|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Graphics** | **Audio** |
| Acknowledgement | The following video has been filmed on Kaurna Land.  We acknowledge this is the traditional country of the Kaurna people of the Adelaide Plains and pay respect to Elders past and present.  We recognise their cultural heritage, beliefs and relationship with the land and respect that they are of continuing importance to the Kaurna people living today. |
| **Words on screen** | **Your right to consultation and participation**  **Submissions to the Parole Board Victims of Crime SA** |
|  | I’m Sarah Quick, I’m the Assistant Commissioner for Victims’ Rights at Victims of Crime SA. |
| **Words on screen** | **Tell us about what you do** |
|  | One of the ways we help victims is with making submissions when an offender applies for release on parole. Victims have a right to make submissions but often feel that it’s a difficult thing to do on their own and need some support. Parole can be a very difficult time for victims because it’s a time when anxiety and trauma can re-emerge. |
| **Words on screen** | **How do you support victims?** |
|  | So we can help a victim write their own submission, make a submission on their behalf and we can also support victims by attending with them if they want to attend a face to face meeting with the Parole Board. |
| **Words on screen** | **When do you usually meet victims?** |
|  | So typically when they’ve been notified that an offender has applied for release on parole and that’s often 6 months before the end of their non-parole period. So we try to contact them as early as possible so we can flag the idea of making a submission and give them time to think about what they’d like to say.  I think victims need time to process what their safety concerns are, if they want any exclusion zones, so giving victims time to discuss it with their family as well. |
| **Words on screen** | **What’s usually in a parole submission?** |
|  | Generally speaking victims will start out with a view about the release of an offender – some people are strongly opposed to the offender being released, some people are okay with the person being released as long as their safety concerns have been taken into account, and other people - surprisingly to some of us – just say they’ve done their time and they should be released, and that they hope the offender makes the most of their new opportunity.  But typically it’s about an individual’s safety concerns. Once they’re addressed, victims feel a lot better. |
| **Words on screen** | **How can the parole process impact on victims?** |
|  | For life sentenced prisoners or people who are convicted of homicide, it can be many, many years later – twenty, thirty years later – that victims have to confront the possibility that an offender is going to be released. So it can be really traumatic because people have re-established their lives. They haven’t ever gotten over what happened, but they’ve started to work with integrating the trauma into their life, and then this process comes up and they have to face the trauma all over again.  It’s also difficult if an offender’s not released because that offender is then eligible to apply every 12 months to apply for release on parole and that’s an ongoing trauma for victims and their families. |
| **Words on screen** | **What do victims need when they come to you?** |
|  | Victims have really diverse needs, so some victims it’s guidance, some victims need reassurance, but I think over and above all victims just feel that they need to be supported and feel heard and to have their concerns validated. A lot of victims know that they want to say something but they actually haven’t got the emotional energy to put their feelings and their thoughts on paper. So it’s just having someone help them compose their thoughts in a logical format, sometimes that’s all they need. |
| **Words on screen** | **How do victims access your service?** |
|  | We regularly make submissions in relation to life sentenced prisoners so we receive automatic notification of those applications, and then we contact the victims in those cases. For other matters it’s really a case of victims contacting us and asking for support. |
| **Words on screen** | **Why is this helpful for victims?** |
|  | I think a lot of the criminal justice processes exclude victims. There aren’t a lot of opportunities for victims to be heard. I think it’s really important that victims feel that they’re treated with respect, with patience and understanding. And I think victims feel empowered by being able to make those submissions. |
| **Words on screen** | **What’s your advice for victims of crime?** |
|  | I think any victim that has any thought of wanting to make a submission – it would be really good to speak to someone about the benefits and to know that there’s also some counselling and therapeutic support available to them if they do choose to make a submission. |
| **Words on screen** | **Have you been the victim of a crime?**  **You have rights.** |
|  | **Find out more at**  **Victims of Crime SA** [**www.voc.sa.gov.au**](http://www.voc.sa.gov.au) |