Government to Ensure Lifers Serve Full Sentence

The Attorney-General Chris Burns has announced the Northern Territory Government will move swiftly to strengthen and clarify laws around life sentences.

“I’m very disappointed the Court of Appeal has found that a serious convicted rapist is eligible to apply for early parole,” Dr Burns said.

“Territorians do not want these types of offenders going free before they legally should.

“When the Territory Government introduced the Sentencing (Crime of Murder) and Parole Reform Act in 2004, the Government was very clear that if there was an aggravating factor such as a sexual element to the crime, the offender should serve an extra five years.

“The Court of Appeal obviously has determined Courts have the discretion to decide whether that extra time should be added to a life sentence.

“But I believe the law is very clear. That was not the intent of Government when we introduced the legislation.”

Dr Burns said the Court of Appeal’s findings were in direct contrast to the High Court’s decision in the recent Leach v Queen case.

“We believe our life sentence laws are strong and plain. But we will move to introduce legislation into Parliament as soon as possible to make Government’s intention of the aggravating sentence crystal clear,” Dr Burns said.

“I understand the Director of Public Prosecutions is considering yesterday’s findings and will make an announcement about whether he will appeal the decision shortly.

“If the DPP does appeal, we are very confident of success.”

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