

COMMUNITY PROTECTION WEBSITE — SEX OFFENDERS

206. Ms A.R. MITCHELL to the Minister for Police:

Can the minister advise the house how the Liberal–National government’s community protection website for absconded and serious repeat child sex offenders is operating after six months?

Mrs L.M. HARVEY replied:

I thank the member for Kingsley for her question.

For the benefit of new members in this place, the government Community Protection Western Australia website went live on 15 October 2012. The website provides comprehensive information —

Ms M.M. Quirk interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Girrawheen, you seem to be having a private conversation across the chamber. Minister, carry on with the answer, please.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: The website provides information to parents in this state and concerned members of the community in respect of the reportable offenders or dangerous sex offenders who are living in the community. There are three different tiers to the website. Tier 1 provides some comprehensive information and is where the police will publish information about dangerous sex offenders or reportable offenders who have absconded, when the police needs the assistance of the community to help find those offenders. Tier 2 provides information about a limited number of offenders, and members of the community, by entering their driver’s licence details into the Community Protection website, can find out information about repeat offenders, reportable offenders or dangerous sex offenders who are living in the vicinity of their postcode. Tier 3 provides an opportunity for parents to find specific information about a particular person who may have contact with their children on a regular basis over time.

Over the first six months, the website has received roughly 90 000 visits from more than 70 000 IP addresses. Between January and March 2013, there were 3 235 visits to the tier 1 portal and 1 485 applications made to the tier 2 part of the website. As of the start of May, there were 13 reportable offenders whose details were published on the website, and 52 repeat reportable offenders or dangerous sex offenders who were published under tier 2.

So far there have been only four complete applications under tier 3. The police were initially concerned that they might be inundated with requests through the tier 3 process, which is a manual process, but that has not been borne out through the community’s engagement with the website. There were also some concerns expressed at the time about potential vigilante action; indeed, I believe that was the reason why the former Labor government ruled out such a website prior to the 2008 election. However, that has not been borne out. I believe that the Liberal–National government’s trust in the community has been received by the community and the community has honoured that trust we have placed in them. So far, I am pleased to report that the police have advised that there have been no actions or reports of vigilante behaviour associated with the website. No-one has been charged with misuse of information from the website —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Armadale, I call you to order for the first time. Minister, just complete your answer, please.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I find it quite curious that some members would think that 90 000 applications to a website, 90 000 hits, is a piece of irrelevant information. I think that comment is offensive to the people of Western Australia who have been using this site.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Midland, I call you to order for the second time. Member for Armadale, I call you to order for the second time. Member for Midland, when I am on my feet could you please stop talking. Can you wind up your answer please, minister.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I just wanted to place on record the government’s appreciation for the respect that the community of Western Australia has given to this government for allowing it access to information that gives people the tools to better protect their community and to better protect their children on a daily basis. It is not a silver bullet; it is a tool that we have provided to parents and other members of the community, and I think 90 000 hits to that site is a tremendous success for that tool. It has been taken up by members of the community to ensure the protection of their children.