



STUART GRIMLEY MP

Member for Western Victoria
State Leader of Derryn Hinch's Justice Party

MEDIA RELEASE



Grimley Moves for More Options for Sexual Assault Reporting

Wednesday 6 April 2022

State Leader of Derryn Hinch's Justice Party Stuart Grimley MP has likely Government approval for a motion that will be debated today (Wed 6 April) that requires the Government to start consultation on an alternative, online sexual assault reporting option, tabling the outcomes of such engagement by 1 September this year.

Mr Grimley will be joined by a victim-survivor of sexual assault from Geelong, Mikaylah East, and the CEO of Child Safe Strategies, Debbie Boyse, at a press conference this morning to speak about the benefits (and their support) for an alternative reporting option for sexual assault in Victoria.

The Victorian Law Reform Commission's 2021 report [Improving the Justice System Response to Sexual Offences](#) stated that about 87% of people who experience sexual violence do not report it to the police.

The report recommended an alternative reporting option, but the Government have continued to not commit to its implementation, [as recent as February](#) through a Question Time response.

Other jurisdictions already have alternative reporting options including:

- NSW which launched [SARO](#) (Sexual Assault Reporting Option) in 2012
- QLD which uses [ARO](#) (Alternative Reporting Option, formerly 'Project USA'; Unreported Sexual Assault)

There are also reporting options in the UK and America. Most police forces in Australia have the ability to report sexual assault without prosecuting, but not online.

Victoria had a reporting option ('Sexual Assault Report Anonymously'; SARA), run by South Eastern CASA, but it was decommissioned in 2020 due to a lack of funding.

The alternative reporting option will allow for greater data collection including understanding of where sexual assault is happening the community and give victims agency over their experience. It may also increase connections to support services for victim-survivors.

Mr Grimley will today speak about the successes NSW's SARO has experienced including:

- Working with licensed venues to disrupt drink spiking reports; and
- Adding victims to prosecutions by using patterns of behaviour collected in SARO reports.

Please see attached a letter of endorsement from Sexual Assault and Family Violence Centre CEO Helen Bolton.

Quotes Attributable to Stuart Grimley MP:

"As policymakers, we should be doing everything in our power to make reporting sexual assault as easy as possible. This online reporting option is just one way to reduce unnecessary barriers.

I've spoken to New South Wales police about their SARO and they've had great success with it. Whilst it isn't perfect (and they are making improvements to make it more trauma-informed), they have been able to prosecute for more victim-survivors and prevent drink spiking as a result of SARO.

The alternative reporting option will help us gather data and intelligence which will allow us to better understand the breadth of sexual assault and develop targeted policies to reduce the scourge.

I'm surprised the Government won't commit to this recommendation, but hopefully if this motion passes today, they will undertake the consultation and bring the results back to Parliament by September 1."



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Background on guests:

Mikaylah East is a victim-survivor of sexual assault after experiencing a rape in 2019. Ms East attests that if an alternative reporting option were available she would have reported much earlier. Mikaylah, the founder of The Imperative Project Australia, is scheduled to begin speaking at schools about consent and would like to provide an avenue for those she presents to to report any sexual abuse through an alternative reporting option.

Quotes attributable to Mikaylah East:

"If I had an alternative reporting option, I would have reported my rape much sooner.

I founded The Imperative Project because I wanted to create a safe space for any survivors of sexual assault and violence where they felt heard and understood. This reporting option will help me to create that safe space.

I would like to be able to refer people who come to me with stories of sexual assault to a reporting option that gives them agency and options over their story.

We need this alternative reporting option as a matter of urgency."

Debbie Boyse is the CEO of Child Safe Strategies; an organisation that trains organisations in complying with Child Safe Standards and providing safe places for children. Debbie commenced her career in Victorian Police for close to 10 years and then worked for a number of years in Child Protection for both government and non-government organisations. Debbie managed a helpline where the public could call up anonymously and discuss the impact of their abuse. Debbie trains in Child Sexual Abuse Prevention and Child Safe Practices for organisations across Australia, Singapore and Fiji. Debbie has worked closely with Care and Protection Canberra ACT to develop and deliver training to frontline practitioners. She has worked in partnership with numerous indigenous communities in South Australia, Northern Territory, Queensland and Western Australia.

Quotes attributable to Debbie Boyse:

"As someone who has managed a national anonymous sexual abuse helpline, any mechanism we can implement to give victim-survivors more ways to report is a good thing. The helpline showed me how many survivors never reported to authorities. I don't believe statistics as most sexual abuse is not reported in my experience.

Often people called the helpline to seek support services and sometimes tell their story without wanting to report the perpetrator. Survivors have often told me that they won't speak up for fear of not having a say in what happens next.

If I train a room of 30 people, on average I would have 3 disclosures per session with most never having reported before.

If people were able to report sexual assault in a safe way, this would assist them to have access to much needed supports."

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