



Speech By
Natalie Marr

MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA

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DEFAMATION AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Ms MARR (Thuringowa—LNP) (12.16 pm): Today I rise to speak in favour of the Defamation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025. This is another bill overseen by the Justice, Integrity and Community Safety Committee—a committee I have been proud to serve on this year. I want to take this opportunity to recognise the parliament's staff and committee members for what has been a busy year and thank them for their dedication and hard work.

This bill is a vital update to our 2005 Defamation Act, aligning Queensland with national standards and delivering a powerful shield against the rampant dangers of online defamation. In our digital age, words spread like wildfire across platforms, often anonymously, damaging reputations and silencing voices. They ignite harm, spreading across digital platforms to bully, harass and sometimes endanger lives. This bill cuts through the chaos with precision and it shields passive digital intermediaries like search engines from undue liability while mandating accessible complaints systems that demand action within seven days to remove or block harmful content. Critically, it extends the defence of absolute privilege to publications of defamatory matter to officials of Australian police forces or services while they are acting in their official capacities. This means Queenslanders, especially victims of crime and domestic violence, can report offences to police without fear of being sued for defamation. They speak truth to the power, safe in the knowledge that the law stands firmly behind them.

The bill also drags our justice system into the 21st century by allowing notices and other documents to be given or served by means of email, messaging or other electronic communication to an electronic address or location indicated by the recipient. There will be no more delays by someone claiming that they never received a letter. This simple change will speed up proceedings and deliver fast justice for victims. These reforms ensure Queenslanders can report crimes without fear of backlash; modernise criminal defamation under the code, with lawful excuses for good faith intermediaries; and give courts authority for rapid take-downs, always prioritising privacy and safety, especially the risks of domestic violence that plague too many families.

My commitment to Thuringowa has seen me fight for tougher legislation that will make families feel safer, and this bill expands on that commitment. They deserve nothing less than ironclad safety. Online smears can shatter community bonds, escalate bullying at schools and heighten real-world threats in our close-knit neighbourhoods.

As someone who has volunteered and chaired the Crime Stoppers Townsville committee, I have witnessed firsthand how unchecked family abuse fuels family breakdowns, mental health crises and even violence. This bill is our frontline defence. It keeps our kids safer from cyber torment, empowers parents to protect their loved ones and ensures swift justice so no family endures needless suffering. I am proud to have contributed to this bill. I will always stand guard for your safety, your voices and our shared future.

Finally, the bill will commence seven days after the date of assent. This will ensure the reforms take effect as soon as possible while providing necessary time to advise Queensland courts, key stakeholders and the public. I proudly commend the bill to the House.