

# Parole board chief's pledge to victims after Worboys case

By Victoria Ward

VICTIMS of crime will be treated with more "humanity" in the wake of the John Worboys case, the chief executive of the parole board has pledged.

Martin Jones acknowledged that a change was needed in the way in which its members approached the subject of restorative justice.

It follows the direct intervention of a woman who was repeatedly raped and tortured at knifepoint in her home.

Rosalyn Boyce, 51, who has met her attacker and has provided statements for his parole hearings for several years, said she had been treated like a "piece of paper" by the parole board and the probation service. She demanded that victims be better treated and understood.

As a result of her campaigning, and with the support of Baroness Newlove, the Victims' Commissioner, the board will next week publish a raft of information in conjunction with the Why Me? charity in an attempt to better inform its members about how restorative justice works. It is hoped that a nationwide information campaign will also lead to a more consistent approach to the subject when considering offenders' parole.

There was widespread criticism earlier this year when it emerged that a three-person parole board panel had decided that Worboys, the 60-year-old serial sex attacker, was safe to be freed after around a decade behind bars.

The decision was made without all of his victims being informed, leading to claims that their needs were not considered and that the board was not fit for purpose.

Two of his victims won a High Court case to block his release after the judges said both the parole board and the Ministry of Justice had made errors during the parole hearing last year. Five more women have since come forward to make further allegations against the serial sex attacker.

Mr Jones told *The Daily Telegraph* that a better understanding of the system from victims' points of view was required and that the way in which the parole board took restorative justice into account needed to be overhauled.

"It is about dialogue," he said. "We should always be listening to the voices of victims and treat them with humanity." Mr Jones said improvements were needed to keep track of victims by modernising the system and communicating via email rather than by post. He

## A victim's story 'It brought me to my knees'

Rosalyn Boyce was repeatedly raped and tortured at knifepoint while her two-year-old daughter slept in the room next door.

She said the only reason she wasn't killed was because the knife fell apart.

The rapist, Lee Hill, received three life sentences. But as the attack was in 1999 he became eligible for release in 2012, and since then Ms Boyce has had to endure the parole process alongside the offender, providing victim impact

statements each year when the panel considers his case.

"You are getting re-traumatised each time," she said. "You are completely out of control and while the perpetrator has a whole legal team and support system, you are left to fend for yourself."

"Last time, the process lasted 18 months. By the end of it I had recurring PTSD."

"I was in a bad way. I didn't know what the outcome would be and one member of the probation

service told me: 'This is not your day, it's the offender's day.'"

During the attack Hill had threatened to kill her if she went to the police and Ms Boyce did not believe that she was safe.

"People think restorative justice is all roses and everything's all right now," she said. "But it's a huge grey area and raises many issues. After giving evidence, I felt like I was back in the room. It was very stressful, it brought me to my knees."

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victims the chance to provide impact statements and support them when they do so.

There were around 8,000 parole hearings last year, but only 200 victims gave impact statements at prisons in person and around 1,000 in writing.

The board is considering the introduction of pre-recorded statements and had begun reimbursing travel costs for those who do attend a hearing.

Last week, Caroline Corby, the new chairman of the Parole Board, admitted that the body had suffered a "loss of confidence" in the wake of the Worboys case and said the board now asked for more information on cases before making decisions.

Mr Jones added: "One of the things that came out of the Worboys case was an increase in awareness of victims' rights. We have been working with Why Me? to try to ensure that we have very clear information for victims to explain how the process works."

"If a prisoner properly engages in restorative justice it can reduce the chances of long-term reoffending."

Lucy Jaffe, director of Why Me?, said its collaboration with the board had got off to an "excellent start".

*'We should always be listening to the voices of victims and treat them with humanity'*