

# For Immediate Release

Heather Steinberg  
Crest Lawyers - Tin Can Bay, Queensland

Phone: (07) 5486 2456 or 0430 499 628

Fax: (07) 5315 0883

Email: [info@crestlawyers.com](mailto:info@crestlawyers.com)

Web site: [www.crestlawyers.com](http://www.crestlawyers.com); [www.littleangels.org.au](http://www.littleangels.org.au)

**12 November 2010**

## Call for Specialised Sex Offenders Court

Almost daily in this State there are newspaper reports of yet another child or children suffering at the hands of a sexual predator. It is not the people working in child protection who are at fault, it is the policies and procedures they must adhere too and it is the Governments lack of action to protect child victims.

Solicitor, child protection activist and former police prosecutor, Heather Steinberg is calling on the Queensland Government to consider the establishment of a specialised sex offender's court as proposed by the National Child Sexual Assault Reform Committee (NCSARC).

The Committee, consisting of some of the nation's leading lawyers, judges and academics and convened by legal academic Dr Annie Cossins, recommends dedicated child sex offence courts to improve prosecution outcomes and reduce the trauma and stress encountered by child victims.

The practice of the Court would ensure appropriate sentencing, intense supervision of offenders through regular compliance hearings, mandated sex offender treatment and rapid and consistent responses to non-compliance with bail and/or probation conditions.

The specialised court, which could be based on the New York Sex Offence Court Model, would include increasing sex offender accountability and community safety and better safeguards for victims.

Ms Steinberg, who offers a Child Victim Legal Service allowing child victims of criminal offences access to their own independent legal representative to ensure their matter is handled correctly and with the best interests of the child in mind, says:

"If the Qld Government implemented a specialised court then my service would not be needed as it would form part of the structure of the Court. However, any opportunity to further protect children will be overlooked by this Government if it means having to put up money to fund it."

Ms Steinberg believes Mr Carmody SC is the ideal person to head up such a court in Queensland and goes further to say "The Court might also be the appropriate body to oversee a public register of sex offenders which I am currently working on with Rob Messenger, MP."

Ms Steinberg also supports the Committee's recommendation for mandatory treatment programs as part of the offenders' custodial sentences.

"Releasing people back on to the street with no treatment whatsoever is a really big problem" Dr Cossins is quoted as saying.

Dr Cossins goes further "I think governments are negligent in sticking guys into prison for maybe four years and then releasing them and thinking that putting them on a sex offender register is actually going to cure their desire to have sex with children."

"Mandatory treatment programs exist overseas but the cost of the initiative would be the basis why the Queensland Government will not back such a proposal," Ms Steinberg believes.

She encourages the Government to get behind the proposal and implement a Planning Committee to establish a specialised Court.

The National Child Sexual Assault Reform Committee is aiming to have the Center for Court Innovation come out to Australia to speak to interested government bodies and other organisations about the court proposal. However, sponsorship from a law firm or other interested organisation is required to fund the trip.

Dr Cossins says "The Center for Court Innovation was instrumental in the establishment of these specialist courts in NY in 2006 and they continue to do so. They actually designed the court model for NY."

If you can offer assistance to fund this trip, please contact Heather Steinberg at [info@crestlawyers.com](mailto:info@crestlawyers.com)

###