



Speech By
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MEMBER FOR REDLANDS

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**PENALTIES AND SENTENCES (SEXUAL OFFENCES) AND OTHER
LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

Second Reading

 **Mrs YOUNG** (Redlands—LNP) (4.17 pm): Every survivor of sexual assault carries with them a trauma that never fully leaves them. For too long the justice system has not given the trauma the recognition it deserves. This bill will change that. It makes sure courts reflect the seriousness of sexual offending, especially when it involves children, and that victims are seen, heard and respected.

The Penalties and Sentences (Sexual Offences) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025 is about restoring faith in our justice system. It is about delivering sentences that reflect the harm caused and showing victims that their voices matter. Our Redlands community have spoken. They want better community safety. They want a system that puts safety first and puts victims before perpetrators. Parents want to know their children are protected, survivors want their trauma recognised and our community expect sentences that reflect the gravity of sexual offending.

This bill answers those calls. It does so by implementing key recommendations from the Queensland Sentencing Advisory Council's report *Sentencing of sexual assault and rape: the ripple effect*. That report confirmed what survivors already knew: sexual offending leaves lifelong scars and sentencing in Queensland has not kept pace with community expectations. One of the most important reforms in this bill is the explicit recognition of harm as a purpose of sentencing. For survivors in Redlands, this matters. It means that when a young woman in Victoria Point or a teenager on Macleay Island goes through the court process the law requires the court to acknowledge their suffering. Their pain is not invisible. Their experience is not minimised. It will now be a central consideration in the sentence. This is a shift that says to survivors, 'Your harm counts and the law sees you.'

The bill also ensures the absence of a victim impact statement cannot be used to imply a victim was not harmed. This reform is simple but powerful. Some survivors cannot bring themselves to write down or relive their trauma. That choice should never mean that the offence is treated as if it caused less harm. For families in Redlands, this change provides reassurance. Survivors will no longer feel punished for choosing not to provide a statement. Their silence will not diminish the seriousness of the crime.

Another key reform addresses how courts treat so-called good-character evidence. Until now, offenders could rely on character references or their standing in the community to reduce their sentence, even when those very qualities had enabled their offending. That is not justice. This bill makes it clear that such evidence can only be considered if it genuinely relates to rehabilitation or the risk of reoffending. Even then, the court can decide not to reduce the sentence. In plain terms, being a 'good bloke' is no longer an excuse. For Redlanders this means offenders cannot hide behind their reputation at the local sport or community club or out in the community. The focus will rightly be on the harm they caused and the danger they pose.

The bill also introduces a statutory aggravating factor for rape and sexual assault against children aged 16 or 17. In the Redlands, parents tell me that while 16- and 17-year-olds are stepping into adulthood they can still be vulnerable to exploitation in sexual offending. This bill recognises that reality. It makes clear that when an offender targets a 16- or 17-year-old the courts must treat it as especially serious. For local families that means confidence their teenagers are protected whether they are at school, starting a job, playing sport or out with their friends. The message is simple: this kind of offending will never be minimised and sentences must reflect the harm caused to the victim.

This bill is not only about sentencing; it strengthens other parts of our justice system. By contrast, Labor rushed forward with changes on this issue chasing headlines rather than good law. Its amendments were poorly drafted and incomplete. Most concerning was its attempt to limit recognition of harm only to surviving victims which would have excluded the horrific suffering of those assaulted immediately before their death. That failure shows exactly why Queenslanders lost confidence in Labor's approach to justice.

The LNP Crisafulli government is doing it properly. This bill has been developed with care through consultation and with victims front and centre. It closes the gaps, it fixes the failures and it makes sure the law works as intended. The parliamentary committee considered it closely and recommended it be passed, and I am proud to support that recommendation today.

This bill matters to the Redlands. It matters to the survivor on Russell Island who wants the law to recognise her trauma. It matters to the parent in Thornlands who wants confidence in the blue card system. It matters to families in Redland Bay who want stronger protection for their children and peace of mind that the system is on their side. It matters to every Redlander who expects the law to reflect fairness, common sense and community standards. The LNP Crisafulli government promised to put victims first. This bill delivers on that promise. It strengthens sentencing, it protects children, it ends excuses for offenders and it restores faith that the justice system is on the side of the victims.