to a halt. It does not. It just means that you continuously review measures to make sure they are working. If those opposite are so proud of this system then they should have nothing to fear. They should be open and transparent like they said they would be during the election, but I suspect, as per usual, that was just lip-service and will not be delivered.

Daniel's Law carries Daniel's name. It carries the legacy of a boy whose life was stolen but whose story has changed a nation. As we pass this law, let us do so with respect and sincerity. Let us make sure we do not just build a register; we build understanding. Let us make sure we do not just promise safety; we actually deliver it. Let us make sure that the pain that Bruce and Denise Morcombe have carried for more than two decades is met with the kind of care, diligence and humanity they have shown every day since losing their son. To the Morcombes: your strength has inspired a generation and it is now our duty as legislators to ensure Daniel's Law lives up to the promise of its name. We support the intent of this bill, but we will hold the government to account to make sure it works and it never fails the children it seeks to protect.