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Sex abuse  
spotlight

Warren Hatelly

Vasse MLA Libby Mettam has questioned whether monitoring of sex offenders in the Capes is on par with the metropolitan area.

Her concerns — aired in Parliament last week amid heated debate about sex offender laws — follow reports earlier this year about a Capes boy allegedly assaulted by a paedophile released into the community who was later believed to be socialising with other children.

Ms Mettam told the *Times* the issue showed the challenges of regional policing and a need for greater communication between Government agencies. "Ultimately, police monitoring activity is governed by how these individuals are categorised, and it appears that greater emphasis needs to be taken on past offending to reflect the potential for these past offenders to groom and reoffend," she said.

"There are significant challenges to monitoring these offenders in regional areas and resourcing should reflect this.

"There is no doubt that regional communities are more vulnerable to these offenders."

The MLA's concerns were not soothed by the response from Police Minister Michelle Roberts, with detailed questions unanswered in Parliament because of operational confidentiality.

Police media said the South West

District had a strategy whereby station chiefs and staff were aware of registered offenders living locally. "There is a strict local regime of reporting that is overseen by the two detectives offices in the district," a spokesman said.

Officers also received disclosure from the National Child Offender System. "Regional-based police are responsible for their management," the spokesman said.

Mrs Roberts told the *Times* regional police "proactively target and monitor the movements of reportable offenders".

She said agencies already co-ordinated their monitoring and the Department of Communities funded behaviour programs in WA.

WA Police declined to provide figures for sex offenders living in the Vasse and Warren-Blackwood electorates, saying they did not have that information on hand.

In March, *The West Australian* reported the father of the allegedly assaulted boy believed the WA Police's sex offender management squad should have known the paedophile was encouraging young boys to have contact with him in the South West.

The father said the alleged offender was also running a group giving him access to other young children.

Registered sex offenders must

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Nic and Wendy Hendry, Cathie Lambert and Rebecca Hannan all support marriage equality. Picture: Therese Colman

## Rally in support of same-sex marriage

Therese Colman

Supporters of same-sex marriage will rally at the Margaret River Hotel on Saturday.

A sausage sizzle will raise funds for counselling service Living Proud and participants are asked to bring along their postal surveys.

In response to the survey on same-sex marriage, Rebecca Hannan said it was difficult to see and hear negative comments from the wider community.

"There are some extremely damaging comments, unrelated issues and unpleasant arguments that are being raised on both sides, which are very sad to see," she said. "I am a passionate advocate

for strong communities, but the plebiscite is an unjust, challenging and invasive process."

Nic Hendry said equal marriage rights would be a step in the right direction in breaking down the prejudice felt by same-sex couples.

"We can't ignore the increase in crisis calls to support helplines," she said.

"It is proven there's a higher rate of teen suicide in the community, and having something as important as equal legal rights is a big step in getting rid of that stigma."

The women are inviting residents to come along with their postal survey forms on Saturday so they can be completed and posted

together. "Come and vote 'yes', all of us together," Ms Hendry said.

"It may not be directly applicable to you, but it makes a great difference to the wider community."

Ms Hannan pleaded to those still unsure of their vote to give same-sex marriage their support.

"Nothing else for the rest of the community will change other than I am sure the wedding industry will notice a significant spike, which has got to be a fantastic thing for business," she said.

"Together let's get this done and move towards a stronger community where all members feel included, respected, accepted, safe and valued."

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