




Speech By
Samuel O'Connor

MEMBER FOR BONNEY

Record of Proceedings, 15 February 2024

ADJOURNMENT

Parole Board Queensland

 **Mr O'CONNOR** (Bonney—LNP) (6.22 pm): I rise to seek answers about how victims of crime are treated by the Parole Board Queensland. Brett and Belinda Beasley are well known to many Queenslanders for their advocacy against knife crime and youth violence after the tragic murder of their 17-year-old son Jack in 2019. Two young offenders were convicted of Jack's killing, one pleading guilty to murder and the other to manslaughter. Both were subsequently sentenced to years in prison.

On 18 December last year, Belinda received a phone call from Corrective Services as she is on the victims register. She was told that the offender convicted of manslaughter had applied for parole and that she could make a submission outlining her concerns. A follow-up email the next day confirmed that, as an eligible person, Belinda was, and I quote, 'entitled to inform the PBQ of any concerns you may have in relation to the potential release of this prisoner ... within 21 days from the date of this letter.' Belinda did not tell her husband, Brett, or her son Mitch, Jack's older brother. It was too close to Christmas to break such shocking news and she had weeks to provide a submission anyway.

However, just a few days later, on 22 December last year, Belinda received a phone call to tell her that the decision had already been made. The young offender convicted of manslaughter over her son's death was granted parole. The offender would be freed from prison after serving barely half of their sentence for actions that devastated a family and many people in our community.

Belinda was distressed by this news. She could not bring herself to tell Brett over Christmas. When she did tell him just before New Year's Eve, Brett spoke out. He raised this injustice and the chaotic and confusing process in the media. Like so many things with this government, within a day the decision to grant parole was overturned.

I thank the minister for responding to my letter on this issue and for meeting with the Beasleys, but still the question has not been answered: how was this allowed to happen in the first place? The 21-day submission time frame is not just a guide for the Parole Board; it is in its legislation. The Corrective Services Act says that each eligible person in relation to the prisoner, the victims of the crime, must be given notice of a parole application and that they have 21 days to make a submission for the Parole Board to consider.

Why was a decision made when the submission period had barely begun? Why was a decision made at all without receiving a submission from the victims impacted by this crime? How many other victims has this happened to? If the Beasleys did not have such a huge profile, it could have easily continued without being overturned. We need answers to make sure that this never happens again to any other Queenslanders.