




Speech By
Hon. Ros Bates

MEMBER FOR MUDGEERABA

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

Second Reading

 **Hon. RM BATES** (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (Minister for Finance, Trade, Employment and Training) (4.08 pm): I rise today to fulfil a promise. It has been clear for many years that a public child sex offender register was needed in this state. In 2017, as the then shadow minister for child safety, I promised Bruce and Denise Morcombe that I would do everything I could to see Daniel's Law passed. Today I am proud of an LNP government that is delivering on that promise.

For more than 20 years, Bruce and Denise Morcombe have been fighting tirelessly to improve child safety in this country following the tragic loss of their son Daniel. This legislation is a testament to their strength, their courage and their resolve to protect vulnerable young Australians. Thanks to the Morcombe's advocacy, this bill named in Daniel Morcombe's honour will establish a new three-tier Community Protection and Public Child Sex Offender Register to protect Queensland children. Just like we said we would do, we are delivering this legislation to put the rights of parents and families ahead of the rights of sexual predators.

This register is the first of its kind in Queensland, giving Queenslanders access to information about child sex offenders in their community to ensure parents can make informed decisions about who has, or will have, contact with their children. This bill, in short, gives parents and guardians another tool in their toolkit to safeguard the children in their care. It is reflective of this government's belief that parents have the right to know if sexual predators are in their community, full stop. It is a reform that, unfortunately, was ignored for too many years under the former Labor government. In stark contrast, the Crisafulli LNP government is delivering on our commitment to see this legislation become a reality—because, under this government, keeping kids safe will always come before protecting sexual predators.

Given this bill is named in Daniel's honour, it is only fitting to commence the substance of my contribution to this debate with the words of Daniel's parents. Bruce and Denise Morcombe made the very first submission to the committee examining the Community Protection and Public Child Sex Offender Register (Daniel's Law) Bill 2025, stating—

The proposed Bill known as Daniel's Law and named in honour of our son is a wonderful gesture that is supported by the Morcombe family.

Daniel's legacy is about keeping kids safe. We believe Daniel's Law will return the balance and provide additional tools for the community to do that.

It of course is not the complete answer. As we all realise offenders of child sexual abuse who do not have a criminal record will remain in the shadows.

But absolutely we know that Daniel's Law is going to help to keep children safer.

Turning to the substance of the legislation, I note previous speakers to this bill have spoken to the specifics in some detail so I will be brief. The public register will ensure families can make informed decisions about the people in their children's lives, whilst also being designed to protect against the potential misuse of information, including from potential vigilante violence. The register will operate as a three-tier system facilitated by the Queensland Community Protection and Public Child Sex Offender Register website and administered by the QPS. I note that tier 1 is the missing noncompliant offender website, tier 2 is the locality search function and tier 3 is the parent/guardian disclosure scheme.

As part of tier 1, the website will display photographs and personal details of reportable offenders who have breached their reporting obligations or contravened the conditions of a supervision order under the Dangerous Prisoners (Sexual Offenders) Act 2003 and who cannot be located by police. Tier 2 sees Queensland residents able to temporarily view facial images of particular offenders residing in their locality in a secure way designed to be accessible only by the individual who has requested the information. This information is limited to reportable offenders who are repeat reportable offenders, lifelong reportable offenders or reportable offenders subject to a supervision order under the Dangerous Prisoners (Sexual Offenders) Act.

Tier 3 of the public register concerns a parent or guardian disclosure scheme. Those with the ongoing parental responsibility for a child will be able to apply for confirmation as to whether someone who has had, or will have, unsupervised contact with their child or children is a reportable offender under the Child Protection (Offender Reporting and Offender Prohibition Order) Act 2004. This will ensure parents and guardians can make informed choices about those who spend time with their children, improving child safety and broader community safety.

We have heard comments during this debate in relation to comparable schemes. Our scheme includes a legislated application process, in contrast to the Western Australian scheme, and has a broader scope of reportable offenders than other schemes, with Queensland's scheme capturing all offences in schedule 1 of the Child Protection (Offender Reporting and Offender Prohibition Order) Act, including contact and non-contact offences, given the harm to victims of all offence types. Further, unlike in South Australia, there will be no fees to access our public register in Queensland. Parents and carers should have access to this information without having to worry about cost. We have also considered the need to protect this information from misuse. The bill provides the Police Commissioner with discretion regarding publishing information for tier 1 and tier 2 offenders. It contains offences for the misuse of information obtained through the register, including those who distribute or publish information from the register without the approval of the Police Commissioner.

Finally, the bill provides provisions to undertake a five-year statutory review of the public register, with the report to be tabled in parliament. Those on this side of the House believe unequivocally that the safety of children should be prioritised over the rights of child sex offenders. It was encouraging to see many supportive submissions received by the committee from a wide variety of community organisations that support this initiative. Australian child protection organisation Bravehearts noted—

Bravehearts supports the proposed Daniel's Law in Queensland, which we believe would allow for controlled public disclosure of information about convicted child sex offenders.

Bravehearts also noted—

Community support for such schemes has remained high across jurisdictions, reflecting a broader public expectation that child protection policies be proactive and transparent.

The Queensland Family and Child Commission submitted—

No child should suffer child sexual abuse because the adults around them did not share information about the threat.

...

The protection of children from harm must be the paramount consideration in all decision-making. While adult privacy and reputational rights are important, they cannot outweigh the obligation to ensure that children are safe. The harms caused to a child by sexual abuse can be lifelong, irreversible and often intergenerational.

Voice for Victims noted—

Daniel's Law is a vital reform that will enhance child safety and community protection in Queensland.

Voice for Victims strongly support its passage and look forward to seeing how it may one day build with other jurisdictions to a Federally legislated tiered system to assist in the protection of children.

This bill is yet another example of the Crisafulli LNP government doing what we said we would do. This bill works to safeguard our most vulnerable Queenslanders, empowering parents and guardians to make informed decisions to protect their children. This public register is well overdue and well supported by the Queensland community. I am proud that we have been able to deliver this

important initiative for Queenslanders, thanks in no small part to the strong advocacy of the Morcombes, who have been tireless advocates for greater public access to information in relation to child sex offenders in the community.

I have had the privilege of meeting with Denise and Bruce Morcombe on many occasions. As a mother, their bravery astounds me as they have gone about making sure they can help protect other people's children here in Queensland after what happened to their son. I would also like to thank my niece who has been working for many years in the child protection unit here in Queensland and has put some of these people behind bars where they belong. I am very proud of her and the work that the Queensland Police Service do in that regard. I am very proud to commend this bill to the House.