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Shadow Attorney-General and Minister for Justice

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Support the victim, but treat the offender too

- Lack of community-based sexual offender treatments in Tasmania
- 2006 KPMG report says supporting the victim alone won't solve the problem of increasing sexual assault
- Call for community-based offender treatment services and improved adolescent services

The State Government has failed to implement the recommendations of its own report into sexual assault services and offending.

The August 2006 KPMG report into the Sexual Assault Support Service System recommended expanding treatment programs for perpetrators in Tasmania.

The report notes:

"offender services ... are critical to preventing future assaults from occurring and achieving better outcomes for victims of sexual abuse ... if sexual assault support services can be conceptualised as addressing the effects of sexual assault on individuals, then sex offender treatment programs can be conceptualised as addressing the causes. Without addressing both cause and effect, the problem of sexual assault is unlikely to be solved in any systemic way. Without responding to sexual assault offenders or potential offenders it is unlikely the demand for sexual assault support services will ever be reduced".

The report recommended extending sex offender programs to convicted perpetrators once released from jail, and for establishing community-based services for adult perpetrators who self-present seeking assistance.

It also noted a lack of services for children displaying sexualised behaviour and a need for treatment programs for juvenile perpetrators, some who

have already been victims of abuse as young children, as being critical to reducing the likelihood of future sexual victimisation.

The KPMG report pointed to Victoria's MAPPS program (Male Adolescent Program for Positive Sexuality) which operates through court sanction as a program to effectively reduce recidivism of sexual offences.

It is understood that successive Labor Attorneys-General have been lobbied by key stakeholders to provide community-based treatment programs to no avail.

Calls by my colleagues to address increasing incidences of sexualised behaviour in adolescents have also gone unanswered.

These matters need revisiting. Currently the only programs for offenders are prison-based and then not even compulsory.

As the four-year-old KPMG report states, there is an urgent need to give consideration to community-based programs for self-referral and continued services to sex offenders once they leave prison.

We must treat cause and effect to get better outcomes and a better future for children in this State. In 2008-09, there were 737 notifications of sexual abuse of children and we must everything within our power to reduce this incidence.

For further information or comment please call Don Morris – 0416 277 035