

**Legislative Statement  
for  
Three Strikes Legislation Repeal Bill**

**Presented to the House of Representatives**

**In accordance with Standing Order 272**

# Legislative Statement for the Three Strikes Legislation Repeal Bill

## Introduction

- 1 The Three Strikes Legislation Repeal Bill (the Bill) repeals sections from the Sentencing Act 2002 and the Parole Act 2002 that create what is commonly known as the three strikes law.
- 2 Repealing the law will deliver on a Labour party manifesto commitment.

## Background

- 3 The Sentencing and Parole Reform Act 2010 created what is commonly known as the three strikes law.
- 4 Under the three strikes regime, a person convicted of:
  - a) a first specified offence<sup>1</sup> is warned of the consequences if the person is convicted of another specified offence committed after that warning,
  - b) a second specified offence is required to serve any prison sentence in full (i.e. without eligibility for automatic release for short-term sentences or the possibility of parole for long-term sentences) and receives a final warning, and
  - c) a third specified offence is sentenced to the maximum penalty for that offence, and the term of imprisonment must be served without parole unless the Court determines that this would be manifestly unjust.
- 5 The law was intended to deter repeat offenders with the threat of progressively longer mandatory prison terms, and to penalise those who continue to re-offend despite the additional penalties.
- 6 However, there is little evidence that the regime has reduced serious offending, and the law has resulted in disproportionate punishment by preventing sentencing judges from taking the circumstances of offending into account. The existing law already enables judges to use the same sentencing options as provided by the three strikes law, but on a discretionary basis.

## Provisions of the Three Strikes Legislation Repeal Bill

- 7 The Bill will repeal sections from the Sentencing Act 2002 and the Parole Act 2002 that create the three strikes law. The Sentencing and Parole Reform Act introduced the term “serious violent offence” into the Sentencing Act. This term has since been referred to in other statutes so will be preserved after the repeal takes effect.
- 8 The Bill does not address the impacts on those already sentenced under the three strikes law. It therefore does not provide retrospective arrangements for

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<sup>1</sup> There are 40 qualifying three strike offences, comprising almost all major violent and sexual offences with a maximum penalty of seven years or greater imprisonment, including murder, attempted murder, manslaughter, wounding with intent to cause grievous bodily harm, sexual violation, abduction, kidnapping, and aggravated robbery.

those individuals who are serving a sentence of imprisonment for a strike offence at the time the repeal legislation comes into effect.

- 9 On introduction of the Bill, I invited the Justice Committee to consider whether (and, if so, how) the Bill should apply to individuals who have already been sentenced under the law. The Committee heard from the public and other interested parties on this issue as a basis for recommendations to Parliament.
- 10 The Justice Committee has not recommended any changes to the Bill to introduce retrospective arrangements for existing strike offenders. The Committee has recommended an amendment to the clause precluding claims for compensation to clarify the interaction of this clause with the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990.

## **Conclusion**

- 11 The Bill will return discretion in sentencing decisions to the judiciary, who are best placed to determine how long a sentence should be and whether (and if so, when) an offender should become eligible for parole.
- 12 The Bill reflects the Government's focus on building a justice system that ensures less crime, less offending and fewer victims of crime who are better supported.
- 13 The Bill will also deliver on Labour's 2020 Election Manifesto commitment to repeal the three strikes law.