



Speech By
Hon. Tim Nicholls

MEMBER FOR CLAYFIELD

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

 **Hon. TJ NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (Minister for Health and Ambulance Services) (4.59 pm): I rise to support the Community Protection and Public Child Sex Offender Register (Daniel's Law) Bill before the House and to acknowledge the contribution by the very many speakers who have spoken with regard to it and to acknowledge the work of the Morcombes in relentlessly pursuing greater good for the safety of children not only here in Queensland but throughout Australia ever since that day in December 2003 that Daniel was lost to them.

There are many events in our lives that we remark on that are hallmarks. For people in this place it might be the day that they were elected here. For many of us it may be the day that our children were born. For others it can be the loss of a loved one, but thankfully very few of us have to remark on a day, in the festive season, on the loss of a child. To be able to do so and to continue to carry on in the face of that loss with the dignity and the stoicism that the Morcombes have faced over that period of time speaks volumes to their individual integrity and their desire to do good. That is why I think it is important that this bill is called what it is called. I am not a big fan of naming bills after people—I think bills are for all of us—but I think in exceptional circumstances an exceptional decision should be made, so acknowledging Daniel with the title of this bill as Daniel's Law is one of those exceptional circumstances where I think it is absolutely suitable to break that rule, if you like, or that proposition.

Times have changed and this legislation becomes necessary. The days of a carefree and happy childhood where we thought we could get a kid on a bike and they could ride around for a couple of hours after school without fear or worry of harm have disappeared. Increasingly we see the prevalence of those depraved individuals who seek to prey on the innocence of young people, and the police minister in his prior role has seen plenty of it. I remember talking to him before he became a member of this place in relation to the terrible events found with young Mason Jett Lee. Some of those events have shaped his view of the world—shaped all of our views of the world—and that is why this legislation is so important.

Whilst it is important for what it does as a piece of legislation, it is also important as a symbol, and it is a symbol of the importance that we in this chamber place on the safety and security and sanctity of children in our community. Symbols are important. In fact, we could argue that they are almost more important than the words of a dry piece of legislation that goes through this House because they send a message and they send a message to the community, and the message to the community from the passage of this legislation by this government is that we support protecting children and that we support providing information that we believe people are entitled to in order to make their own lives safer. It also sends the message that we should rely on our Police Service and that vigilantism is not part of our society, but that the laws and the rules we put in place with the adequate resourcing and the adequate support of police and other services will provide the protection that people seek and they desire.

I have been listening to the debate over the last couple of days and I have listened to some of the concerns raised and it is clear that this is not the end of the matter. This is another step. We put another brick in the wall around protecting our children. This is not the whole answer. There has never been the pretence that it has been the whole answer, but it is another part of the answer that we continually build on, and the price of doing that is continual vigilance and it is continually reviewing the way we do things. It is not all of the answers, but we should not let any theoretical or supposed complaints stop us proceeding in the best way that we know how in this place to take another step in protecting our children. It is often said that we should never let the perfect be the enemy of the good, and in terms of this bill that is exactly right.

There will be many things that will need to be done in the future and we will no doubt need to come back in here and other parliaments will no doubt need to revisit steps that are taken to protect children into the future. In terms of fulfilling the aims of the bill to increase community awareness by giving parents and carers access to information to help protect children and to guard against misuse of offender information, this bill achieves what it set out to achieve and it does so in a very measured, a very calm and a very proper way. The bill also recognises the need to align with the work undertaken through the Daniel Morcombe Foundation to provide educational resources, tools and strategies to help the community and help parents to protect their children and empower them to do it, because it recognises that it is not the be-all and end-all—it is not the answer—but it is a very significant step in providing those answers.

This is the end of a long journey for this bill. I remember the genesis of it when I was opposition leader in 2017 and the initial discussions we had about introducing a law like this. We looked at Western Australia because it had had that law in place for some time and we discussed the matters that we are discussing here. I remember very firmly the work undertaken under the leadership of the member for Nanango at that time in 2019 and the discussions we had in this place in relation to it, and now we see the culmination of all of that work. My good friend the member for Mudgeeraba was also a fierce advocate for child safety and child protection, amongst other matters that she took to heart and still has close to her heart. Here we are another six years later finally putting in place a piece of legislation about which I think everyone will stand up and say, 'Why didn't we do this a decade ago? Why did it take so long?'

The experience in Western Australia provides us with clear guidance, and that is there is no outbreak of vigilantism and there is no misuse of the information. In response to the member for Morayfield in relation to what a reasonable, rational person would do, the experience in Western Australia is that reasonable, rational people act reasonably and rationally. They are good, decent Australians. They do the right thing. They are interested in the protection of themselves, their kids and their community and they behave appropriately. I have great faith in them. They do not always vote for us, but I have great faith in them and I think we should have the same faith in them. This bill places the same faith in them and it puts another step and another brick, as I said, in the wall around the protection of our kids. With those brief words, I conclude my contribution by saying that, like all Queenslanders, I welcome the introduction and later today hopefully the passage of Daniel's Law in Queensland.