

WA's Public Sex Offender Registry: It's our right to know – Oh but we don't use it!

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Community Protection Offender Register

- Western Australia implemented a SOR in 2012
 - to lessen the chances that convicted offenders will re-offend
 - to help police investigate and prosecute any future offences committed
 - to allow for publication of information about certain offenders
 - to assist courts to make orders banning offenders from participating in certain activities.



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Local Search

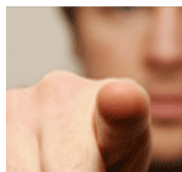
Performing a local search will provide the applicant with access to photographs of dangerous and high risk offenders residing in their locality. Only the photographs of offenders residing in an applicant's suburb and the adjoining suburbs will be displayed. **The offenders whose photographs will be displayed include either:**

- Dangerous sexual offenders subject to supervision orders under the [Dangerous Sexual Offenders Act 2006](#);
- Serious repeat reportable offenders;
- Persons who have been convicted of an offence punishable by imprisonment for 5 years or more, and concern is held that this person poses a risk to the lives or sexual safety of one or more persons or persons generally.

Access to this information is primarily for the purposes of enhanced public awareness and safety.


Please be aware the [Community Protection \(Offender Reporting\) Act 2004](#) provides that it is a criminal offence to misuse the information made publicly available by this website. Those found guilty of committing such an offence can be liable to up to 10 years imprisonment. It is an offence for any person to use the published photographs to:

- engage in any conduct that will create, promote or increase animosity toward or harassment of a person identified by this site; or
- publish, distribute or display any photographs or personal information provided by this site without the prior written approval from the Minister for Police.




MISSING OFFENDERS

Help us locate Missing Sex Offenders



LOCAL SEARCH

Access to Dangerous and High Risk Offenders in your locality



DISCLOSURE SCHEME

Parent or Guardian inquiry about a Reportable Offender

Information Links



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What's already there?

- Each state has Sex Offender Registry
- WA has only public database – but access is limited
- Northern Territory proposed bill but legislation deferred after concerns raised
- Victorian Liberals promised SoR but election won by Labor

National Public Register for CSOs?



PHOTO: Peter Dutton said thwarting the exploitation of children was his key priority as Home Affairs Minister.
(ABC News: Marco Catalano)

National Public Register for CSOs?

- ***But will it work?***
 - Seminal and recently published literature
 - AIC Report “results mixed at best”
 - Little evidence that US SORNA policies reduce reoffending
 - Some evidence that it increased recidivism
 - Perhaps a general deterrent effect?

Theoretical Framework

- Sex offending is a complex behaviour with several theoretical explanations and treatment options.
- Shaming (Braithwaite, 2000)
 - Reintegrative
 - Stigmatic
- Relapse Prevention Model

Research Questions

1. What are community member beliefs about the function of the Sex Offender Registers?
2. What actions did they take after gaining information from the registry?
3. What are the implications of having a public sex offender registry?
 - For the perceived safety of the community;
 - On the rehabilitative process of the offender.

“My understanding is that there is such a thing as a sex offender registry...I’m not sure whether there is a federal one. However, I’m fairly sure in my own mind that we do have a SOR here in Western Australia.”

Access

Local Search Application

Performing a local search will provide you with access to photographs of dangerous and high risk offenders residing in **your residential locality only**. The photographs are accessible through a web link sent to your nominated email address.

If you have a current WA Motor Drivers Licence, please fill in the form below.


Please ensure the details you provide are accurate. The current address details need to match those on your WA Motor Drivers License for your application to be approved. You can update your address details online at the [Department of Transport](#) website. Please allow 7-14 days for the address change to be processed then submit your request.

If you don't have a current WA Motor Drivers Licence, [please click here](#)

Mandatory fields are marked with (*)

If you **have** a current WA Motor Drivers Licence, please fill in the form below ▼

Drivers Licence No. *	Date of Birth *	Email Address *	
<input type="text" value="5426324"/>	<input type="text" value="10/12/1990"/>	<input type="text" value="Curiosity@bignet.com"/>	
Unit No.	Street No.	Street Name	Street Type
<input type="text" value="4"/>	<input type="text" value="42"/>	<input type="text" value="Inquisitiveness"/>	<input type="text" value="Street"/>
Suburb *	Postcode *	State	Country
<input type="text" value="Interest"/>	<input type="text" value="6000"/>	<input type="text" value="WA"/>	<input type="text" value="Australia"/>



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Opinions of those who had accessed



Dissatisfied with Information

Many expected detailed information similar to that of the U.S. SoR.

“...I do believe that there needs to be some kind of public register.. but not in the way that we currently have.. I’m not happy with just photographs...”

Limited information

“I looked at it probably three or four times and that’s it. I didn’t do anything because I didn’t... there was really nothing to do with the [limited] information.”

Implications

“They would discuss it with people they know...especially people with children as they are the most vulnerable”

“I think they would make an effort to make sure that everyone knew they were a sex offender if they ever found out.”

Vigilantism

While the participants believed they, or most people would disclose what they had found, a large proportion cautioned about vigilantism.

They stated impacts such as;

- **Policing:** ‘causing chaos’
- **Families:** ‘collateral damage’
- **Public safety:** ‘dangerous for others in the community’
- **Offenders:** ‘people may harm the offender’



“...if people find them - they could attack the offenders. Doing that they making more work for police, like if family victims find about that there is sex offender close to them they could attack them...”

Rehabilitation

"...if they cant get a job and don't have the finances then it could be that they end up doing some other forms of crime to sustain a lifestyle and that causes problems as well for rejections, self-esteem, so no I don't think that it would help them."



Rehabilitation

“...well if they have no opportunity to like to rebuild normal relationships with the community then they can’t really change, I feel like the registries themselves do potentially stop the rehabilitation process from happening, in essence they are directly contributing to the failure of the judicial system.”



Shaming Stigmatisation

“...may provoke the community to target the offender because it advertises where an offender is and the general public tend to view them as disgusting people.”

Shaming Stigmatisation

“And, a witch hunt goes on and they zero out that this is the person that's moved into the suburb that's a sex offender...That would be catastrophic.”

...but they want it!

It's our right to know – Oh but we don't use it!

*“...I think you have a right to know if people like that
are in your area....”*

“...really, its our right to have the information...”

Limitations

- Convenience sampling
- Gender
- Larger quantitative survey
- Comparison with states with no public SOR

Thoughts?

- Many offenders are known to the victim (not stranger crimes)
- \$7.8 mil to establish nationally
- 88 extra police officers
- 1,695 GPS electronic monitoring devices
- Imagine what 7.8 million dollars could do for prevention programs, treatment programs and assistance for victims

Conclusion

- Is a public SOR the best option for dealing with released Sex Offenders?

