

**Will Hodgman MP**

Leader of the State Opposition

Monday July 14, 2008

***Comprehensive action to address community concerns on sex offenders***

The State Opposition is committed to comprehensive action to address concerns about sentencing of rapists and other sex offenders.

The recently released Law Reform Institute report on sentencing said that the average sentence for rape was about two years and:

*“Examining the median sentence for one and two count of rape suggests that sentences have become more lenient.”*

It also said:

*“The Institute suggests that what is an appropriate sentencing level for rape and other sexual offences is an issue that needs further consideration.”*

Leader of the State Opposition, Will Hodgman, said the government was burying its head in the sand on the issue. The Liberals, on the other hand, were committed to addressing it.

At the State Liberal Council in Launceston yesterday, Mr Hodgman said that a Hodgman Liberal Government would interact with Tasmanian judiciary to bring about a matrix to ensure that sentences awarded to convicted persons are commensurate with the crime committed and more in line with community expectations.

Mr Hodgman said the Opposition's policy was far more comprehensive than sentences that are more in line with community expectations for rape and sex offences, particularly against children, the elderly and vulnerable Tasmanians.

It is firm Liberal policy to ensure that all convicted sex offenders receive rehabilitation and treatment – something that the State Government bizarrely opposes.

“We will ascertain what is an appropriate sentencing level for rape and other sexual offences,” Mr Hodgman said.

“A Hodgman Liberal Government will establish a Sentencing Advisory Council, which will bridge the gap between the community, courts and Government by informing, educating and advising on sentencing matters.

“And a Hodgman Liberal Government will make it compulsory for those people who do commit these terrible crimes to complete a sexual offenders' treatment program.”

Mr Hodgman said it was an absolute disgrace that just one of the seven child sex offenders who received parole last year was required to undertake in the Risdon prison sex offender treatment program.

“The government's approach to sex offenders is so inadequate that recently it was revealed that a sex offender in jail who indicated in interest in participating in the sex offenders treatment program was refused a place because he was considered too low risk.

“No one in the government has been able to explain what sex crime that results in a jail sentence could possibly be considered so low risk that an offender is denied a place in the sex offenders treatment program.

“Under Hodgman Liberal Government, sex offenders won't get the choice of whether or not they take part in a treatment program – it will be mandatory.

“There is a considerable degree of community disquiet about the perceived leniency of some sentences that have been handed down in some horrific rape cases, and the fact that once in jail, many of these offenders do not receive the sort of rehabilitation and treatment that they clearly need.

“I call on the State Government to start responding to this problem, rather than just continuing to bury its head in the sand.”

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