

Convicted driver released for 'operational reasons' The Irish Times April 30, 1993, CITY EDITION

bereaved by the death of [REDACTED] I do think it important, however, that the House should have a frank statement of the realities involved," she added.

Mrs Geoghegan-Quinn said it was a matter of the deepest regret to her that a letter she sent to the family, following her meeting with them, was wrongly addressed and caused them further distress. "That error was inexcusable. As Minister, I accept full responsibility for what occurred and I immediately apologised both personally and by letter for this lapse in standards which the error showed," she said.

The Minister said that she had begun a major review of policy on the prison system and the treatment of offenders. A wide range of options was being considered, including the provision of more cell spaces, the wider development of community-based sanctions as an alternative to prison custody and the development of more appropriate parole arrangements.

Outlining the background to the case, Mr Shatter said that at 11 p.m. on a night in March last year, [REDACTED] and two teenage friends were hit by a car driven by a 24-year-old man, Brian Kennedy. Four days later, she died in hospital.

Kennedy was given a three-month prison sentence at Dun Laoghaire court after being convicted of dangerous driving. He was also fined £300 for driving while uninsured and disqualified from driving for two years. He was fined a further £200 for the unlawful use of the car which the court was told belonged to his mother. A hit-and-run summons was struck out.

Less than two weeks after beginning his sentence, Kennedy was released from prison.

"It is, I believe, an outrageous scandal that this person was released so early from prison and his early release has caused great anguish to the parents of the deceased girl," said Mr Shatter.

He said that there had been some recent comment from the Minister about the need for the judiciary to impose harsher sentences in particular types of cases and for a uniform sentencing policy.

There was little point in the Minister engaging in such criticism of the judiciary if she was unable to keep her own house in order and ensure that when sentences were imposed they were fully and properly served.

He added: "Joan and Leo [REDACTED] are entitled to straight and honest answers to their questions. Instead of answers, they have been treated with contempt by the Minister responsible for the early release of the person who killed their daughter, and despite this Government's so-called commitment to openness, it has, until today, refused to explain the extraordinary events I have described.

In a statement last night, Mr Shatter said that the Minister's response in the Dail was appalling" and added that it was time to start tipping the balance in favour of the victims of crime.

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