



Mike Baird MP

Premier of NSW

Minister for Infrastructure

Minister for Western Sydney

MEDIA RELEASE

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LIFE SENTENCES FOR CHILD SEX OFFENDERS

People who commit the crime of sexual intercourse with a child under 10 will be facing life behind bars as part of a package of strong child protection measures announced by Premier Mike Baird and Attorney General Brad Hazzard today.

“This is about protecting child victims of sexual assault and bringing paedophiles to justice,” Mr Baird said.

“Included in the package is increased support for child victims of sexual assault: there is no one more vulnerable than a child who has been abused and we must do everything we can to protect them.”

The Baird Government will ensure the sentencing of child sexual assault offenders meets community expectations by:

- Increasing the maximum penalty for sexual intercourse with a child under 10 from 25 years to life imprisonment; and
- Including additional child sexual assault offences in the standard non-parole period scheme.

“Confidence in the justice system is undermined when sentences appear out of step with community expectations, which is why the NSW Government requested a Parliamentary Joint Select Committee inquiry into the sentencing of child sexual assault offenders,” Mr Hazzard said.

“Standard non-parole periods provide the judiciary with guidance on what sentence to impose and the Sentencing Council has found they lead to longer jail terms, particularly for crimes involving sexual violence.

“Applying standard non-parole periods to a greater range of child sexual assault offences will help deliver consistent outcomes in line with community expectations.

“For example, for the crime of sexual intercourse with a child between 10 and 14 years, the current average non-parole period is less than two years, and our proposed standard non-parole sentence is 7 years.”

Mr Baird and Mr Hazzard commended the work of the Sentencing Council which includes representatives from victims support groups.

Howard Brown, vice president of the Victims of Crime Assistance League (VOCAL) applauded the Justice package saying it would result in cases being resolved more quickly and in offenders being more likely to be rehabilitated.

“In the past the term of imprisonment has been too short for an offender to successfully complete sex offender programs, resulting in their release without treatment,” Mr Brown said.

“This proposal will enable judges to set non parole periods which will assist Corrections to treat offenders.”

The Baird Government will also support child victims of sexual assault by piloting:

- Specialist judges appointed to deal with child sexual assault cases across the state;
- Children’s Champions - qualified experts who will support child witnesses through the trial process and advise on appropriate questioning of children; and
- Keeping child witnesses out of the courts by allowing cross examination to be pre-recorded.

Child sexual assault trials, both current and historic, comprise nearly 60 per cent of all sexual assault trials before the NSW District Court each year.

The pilot program will employ additional District Court judges and provide them with specialised training to deal with child sexual assault cases.

They will tour NSW on circuit, providing faster access to justice for the most vulnerable victims in all corners of the State – from Bondi to Bourke.

“The NSW Government has already taken support for vulnerable survivors of historic child sexual assault to a new level, including a raft of measures in response to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse,” Mr Baird said.

“This package will fundamentally improve protections for vulnerable children today and for the future.”

To further strengthen existing child protection education measures in NSW schools, a re-elected Baird Government will provide \$4 million over 4 years to deliver a specialised program to children and young people.

Child protection education in schools can assist students to develop skills to recognise and respond to unsafe situations. This includes seeking assistance effectively, establishing and maintaining relationships, and strengthening attitudes and values related to equality, respect and responsibility.

Selection of a program provider will be subject to a competitive request for tender and consistent with the NSW Procurement Approach.

MEDIA: Clare Masters (Premier) 0414 257 745
Leonie Lamont (Attorney General) 0407 591 926