

# Inquiry into the Management of Child Sex Offender Information

Parliament of Victoria  
Committee on Legal and Social Issues  
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on behalf of the Australian Psychological Society

# Some Definitions

- Paedophile
  - A person sexually attracted to pre-pubescent children
    - Tanner stage 1 (approximately 13 years and younger)
    - May or may not sexually abuse children
- Hebephile
  - A person sexually attracted to young pubescent children
    - Tanner stages 2 and 3 (approximately 13-14 years)
    - May or may not sexually abuse children
- Ephebophile
  - A person sexually attracted to adolescents (15-19 years)
    - Not sexually deviant, but clearly illegal when acted out with the lower age range

# Some Definitions

- **Child Molester / Child Sexual Abuser**
  - A person who engages in sexual activity with a child victim
    - May or may not be a paedophile or hebephile
    - Can be conceptualised on a continuum from preferential to situational (Lanning, 2001, 2010)
- **People, predominantly males, sexually abuse children for a variety of reasons**
  - Stephens et al. (2019)
  - 1900 offenders with at least one child victim
    - Deviant PPG results (41%)
      - Paedohebephilia (24%)
      - Hebephilia-only (16%)
      - Paedophilia-only (1%)

# Sex Offender Registries

- Provide a crucial investigative resource for police
- Have no effect on recidivism rates
  - Many offenders on these registries are not high risk
    - Based on name of offence rather than risk
  - But registries do assess the risk of people on them
- Ironically, many high risk sexual offenders (that target adult females) are not on these registries

# Public Sex Offender Registries

- Will not provide the results people want
- Public registries do not reduce recidivism
  - Some evidence that they lead to *increases* in recidivism (Prescott & Rockoff, 2011; Agan & Prescott, 2014)
  - Risk of vigilantism (Lasher & McGrath, 2012)
    - 44% experienced threats or harassment by neighbours
    - 20% experienced threats or harassment in general
    - 14% property damage
    - 8% physical attacks

# Public Sex Offender Registries

- Most sexual offenders are not reconvicted
  - Victorian study (Reeves et al., 2018)
  - 621 offenders (414 with child victims exclusively)
    - average follow-up 12.16 years
  - 18.8% sexually reconvicted
    - Child: 17.4%
    - Adult: 18.8%
    - Mixed: 24.1%
- No registry, public or private, is going to identify sexual offenders before their first offence

# Prevent Sexual Offences Through Improved Public Awareness

- Rather than looking to a public registry as a panacea, the public may benefit from knowing:
  - Approximately 10% of child sexual abuse victims are assaulted by someone they do not know
  - Parents should be wary of anyone who shows more interest in their children than they do
  - Someone caught with a large collection of child exploitation material is very likely to be a paedophile (but not necessarily likely to molest a child)
  - Those that offend against male children are more likely to be paedophiles and more likely to reoffend

# Prevent Sexual Offences Through Improved Public Awareness

- Development of an anonymous online or telephone support service for people who are worried that they may sexually abuse a child
  - With referral options to specialist forensic mental health services
  - Being proactive rather than reactive



# Storing and Sharing Data

- Police services need to be able to share information readily
  - With other police services
  - With agencies to identify those who travel
  - Government departments
- A national offence tracking system such as ViCLAS (Violent Crime Linkage Analysis System) would be advantageous for linking unsolved sexual crimes

# For further information

Please contact the office of APS Chief Executive Officer:

