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Police shortage leaving paedophiles unmonitored

A severe lack of police resources is leaving the state's children at risk, with known child sex offenders going unmonitored for extended periods of time - and even being lost from the system entirely.

The Police Association of NSW is today calling for an urgent increase in the number of police to investigate child sex offences and additional police to monitor people on the child protection register – the list of convicted child sex offenders living in our communities.

PANSW President Tony King said that in order to ensure the safety of our children, the minimum standard should be one police officer dedicated to monitoring every 30 offenders. At the moment, responsibility to monitor those on the child protection register falls to local police, who are already stretched to capacity. It is undertaken on a part-time, ad-hoc basis while conducting other serious investigations.

“We know there are over 4000 offenders on the Child Protection Register, but only a fraction of those are monitored regularly due to the fact that we simply don't have enough police to do the job,” Mr King said.

“The most frightening statistic that demonstrates the complete lack of resourcing to protect our kids is that in one month only 67 of the 4000 registered offenders were intrusively monitored using the powers available to police.

“We know we need a ratio of one dedicated full-time officer to every 30 offenders to be able to proactively manage paedophiles on the list. We need 150 more police in our commands and districts just to manage those people currently registered.

“Reoffending rates for child sex offenders are incredibly high – almost 50 per cent. We need to be monitoring these people regularly and catching them before they ruin a child's life. Afterwards is too late.

“The legislation in this area is strong. Police have the powers to actively monitor and stop these offenders targeting our children, but we just don't have the resources to do it properly.

“The child protection register is our way of keeping an eye on these grubs, to prevent reoffending, and to protect our kids. The officers who do this work day in and day out are stretched to capacity, often with one or two officers managing in excess of 100 convicted offenders.

“The statistics around this are shocking. There are currently 201 offenders whose whereabouts is unknown, 80 child sexual abuse cold cases that police don't have the resources to investigate properly, and 62 people on the list who haven't had their DNA tested, meaning that they may well be linked to current crimes but we just don't know.”

>>> *see over* >>>



MORE COPS ALSO REQUIRED IN CHILD ABUSE SQUADS

The Police Association of NSW says we also urgently need more detectives in our Child Abuse and Sex Crimes Squad - those who respond to offences committed upon our children.

“At present, detectives in these squads are stretched beyond capacity, dealing with the 9527 reports that require 4583 investigations every year,” Mr King said.

“These detectives do amazing and disturbing work arresting and prosecuting paedophiles, but we need more of them. A further 101 Detectives are required in these squads in Sydney and around the state.

“It’s not an either/or situation. We need more police to lock up the paedophiles, but every conviction means another person on the Child protection Register, so we also need police in our commands and districts to monitor them in our communities.

“This area of policing has been under resourced for years. Past decisions have left our children vulnerable. It’s time to resource these squads and our districts and commands.

“Things are only going to get worse. There are 1300 offenders in custody who will be released in coming months and years who will also go on the list, further stretching police resources.

“We’re talking about the most heinous of offenders – people who hurt our children. We can’t have these people walking around completely unmonitored, free to do whatever they please. These are known criminals, who on all known evidence are likely to reoffend.”

Key facts:

- There are currently approx 4000 known offenders on the Child Protection Register
- The reoffending rate within four years is 46%
- There are 201 people on the Child Protection Register whose whereabouts are unknown
- There are approx. 80 unidentified child sex offenders whose DNA is on the database
- There are 62 offenders whose DNA is untested
- There are 9527 reports that require 4583 investigation every year
- Over 4500 charges are laid a year.
- 150 dedicated Detectives are required in Police Area Commands and Police Districts to intrusively monitor the growing numbers on the register.
- 12 additional Detectives are required in the Central Child Protection Registry to ensure legislation is utilised to its full force.
- 67 additional Detectives are required in Child Abuse Units to investigate and prosecute child sex offenders.
- 16 additional Detectives are required in the Child Exploitation Internet Unit to target on-line predators.
- 7 additional surveillance operatives are required to assist in targeting and monitoring.

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