

JUVENILE OFFENDERS — MONITORING

560. Hon NICK GOIRAN to the Minister for Education and Training:

I refer to the minister's response to my question without notice 483 regarding information sharing between agencies about reportable sex offenders under the age of 18 years who move from one school to another, in which the minister informed the house that arrangements are slightly different for independent non-government schools, as they are not a "system".

- (1) Is Catholic Education Western Australia one such system?
- (2) Do any other school systems exist in our state?
- (3) If yes to (2), what are the names of those systems?
- (4) How many schools exist inside a system?
- (5) How many schools sit outside a system?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. Given the member has asked a number of questions about this, I think it is useful to put the answer about the specific details in some context.

On 17 March 2017—the day I was sworn in—I was advised by the Department of Education and Training about a particularly awful child-on-child sex abuse case in a school in Western Australia. Some media attention was attached to that as well. I asked about what the protocols were to ensure that the relevant schools were being notified about what happens when a child who is a student is charged with an offence against another student at that school. I was told that no existing protocols were in place, and that it was fairly random as to whether either the courts or the police notified schools about whether a child was charged, or even convicted, and whether a child was under consideration in relation to any of those matters.

Within 10 days of being sworn in, I asked four government agencies and their respective ministers—WA Police Force, the Department of Communities, the Department of Justice and the Department of Education and Training—to meet with me to see whether we could establish safety planning protocols for school-aged sex offenders. It was agreed by everyone at the table that stronger measures needed to be put in place to protect all students and to ensure community confidence that students could be as safe as possible at school.

I was not interested then and I am not interested now, but it remains an offence to share information with members of the public about the whereabouts of anybody accused of sexual offences. However, we have an obligation to ensure that parents can be confident that measures have been taken to protect everybody at the school when these kinds of events occur. Until this change, as I said, it was really random. There is now an obligation on, and an agreement for, WA Police, the Department of Education, child protection and family support, and corrective services to immediately work together to protect all students. The measures that will be put in place, whether clinical or moving a child into another education setting, will depend on the circumstances of that particular child, the charges involved, and anyone else who might be involved.

Catholic Education WA and the Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia were part of those discussions about how we might manage it and how we might put in place similar case management plans. The objective of that exercise—it remains the objective—is to ensure that the most appropriate education program and clinical services, when required, are put in place for the alleged offender and to protect the best interests of the victim and all students at a school that might be caught up in these circumstances. An individual approach is taken to each particular notification because it will vary depending on the nature of the charges or conviction and the particular circumstances. The action that we took was the first action taken by a WA government. These protocols were not in place prior to the discussions that I convened within days of the Labor Party being elected to government.

With respect to the specific numbers that the honourable member sought in his question, I advise as follows.

- (1) Yes.
- (2) No.
- (3) Not applicable.
- (4) A total of 162 non-government schools are part of the Catholic schools system.
- (5) A total of 147 non-government schools are not part of a system.