

SCHOOLS — CHILDREN WITH HARMFUL SEXUAL BEHAVIOURS

771. Dr D.J. HONEY to the Premier:

Before I ask my question, I would like to recognise Simone and Victoria from Accountability for Children in Education and Square Peg Round Whole.

My question is to the Premier in his capacity representing the Minister for Education and Training. I refer to questions asked in the other place about the Department of Education's multiagency protocol for education options for young people charged with harmful sexual offences.

- (1) What protocols are in place to protect schoolchildren after a student charged with a sexual offence is moved to their school?
- (2) What is the difference in protocols for a child who is charged with a sexual offence versus one who is convicted of one?
- (3) How many police notifications does the Western Australia Police Force have for public school students who have been charged with a sexual offence?

Mr M. McGOWAN replied:

I thank the Leader of the Liberal Party. That question is different from the one that was provided to my office. In any event, I will answer as best I can.

- (1)–(3) In 2017, the Departments of Education, Communities and Justice and the Western Australia Police Force formalised a multiagency approach to manage young people charged with harmful sexual behaviours. The multiagency protocol for education options for young people charged with harmful sexual behaviours provides for these agencies to cooperate and lawfully share information in the best interests of all students and staff.

Although it is still an offence to share information with parents or members of the public about a child accused of sex offences, stronger measures were needed to protect all students and maintain community confidence that schools are as safe as possible. A protocol was put in place to manage safety arrangements for all school students in Western Australia when a young person attending school is charged with harmful sexual behaviours. The protocol provides the Department of Education with the ability to determine the most appropriate education placement for students charged with harmful sexual behaviours as notified by the Western Australia Police Force.

When a student is charged with a harmful sexual offence, it indicates that there may be a level of risk in the school environment. Upon notification through the protocol, the department manages the risk by ensuring that planning is in place at the school to support students charged, as well as known students harmed. These plans are called risk assessment and management plans, or RAMPs. There are currently 60 RAMPs in place for students who are enrolled in public schools. Education is assessed on an individual basis, as was emphasised in the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse as being necessary, and may include a range of different education options.

The Minister for Education and Training has asked the Department of Education to ensure that the safety of victims is the paramount consideration in this decision-making process and in the development of a RAMP. When a student transfers from one school to another, including between the public system and the non-government sector, relevant information is shared in the interests of student safety. Regardless of the outcome of the WA police investigation and/or court outcome, the school manages the risk associated with the student's actions that led to the charge.