
Tuesday, 16 October 2007

GOVERNMENT PUTS A JAM ON YOUTH CRIME REVOLVING DOOR

Premier Mike Rann and Attorney-General Michael Atkinson today announced major reforms of juvenile justice laws designed to block the revolving door of youth crime and repeat offending.

The new measures include establishing a **Youth Parole Board** to deal specifically with recidivist young offenders.

Following Monsignor Cappelletti's *To Break the Cycle* report, the Attorney-General is today introducing to Parliament the ***Statutes Amendment (Young Offenders) Bill*** that will change the way the courts can deal with young offenders.

Mr Rann says he shares the concerns of those who feel that the courts are not doing enough to curb the dangerous activities of a hard-core of young repeat offenders who appear to be going straight back into crime after being caught, charged and convicted.

"I want to give these recidivist offenders a clear message - break the terms of your parole and you face going straight back inside.

"We intend building on the recommendations of Monsignor Cappelletti's report, and ensure community safety is taken into account when sentencing serious repeat offenders.

"Further proposed legislation will allow the Youth Court, when sentencing a young offender, to declare an offender to be a '**recidivist young offender**' where a history of offending warrants a more severe sentence to protect the public.

"The Board will review the offenders progress while in detention and only then, after taking into account matters such as public safety and the impact the release might have on a registered victim or registered victim's family, set conditions for release.

"If the offender breaches those conditions, then police will be allowed to apply directly to the Board to return the offender to detention.

"As such, that offender will have to face the Youth Parole Board before release back into society."

The bill also seeks to:

- Amend the *Criminal Law Consolidation Act 1935* and the *Criminal Law (Sentencing) Act 1988* to allow offences to be considered 'aggravated' and therefore attract higher penalties if an adult uses or exposes a child to the crime in committing the offence; and
- Amend the *Youth Offenders Act 1993* to give the Director of Public Prosecutions the authority to refer an offence alleged to have been committed by a youth directly to the Magistrates Court where the youth would be tried as an adult.

Attorney General Michael Atkinson says the Youth Parole Board would be chaired by a Judge of the Youth Court and include among its members someone with experience of the impact of crime on victims and a serving or former police officer with experience in the rehabilitation of young offenders.

Mr Atkinson says this further evidence of the Government acting on Monsignor Cappelletti's recommendations.

In addition to the new legislation announced today, the Government has:

- Wholly, or in part, carried out the remaining urgent recommendations made by Monsignor Cappelletti in his report;
- The Implementation Taskforce, headed by former Deputy Police Commissioner John White, has been formed, has met and will continue to meet regularly to monitor the implementation of the recommendations (Rec 1);
- John White met the South Australian Aboriginal Advisory Council last week to advise on the status of the implementation of the recommendations;
- All the Operation Mandrake Youth who have been convicted have been assessed and have a case management plan (Rec 4);
- Kurruru Indigenous Youth Performing Arts has been funded by the Social Inclusion Unit to implement four programs for young Aboriginal people, including young males in contact with the juvenile justice system (Rec 29), and;
- The weekend before last, the State Government (Social Inclusion Unit) supported the Inaugural South Australian Sports and Cultural Festival at Moonta. More than 2,500 people attended the event. (Rec 37).