

Vanessa Goodwin MLC

Shadow Attorney-General and Minister for Justice

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Does Labor support Sentencing Advisory Council?

- Sentencing Advisory Council recommended to government in June 2008, following 7 year inquiry into sentencing
- There is considerable concern in the community about the perceived leniency of many sentences
- The council could help address such concerns and is supported by the Liberals but the government's position is anyone's guess

The State Government should have acted by now to establish a Sentencing Advisory Council to help address community concerns about the leniency, or perceived leniency, of many sentences.

This is Liberal policy. It was also a recommendation of the Law Reform Institute – following its 7-year inquiry into sentencing.

But the State Government appears to have done nothing to adopt this recommendation, in yet further evidence of inability to deliver good outcomes for Tasmanians.

There is considerable community disquiet about the perceived leniency of some sentences that have been handed down by the courts – particularly with a number of sexual assault cases on the North West Coast.

The Law Reform Institute started a review of sentencing in 2001 and delivered a comprehensive report on sentencing last June.

The government has started yet another review to look at what sentencing reforms could be appropriate for Tasmania – despite the fact it has been promising sentencing reform for the best part of the last decade.

But there's no reason for delay in establishing a Sentencing Advisory Council to help empower the community and bridge the gap between the community, courts and government on sentencing matters.

The Law Reform Institute said the functions of such a council should include gauging public opinion on sentencing matters, to provision of accessible sentencing data and consulting with government, stakeholders and the community on sentencing matters.

The Liberals believe it is imperative that such a council have appropriate victims of crime representation.

The question is – what is the government doing about this?

It has been sitting on the report since June last year.

Appropriate sentences go a long way to protecting our community. The lack of action on a Sentencing Advisory Council seems to be yet another case of the government being so focussed on its own internal problems that it is neglecting the good government of Tasmania and the needs of the community.

For further information or comment please contact Ella Woods-Joyce on 0418 338 774