



Consider limited trial of public disclosure of sex offender information: report

A parliamentary inquiry has called for an investigation into the circumstances in which a limited public disclosure scheme for registered sex offender information could be trialled in Victoria.

The proposal is among five recommendations made by the Legislative Council Legal and Social Issues Committee following its investigation into management of child sex offender information.

The Committee found while there are already certain circumstances in which offender information on the Victorian Register is released in the interest of community safety, the Victorian Government should refer a specific inquiry to an appropriate body, such as the Victorian Law Reform Commission.

“The Committee believes that a trial for disclosure of sex offender information in certain limited circumstances is worth investigating,” Committee Chair Fiona Patten said.

“However, any public disclosure system for child sex offender information must carefully balance the need to protect the community against the potential impact on offender compliance and recidivism rates. It is important that law reform is driven by data and an empirical evidence base.”

The Committee has also suggested Victoria Police review its current practice of retaining deceased and deregistered offenders on the Victorian Sex Offenders Register.

“We heard that Victoria Police’s current inclusion of deceased and deregistered offenders on the Register is an internal practice that is not mandated in legislation and runs the risk of creating a skewed picture of sex offending in the Victorian community,” Ms Patten said.

“This is a practice that requires immediate review to see if the ongoing storage and reporting of this information could be better managed.”

The Committee also believes an independent review of the effectiveness of the *Sex Offenders Registration Act 2004* (Vic) should be conducted as soon as possible, and every five years thereafter.

“The Committee heard from a range of organisations raising a number of issues about the current framework,” Ms Patten said.

“There has not been a comprehensive evaluation of the effectiveness of the framework and whether it is properly achieving its legislated aims.”

Furthermore, the Committee has recommended a significant focus on preventative measures, including enhanced education and specialised services for vulnerable children, aimed at stopping all forms of child sex abuse, including online grooming.

The inquiry received 83 submissions and gave voice to many stakeholders at public hearings.

“The Committee heard the concerns of victim survivors, advocacy groups, academic and legal experts and members of Victorian and international government bodies,” Ms Patten said.

“Their contributions enabled us to formulate the report’s recommendations to make improvements to the child sex offenders’ framework.”

To view all of the findings and recommendations read the [final report](#).

Issued: 7 September 2021