




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

 **Mr RUSSO** (Toohey—ALP) (12.03 pm): I rise to speak on the Community Protection and Public Child Sex Offender Register (Daniel's Law) Bill 2025. At the outset I acknowledge Bruce and Denise Morcombe, whose tireless advocacy has changed the landscape of child safety in Queensland and across Australia. Their strength, compassion and determination, born from unimaginable tragedy, have inspired generations to do better to protect our children and to ensure Daniel's legacy continues to make our communities safer. The Daniel Morcombe Foundation is now marking its 20th year of service. Through education, awareness and advocacy, Bruce and Denise have made an extraordinary difference. Day for Daniel, which will be held again this Friday, is now the largest child safety education day in the country, with more than two million Australians participating. The foundation's recent documentary *Don't Waste It* is yet another example of their forward-thinking approach, speaking directly to young people about personal safety and real-world risks.

The bill before the House is a deeply meaningful and significant milestone for the Morcombe family and for Queensland. It seeks to strengthen protections for children through a three-tier public register of child sex offenders. Its intent is simple: to make children safer. For that reason, the Queensland Labor opposition will support this bill. Labor has a proud record of taking tough, evidence-based action to protect children and hold offenders to account. It was a Labor government that introduced the strongest legislative framework in the nation for monitoring child sex offenders, doubling the reporting periods and extending oversight for repeat offenders to 20 years or life. Labor permanently integrated Task Force Orion into the Queensland Police Service and almost doubled the resources for the child protection offender registry since 2015, with a commitment to double that again by 2030. Labor also expanded police powers to inspect digital devices, introduced new offences for failing to comply with reporting obligations and cracked down on the use of software used by offenders to conceal their activities online. Those are the kinds of strong, practical measures that keep Queenslanders safe.

The bill is modelled on the Western Australian and South Australian schemes. It will create a three-tier system for the public release of limited information. Tier 1 will identify missing noncompliant offenders whose whereabouts are unknown—a vital alert mechanism. Tier 2 will allow residents to conduct local area searches to see if serious reportable offenders live nearby. Tier 3 will allow parents and guardians to check whether a person with unsupervised contact with their child is a reportable offender. These are measured reforms and the opposition recognises the intent; however, they must be implemented carefully and properly resourced. If this parliament does nothing else, it must ensure that the laws we pass actually work and that they keep children safe.

The opposition notes the range of views raised during the committee process. Many stakeholders expressed support but also significant concerns about potential unintended consequences. One of the key risks identified was the creation of a false sense of security for parents who use the register. As the

Queensland Police Service advised the committee, only around 749 of the 3,240 reportable offenders would fall under category 2, which is less than 25 per cent. That means that the vast majority of known offenders will not appear on the public register. It is essential that parents and guardians understand this limitation. The government must ensure clear, factual communication so that families do not mistakenly believe that 'no result' means 'no risk'.

Another serious concern is resourcing. The Queensland Labor opposition has consistently called on the government to properly fund the Queensland Police Service for both the establishment and the ongoing operation of Daniel's Law. The deputy commissioner advised the committee that only four or five staff will be assigned initially to get it underway. That is somewhat alarming. Stakeholders estimate that up to 100 full-time-equivalent staff could be required to administer this register effectively, costing as much as \$17.5 million annually. The budget contains no ongoing funding, no new permanent positions and no forward estimates allocation. Expecting existing police to absorb this additional workload is unrealistic and unfair. Without proper resourcing, the system risks failure before it even begins.

Equally concerning is the lack of progress on the IT system that will underpin the register. At the time of the committee hearing, no tender had been awarded and no proof of concept had been developed. Are these laws being rushed for political reasons? When will the system be operational and will it be tested thoroughly before launch? These are questions the government must answer.

The opposition is also deeply concerned about the absence of a victim notification scheme. Police told the committee that notifying previous victims before information is made public was impractical. Every victim matters. With proper resources, practical systems could and should be developed to offer victims support and avoid blindsiding them. This must be addressed before implementation.

Legislation alone cannot keep children safe. Education and awareness remain the most powerful tools we have. The opposition urges the government to roll out a strong, evidence-based community education campaign—not glossy political advertising, but genuine engagement that explains what this register does and what it does not do.

Stakeholders were clear that most offenders are not strangers. They are often known to victims and their families. The register is one tool—an important one—but it must be part of a broader, holistic approach to child safety. The work of the Daniel Morcombe Foundation shows exactly how this can be done—empowering children through the Recognise React Report curriculum, and building awareness through Day for Daniel. That kind of education saves lives.

The opposition welcomes the statutory review after five years, but believes that is too long to wait for the first evaluation. We call on the government to commit to earlier and ongoing reviews to ensure the scheme is working as intended and to address any unforeseen issues quickly. The experience in South Australia shows the value of continuous monitoring and adjustment.

This bill represents a significant step in the ongoing effort to protect Queensland's children. The Labor opposition supports Daniel's Law, but we do so with our eyes open. We will hold the government accountable to ensure that it is implemented properly, resourced adequately and reviewed rigorously. We again commend Bruce and Denise Morcombe for their extraordinary courage and their enduring contribution to child safety. Their advocacy has brought us to this point. Now it is up to this parliament, and this government, to ensure that Daniel's Law delivers on its promise. The safety of Queensland's children must always come before politics. That is why the Labor opposition supports this bill and why we will continue to fight to make sure it truly keeps kids safe.