

22 September 2015

The Research Director
Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and
Family Violence Prevention Committee
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE Q 4000

Email: [cdfsdfvpc@parliament.qld.gov.au](mailto:cdsdfvpc@parliament.qld.gov.au)

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Criminal Law (Domestic Violence) Amendment Bill 2015

Protect All Children Today Inc. (PACT) is supportive of any legislative reforms that better protect vulnerable children and young people who have been victims or witnesses of domestic violence.

PACT is a non-profit community organisation established in 1986 as a service provider of court support as well as advocating for vulnerable children, young people and their families. PACT's Child Witness Support Program provides support for children and young people who are required to give evidence in criminal court matters, either as victims of, or witnesses to, a crime. PACT recruits Child Witness Support Volunteers to provide child victims and witnesses with support and information about the Criminal Justice System.

It is through our experience that we offer the following comments:

- As a proportion of the children and young people PACT support are victims or witnesses to domestic violence, we strongly support any increases in penalties that would strengthen child protection and discourage further family violence.
- We believe that by reporting a person's history of domestic violence will provide more appropriate sentencing, based on an accurate reflection of the offenders past behaviour. Sadly, escalated violence if not addressed successfully, can lead to the death of a spouse or offspring, as we've seen in the media recently.
- We support the amendment of the *Evidence Act 1977* to ensure the availability of protections for special witnesses as these practices have provided significant benefits to the child victims and witnesses of crime that PACT support. Having safe, secure environments within the courts for families to wait, protected from harassment by the offender, will enable the provision of better evidence. We further believe, that children are likely to benefit indirectly if their caregiver is less traumatised by their involvement in the court process.
- We suggest that consideration should also be given to assisting perpetrators to access appropriate intervention services such as counselling/therapy etc. as this could lead to better overall outcomes for the family and reduce recidivism.
- It is pleasing to see that Queensland is recognising the need for consistency in legislation with other Australian States, which also sends a positive message to the community about the seriousness of domestic violence in our society.

We greatly appreciate the opportunity to provide comment on this piece of legislation and trust that our input has been of value.

Yours sincerely



Alexandra Marks
Chairperson



Jo Bryant
Chief Executive Officer