

Question on Notice

No. 357

Asked on 8 May 2014

MR KNUTH asked the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice (Mr JARROD BLEIJIE) –

QUESTION:

Given the Attorney-General has stated that he intends to make Queensland the safest place in Australia to raise children and that current legislation only permits registered victims to object to parole applications of sexual offender— Will the Minister advise:

- (a) if he intends to make changes to legislation that currently enables a sex offender the privilege of accessing the details in non-primary victim parole objections; and
- (b) how members of the public can formally object to the parole of a sexual offender and have their submission considered by the Parole Board when they are not eligible to register as a victim?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member Dalrymple for his question.

This Government is committed to ensuring that children are safe in Queensland communities. This is reflected by the number of laws that have been passed by Parliament strengthening the penalties for child sexual offences.

When considering a prisoner's application for parole, the highest priority of the Queensland Parole Boards (the Parole Boards) should always be the safety of the community, including our children.

With regard to the Member's questions:

- (a) A prisoner is entitled to procedural fairness during the Parole Boards' decision-making process. However, victims must be protected. To this end, the Parole Boards must not release to the prisoner any correspondence from a person registered as a victim under the *Corrective Services Act 2006*. Further, sensitive third-party information must not be disclosed to a prisoner, where it may place another party at risk or, in instances where the third party has provided valid reasons for requesting that it not be disclosed to the prisoner, unless the information can be disclosed in a non-identifying manner.
- (b) I am aware that the release of sexual offenders on parole is a significant concern for victims of sexual offences, victim support groups and the general community. Under the *Corrective Services Act 2006*, members of the public without a relevant connection with the prisoner and the offence will not be invited to make a submission to the Parole Board. The role of the Parole Boards is to decide the level of risk that a prisoner may pose to the community by considering a range of matters, including submissions from eligible persons and medical and psychological reports.