



Minister for Police and Corrective Services and
Minister for Fire and Emergency Services

Ref: QCS-04245 2023

Your Ref: A114871

22 NOV 2023

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Mr Neil Laurie
The Clerk of the Parliament
Queensland Parliamentary Service
Parliament House
Cnr George and Alice Streets
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Mr Laurie

I refer to your letter dated 25 August 2023 to the Honourable Yvette D'Ath MP, Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence about Petition Nos. 3923-23 and 3941-23 tabled in the Queensland Legislative Assembly on 22 August 2023. A copy of your correspondence was forwarded to my office on 21 September 2023.

The petitions draw attention to a matter of the parole board and seeks the indefinite detention of prisoner Shaun Ross Andrew, who was sentenced to life imprisonment for the Murder of Ms Joelean Lee Watson, and the attempted murder of Ms Joelean Watson's two-year old daughter, Makayla.

In providing my response pursuant to standing order 125, I would like to commence by thanking the petitioner for informing members of this matter and extend my deepest condolences to Ms Linda Watson and all families of the victims, as well as others impacted by the actions of this prisoner.

While the Parole Board Queensland (the Board) is established under Chapter 5 of the *Corrective Services Act 2006* and sits within my portfolio as Minister for Police and Corrective Services, the Board is independent led by a President with equivalent experience and standing as a Supreme Court Justice and Deputy Presidents as District Court Judges.

The Board is also comprised of professional board members with legal or health qualifications, public service representatives with experience in community corrections, senior police officers and members of the community.

While the independence of the Board requires its decisions to be made without influence or pressure from external sources, its highest priority in the decision-making process is always the safety of the community.

When considering whether a prisoner should be granted parole, the Board will consider all relevant material to make an evidence-based decision, in accordance with common law principles, legislation and Ministerial Guidelines. Relevant material includes, but is not limited to, submissions made by victims and/or family members and any comments made by the sentencing court.

The Board has no role to play in, and no power to vary, sentencing decisions including setting parole eligibility dates. A parole eligibility date does not mean a prisoner is automatically granted a parole order, and a prisoner serving a life sentence must apply to the Board. If granted parole, the prisoner remains under supervision of an authorised corrective services officer for life.

Notwithstanding, I will forward a copy of the petition to the Parole Board Queensland for its awareness.

I appreciate this is a most distressing time for the families of the victims and I want to again convey my appreciation to the petitioners for bringing this matter to the attention of the House.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Mark Ryan', followed by a long horizontal stroke.

The Honourable Mark Ryan MP
Minister for Police and Corrective Services and
Minister for Fire and Emergency Services