



Speech By
Sandy Bolton

MEMBER FOR NOOSA

Record of Proceedings, 28 October 2025

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

 **Ms BOLTON** (Noosa—Ind) (8.45 pm): Our role as parents and communities is to do everything we can to keep our children safe. This bill introduces a public child sex offender register in these efforts. Supported and fought for by Bruce and Denise Morcombe of the Daniel Morcombe Foundation, this bill will be known as Daniel's Law in memory of their son. They have tirelessly campaigned for over a decade for this and, as Bruce said, it could act as a deterrent to potential offenders as well as to convicted offenders who breach their court orders. He also noted it is not a silver bullet—and I think we have heard that tonight—but provides the ability for us to check on those who are in contact with our children and grandchildren. Others in support were the Queensland Family and Child Commission and the Voice for Victims foundation, with several suggested amendments including more supports for victim-survivors.

Our most recent Noosa electorate survey about the proposed register saw that 82 per cent of those who completed the survey were in support of it. This was with some very aged information available that we unearthed over the years since 2021, when we ran our first survey. Some included that in 2011 the *Journal of Criminology* found that sex offender registers do not reflect what was known about sexual offending and had not been successful in reducing offending. In 2018 the Australian Institute of Criminology found mixed results from research studies, with some showing no impact, others a decrease and others a concerning increase in offences. That is all we could find in going back.

This bill replicates the 12-year-old model used in Western Australia, which has three tiers. We have heard about them but I will quickly go through them. The first is a website available for all to access displaying personal details, including pictures, of offenders who have breached their reporting or supervision obligations or whose whereabouts are unknown. Tier 2 allows Queensland residents to apply to temporarily view facial images of offenders residing in their general locality, with the application via an approved form to the Police Commissioner. The final tier allows parents and carers to apply for confirmation of whether a particular person who has had or will have unsupervised contact with their child is a reportable offender. A key question, of course, in all of this is: how effective has the Western Australian model been? In 2018 the WA Police Force published a review of the operation and made the limited conclusion that it met its overall identified purpose of providing a register and is accepted as a tool for providing information to the community.

The Bar Association of Queensland in their submission did not support the bill, stating that the public register was not evidence-based, unjustifiably removed opportunities for judicial review and may deter some offenders from pleading guilty. The Sexual Violence Research and Prevention Unit and the Queensland Council for Civil Liberties stated that it would not protect children as it will at best be ineffective and at worst create a false sense of security—and I think we have heard that multiple times in speeches—thus increasing the risk to children. The director of research at Bravehearts highlighted that 70 to 80 per cent of child sex offenders are known by the child or the family and the Public Guardian

highlighted that the sexual recidivism rate for offenders is 7.7 per cent. What is really concerning is that at any given time the offenders who have not been caught are not on a register and they could be anywhere around us. I think that sends a clear message that we must be vigilant at every moment.

Victim-survivor voices are important. Dr Kelly Richards from the QUT School of Justice has undertaken research for the Australian Institute of Criminology where victim-survivors raised concerns that they would be identified, triggered, shamed or retraumatised by the public release of information. We must take this seriously as well as the risk of exposure to families of those with historic sex offences and the impact that could have on innocent partners and their children.

The committee report recommended that the bill be passed and, given the variable and contrasting evidence and the emotion that we all bring to this chamber as mothers, fathers and grandparents which can make it difficult for evidence-based decision-making, government must at a minimum ensure an independent evaluation is undertaken over the coming months, prior to the five years mentioned. We really do need to know if in any way this creates greater danger to our children or trauma to victim-survivors or, as has been raised, sends offenders underground through vigilante type activity. The Australian Centre for Evaluation recommends starting evaluations before any program is implemented to ensure the right data is being collected from the start, and I trust this is being done or thought about right now.

In closing, I want to thank the minister, the committee and its secretariat, departmental staff and all who submitted. To Denise and Bruce: I, like every resident on the Sunshine Coast, never forgot that day when Daniel was taken. My youngest—my daughter—was 13 at the time, the same age as Daniel, and she caught the bus as he and all of them did. The enormous grief you and all of his loved ones have endured for years, as well as so many others whose children have been horrifically taken by monsters—and that is what they are—who masquerade as humans is forever imprinted in our minds and changed us forever. Your tireless efforts to make our world safer for our young ones, dedicated advocacy and enduring compassion has inspired us all. On behalf of my electorate, I send our deepest gratitude and support for your work and for this bill.