

THE AUSTRALIAN

Victoria brings in stricter parole laws after Jill Meagher murder



Adrian Bayley arrives at the Supreme Court in Melbourne to be sentenced for the murder and rape of Jill Meagher. Picture: Jon Hargest

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THE Napthine government has announced further toughening of Victoria's parole regulations in the wake of Jill Meagher's murder.

It will now be an offence to breach parole, with penalties of up to three months in jail as well as a fine of up to \$4200.

The changes follow a public outcry calling for stricter parole conditions, after it was revealed this month that Adrian Ernest Bayley murdered Melbourne woman Jill Meagher last September while he was on parole for a string of violent rapes.

His parole had not been revoked even though he had pleaded guilty to attacking a man outside a Geelong pub.

Premier Denis Napthine said he found it extraordinary breaching parole was not already an offence and the additional changes announced today would ensure fair and reasonable protection for the community.

"We will not compromise on community safety," he said. "Parole is a privilege not a right."

Police will also be able to arrest and detain people who are alleged to have breached parole.

A breach of parole may mean breaking curfew or an alcohol ban, and it would be up to police to determine if the breach was a reasonable excuse or should result in charges.

One example, Dr Napthine said, would be a parolee who missed an appointment, but the excuse was their car broke down.

Bayley, 41, was sentenced to life imprisonment last week for murdering Meagher as she walked home from drinks with ABC colleagues.

He was on parole after serving 8 years in prison for viciously raping 5 prostitutes, and had served earlier jail time for other sexual offences.

Last December the government introduced legislation to close some of the loopholes in the parole system.

It has since gone further to ensure sex offenders and serious violent offenders convicted of a sex or violent crime while on parole will automatically have parole cancelled, while those charged must have their cases considered by the parole board with a presumption that their freedom will be rescinded.

Earlier this month Dr Napthine apologised to Meagher's family, saying the justice system had failed in that case.

Additional reporting: AAP

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