

Government plans child sex offender register  
13 August 2015

A Bill is being introduced into parliament which will enable the establishment of New Zealand's first Child Sex Offender Register.

Social Development Minister Anne Tolley said the Bill is part of a programme of work, led by the Vulnerable Children's Board, that aims to keep young people safe from harm.

The Child Protection (Child Sex Offender Register) Bill will allow Police and Corrections to establish the register for convicted child sex offenders aged 18 or over at the time of committing their offence and who are:

- Convicted of a qualifying offence and sentenced to prison.
- Convicted of a qualifying offence and sentenced to a non-custodial sentence, and directed to be registered by the sentencing judge.
- Convicted of an equivalent offence and sentenced overseas, or have been on an overseas register, if they intend to reside in New Zealand

Mrs Tolley said the register will provide information to a dedicated unit of Police and Corrections staff, which will identify and manage the risk posed by convicted child sex offenders who have come to the end of their sentences, or are serving non-custodial sentences. Based on the scale of offending, offenders will stay on the register for a term of life, 15 years or eight years.

"At the moment, offenders can disappear back into communities when they finish a sentence or order."

"By gathering information authorities will be able to keep track of these offenders, while also being alert to any changes in their circumstances.

Agencies will gather continually updated personal information, which can then be assessed and analysed to determine if reoffending is more likely to take place, so that necessary action can be taken.

"This gives authorities another tool to try and prevent reoffending, to help keep children safe."

The register will not be open to the public but Mrs Tolley said the information might be released to parents, caregivers or a child's teacher if there is a significant threat to the safety of children.

All registered child sex offenders will be required to report to the Police within 72 hours of their release from prison or after receiving a non-custodial sentence if directed to register by a judge.

They will need to provide a range of information including fingerprints, photographs, aliases, address, workplace and employer, car registration, computer IP address and passport details.

They will have to notify police within 72 hours of any changes.

The Bill will also establish offences for failing to report or provide the required information with penalties of a fine of up to \$2000 or one year in prison, or both. Penalties of up to a \$4000 fine and a maximum jail term of 2 years will be established for those giving false or misleading information.

Authorised Police and Corrections staff, and authorised staff from relevant agencies such as the Ministry of Social Development and Housing New Zealand will be able to share

relevant information in the register, allowing them to work together in the interests of public safety.

Convicted child sex offenders serving a sentence at the time the new legislation comes into force, or convicted afterwards, will need to be registered.

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