



Speech by

Fiona Simpson

MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE

Hansard Wednesday, 6 October 2004

CHILD SEX OFFENDERS

Miss SIMPSON (Maroochydore—NPA) (5.38 p.m.): I rise to second this motion, which moves, 'That as one-third of persons convicted in Queensland of child sex crimes escape prison sentences, this parliament directs that the government legislate for mandatory minimum periods of imprisonment for persons convicted of child sex crimes, including the possession, production and distribution of child pornography.'

Something is terribly wrong with our system of justice if one-third of convicted child sex offenders do not serve any time in jail. For goodness sake, where are our priorities when fine defaulters can end up in jail but one-third of convicted child sex offenders do not go to jail?

It is time that the system was changed. That is what this motion is about. While the extension of maximum sentences is one issue, this is really about whether people go to jail in the first place. It is also about what effective monitoring is undertaken when people are released from jail, and I will come back to that in a moment.

If people are going to jail for relatively minor offences, why aren't people who have committed these absolutely horrendous crimes against some of the most vulnerable in our community ever facing the threat of a jail sentence, ever facing the punishment of a jail sentence? While I know there will be some bleeding hearts who will say that people should not be sent to jail as punishment, that is just a lot of rot because many times these young children have been committed to a lifetime of great distress and brokenness, which flows right through our mental health system. It flows right through even to children becoming offenders themselves later in life. It is a cycle which has to be broken, but it is one which has left many shattered lives within our community.

Government data reveals that between 1988 and 2003, of the 645 persons convicted of indecent treatment of children under 16, 217 escaped a jail sentence. Of the 92 convicted of carnal knowledge with or of children under 16, 42 escaped a jail sentence. Of the 59 convicted of unlawful sodomy, eight escaped a jail sentence. The figures did not improve between July 2002 and March 2003, where of the 142 convicted of indecent treatment of children under 16, 46 escaped a jail sentence. Of the 21 convicted of carnal knowledge with or of children under 16, 12 escaped a jail sentence.

These figures are damnable. These figures demand that there be a change. These figures demand that a jail sentence at least be mandatory as a means of protection, as a means of deterrence and as a means of saying as a society that it is just not good enough that the people who commit these terrible crimes are allowed to go free.

With regard to child pornography, there is a saying that what you feed breeds. This is one of those crimes where people who are accessing child pornography are feeding an addiction. They are feeding on something and they always have an insatiable appetite for more. But, more than that, they are supporting an industry of abuse. When they look at that pornography—even if that is in private—they are supporting an industry of abuse. They are supporting people who are abusing children, who are putting them onto the Internet and so on. There needs to be a crackdown on that.

I know that all members are against child abuse and pornography, but what is being queried here is the fact that the system does not do enough to address these issues. While there are supervision orders for monitoring offenders after their release from jail, I am calling on the government to review the effectiveness of these supervision orders and to look at new ways of providing adequate, ongoing and lifetime monitoring of people who have committed child sex abuse. Some of the figures show that repeat sex offenders are some of the worst recidivist offenders; they repeat their offences against children. I call on the government to review the effectiveness of supervision orders and to look at lifetime supervision and more effective means of providing that supervision of those people.

Time expired.