COMMUNITY SAFETY AND LEGAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Members present:
Mr PS Russo MP—Chair
Mr MA Boothman MP
Mr SSJ Andrew MP (virtual)
Ms JM Bush MP
Mr JE Hunt MP
Mr JM Krause MP

Staff present:
Ms Mary Westcott—Committee Secretary
Mr R Pelenyi—Assistant Committee Secretary

PUBLIC HEARING—INQUIRY INTO THE CORRECTIVE SERVICES (PROMOTING SAFETY) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2024

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

Monday, 18 March 2024

Brisbane

MONDAY, 18 MARCH 2024

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The committee met at 10.00 am.

CHAIR: Good morning. I declare open this public hearing for the committee's inquiry into the Corrective Services (Promoting Safety) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. My name is Peter Russo, member for Toohey and chair of the committee. I would like to respectfully acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet today and pay our respects to elders past and present. We are very fortunate to live in a country with two of the oldest continuing cultures in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples whose lands, winds and waters we all share. With me here today are: Mark Boothman, member for Theodore and deputy chair; Stephen Andrew, member for Mirani, via teleconference; Jonty Bush, member for Cooper; Jason Hunt, member for Caloundra; and Jon Krause, member for Scenic Rim.

This hearing is a proceeding of the Queensland parliament and is subject to the parliament's standing rules and orders. Only the committee and invited witnesses may participate in the proceedings. Witnesses are not required to give evidence under oath or affirmation, but I remind witnesses that intentionally misleading the committee is a serious offence. I remind members of the public that they may be excluded from the hearing at the discretion of the committee. These proceedings are being recorded and broadcast live on the parliament's website. Media may be present and are subject to the committee's media rules and my direction at all times. You may be filmed or photographed during the proceedings and images may also appear on the parliament's website or social media pages. I ask you to kindly turn your mobiles phones off or to silent mode.

LAING, Mx Louis, Vice-President, Queensland Chapter, Pride in Law

MacDOUGALL, Mr Duncan, President, Queensland Chapter, Pride in Law

CHAIR: I now welcome representatives from the Queensland Chapter of Pride in Law. Good morning. Thank you for joining us. I invite you to make an opening statement of up to five minutes, after which committee members will have some questions for you.

Mr MacDougall: By way of introduction, my name is Duncan MacDougall, he/him, President of the Queensland Chapter of Pride in Law. This is my colleague Louis Laing, the Vice-President of Pride in Law. Pride in Law thanks the Community Safety and Legal Affairs Committee for the opportunity to provide feedback on the Corrective Services (Promoting Safety) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024 and for the opportunity to stand as a witness before you today.

Pride in Law is Australia's first and only national non-political legal association aimed at connecting lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex and asexual—henceforth LGBTQIA+—members of the legal community and their allies. We work to increase visibility, education and advocacy on the LGBTQIA+ issues in the law and the legal profession. Our submission to the committee was compiled from this perspective by our Queensland chapter executive committee, whose members have expertise on the law as it affects the LGBTQIA+ community in Queensland.

The introduction of the Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 2023 to Queensland will broadly affect Queensland's legislation, and thus we commend the Queensland parliament for seeking to address this in the bill. According to the explanatory notes, the bill's aim in amending the body search provisions in the CSA is to provide flexibility for the diverse needs of prisoners, including trans and gender diverse prisoners. However, we note that the vague language of the proposed amendments may result in an arbitrary application of the amendments. In particular, Pride in Law notes the potential impact the body search provisions in the bill may have on the LGBTQIA+ community.

The Queensland Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 2023 will allow an individual to apply to alter their record of sex on their birth certificate, including by nominating their sex descriptor as 'any other descriptor of sex', such as 'agender', 'genderqueer' and 'nonbinary'. The current provisions mandate that at least one of the health practitioners present during the body search of a prisoner must be of the same sex as the prisoner being searched and that if another person is required to assist in a body search they must also be the same sex as the prisoner, except in emergencies.

The bill proposes to omit these requirements and introduce a new section 39A which allows regulations to prescribe additional requirements and procedures for conducting searches of prisoners. This omission removes the uncertainty these provisions create in circumstances where a prisoner has chosen a sex descriptor other than male or female. However, without clear guidelines, there is a risk of arbitrary decision-making potentially leading to discrimination against the people which the amendments are aimed at protecting, such as LGBTQIA+ individuals, particularly trans and gender diverse individuals, or other marginalised groups or individuals who may be vulnerable during body searches such as people who are pregnant, breastfeeding or with religious beliefs.

While proposed section 39A provides that regulations can be made to supplement the search provisions to consider the special or diverse needs of a prisoner, the provision does not provide any concrete protections for the search process itself, merely relying on the potential creation of subordinate legislation to do so. Due to the many systemic changes that the LGBTQIA+ community faces, combined with unjust discrimination due to the unique vulnerabilities of its members, Pride in Law has recommended robust policy and guidelines be introduced to support these amendments, including the following: a commitment to ongoing training for Queensland Corrective Services staff and any associated staff that focuses on trans and gender diverse identities and the experiences of LGBTQIA+ individuals in the criminal justice system, including unique vulnerabilities which members of the LGBTQIA+ community face; the allocation of resources to specifically examine the experiences of LGBTQIA+ individuals in the criminal justice system to inform the policies and practices of Queensland Corrective Services; and, finally, a commitment to ongoing consultation with LGBTQIA+ stakeholder groups to inform the policies and practices of Queensland Corrective Services.

It is therefore imperative to establish clear and comprehensive guidelines that accommodate the unique challenges faced by LGBTQIA+ individuals, in particular trans and gender diverse individuals as well as other vulnerable individuals, to ensure they are protected from harm in this space, particularly because of the significant ways in which vulnerability is institutionalised and to a great extent endemic to criminal justice processes. Thank you

Mr BOOTHMAN: Going to your comments about 39A, you say that the regulation needs to be a lot clearer. Can you elaborate on what you would like to see in that regulation?

Mx Laing: Generally, what I would recommend is that the bill might include a safeguard—for example, a provision that states that the person being searched can express their preference for the gender of the person searching them, and if practical to do so Corrective Services could accommodate that.

Mr BOOTHMAN: What you are saying is that, if the person is not the same gender as that individual, they may ask for another gender to participate in that search?

Mx Laing: Essentially, yes, although I do identify that, in circumstances where someone has nominated not male or female as their gender on their birth certificate following the reforms, that might create difficulties. I believe and I recommend that it should just be a consideration in the search provisions and a safeguard and worded in such a way that it is not mandatory but it does provide a safeguard for people whom it would protect.

Mr BOOTHMAN: Thank you.

Mr HUNT: First of all, thank you for your submission. You talked about changes to the search process itself. What changes would you make to the mechanics of the search process?

Mx Laing: Could you word the question differently?

Mr HUNT: There is policy and procedure currently that describes and directs how a search requiring the removal of clothing is conducted. QCS has wrestled with this issue for some time with some success and some instances of nonsuccess. What changes would you like to see to the search process itself? Do you have an operational recommendation as to how that would be carried out?

Mx Laing: Yes. I suppose the safeguard would be a really good start. In terms of the operational side of it, I believe it should be perhaps included in the operations manual for police officers conducting searches. In creating that new part of the operations manual for the police officers, it would include that safeguard that I spoke of earlier. I would also recommend, as we alluded to earlier, the ongoing training of police officers so they can be sensitive towards the LGBTQIA+ community. I think it is a changing area and, as you said, sometimes changes like this have success and sometimes they do not have success. It is hard to put a concrete solution in place, but I think embedded into the operations manual should be inclusions about how to interact with the LGBTQIA+ community and how to be sensitive about it and also that safeguard that I spoke of earlier.

Mr HUNT: Thank you.

Ms BUSH: Thanks for coming in. I am embarrassed to say that I was not aware of your organisation but it looks fantastic and I am really glad that you exist. Thank you for the work that you do. Obviously, your submission is very focused on one particular area. It is a bit out of scope of the bill but I noticed you mentioned removing the gendered language in the body search provisions of the CSA only. Would you want to see that expand? I quickly did a search to look at that and I could not see the gendered specific areas in that section, but there were references to female prisoners throughout the rest of the act. Do you have any comments on that, or are you specifically talking about the conflation of gender and sex? Can you help me understand that a bit more?

Mx Laing: I think for sure we were talking about the conflation of gender and sex. In particular, in the current provision it mentions the same-sex search provisions so that is what we were targeted at when we were referencing that. In terms of the female prisoner, I am not immediately familiar with the female prisoner sections but I do think it is important to retain that language there because there are issues with female prisoners that female prisoners in particular do face. Obviously, we come from an LGBTQIA+ perspective. We are not the Women Lawyers Association and we do not really speak on behalf of women as a whole, but I do think it is important to retain that and we were speaking to the conflation of sex and gender.

Ms BUSH: So in sections where it says 'it must be completed by a health practitioner of the same sex as the prisoner', you would rather see that as 'someone who is the requested gender of the prisoner'. Is that the kind of wording?

Mx Laing: I think it should be worded in a way so the prisoner can express a preference about the gender of who they are being searched by, rather than include the 'same gender'. I do not think you should replace 'same sex' with 'same gender' if that makes sense.

Ms BUSH: That is understood. I can already hear people saying, what if you have a dangerous prisoner who is wanting to be searched by someone of the opposite sex in a predatory way; how would you respond to that?

Mx Laing: I think in other legislation there is essentially a proviso.

Ms BUSH: Like something that overrides for safety.

Mx Laing: Yes, in terms of if they have an ulterior motive—I do not think we should use the word 'motive'. I think it is 'nefarious purpose' that a lot of other legislation uses. So a nefarious purpose provision would override that so that the searchers themselves are also not taken advantage of.

Ms BUSH: Is there something in another act, in another jurisdiction, that you were leaning on?

Mx Laing: I believe it is in a couple of different sections of the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act. I am pretty sure it is 'nefarious purposes'.

Ms BUSH: So it replicates that. Got it, thank you.

Mr HUNT: Duncan, in your opening statement you talked about some concerns around arbitrary decision-making; in relation to what and in what regard?

Mr MacDougall: When you say 'arbitrary', what exactly are you referencing there?

Mr HUNT: In your opening statement you were talking about the dangers of arbitrary decision-making around section 39 specifically; could you clarify that?

Mr MacDougall: Yes. I think it is more along the lines of people who are conducting the searches having a discrepancy as who may take control, or who ought to give the search. Again, it may be the case that they may say, 'Well, they look a certain gender they should do this,' or there may be some sort of safeguard that could take into consideration the prisoner's preference in that respect. There may be something that can be married up to avoid that arbitrary decision-making, but I think it comes down to the fact there may be confusion on the part of the people conducting the searches as to who then takes control, in that sense.

Mr HUNT: Confusion about a lack of direction—

Mr MacDougall: A lack of direction, yes.

Mr HUNT:—rather than it being arbitrary.

Mr MacDougall: More of a confusion and a lack of direction—'What do we do in this instance?' There may be questions as to: 'I think they identify as x, y, z in which case we will do this,' whereas there may be more clear guidelines as to how to address the individual.

Mx Laing: I think it also speaks to the sensitivity around the community. There have been some historical difficulties between the police and Corrective Services and the LGBT+ community, so I think conducting searches in a way that is sensitive speaks to that component.

Ms BUSH: I am having a look through the PPRA and I cannot find it. Would you be willing to find the wording, or the act, or something that would help us look towards the ideal model for you?

Mx Laing: Of course. Would you like us to submit that?

Ms BUSH: The Chair will give you a direction on that. It is probably in here, I just cannot find it.

Mx Laing: It might not be 'nefarious purpose', it might be a different word.

CHAIR: We are asking for any questions that are taken on notice by the close of business on Thursday, 21 March 2024. Does anyone else have any questions for the presenters this morning before we close?

Mr BOOTHMAN: When it comes to section 340AA in regard to sensitive information, do you have any concerns that demanding information from an individual would breach people's human rights?

Mx Laing: Yes, do you mean in terms of trying to access their identity documents?

Mr BOOTHMAN: Yes.

Mx Laing: Definitely; I think that is a difficulty. I do not think I have the solution. As the committee has alluded to earlier, a lot of this is hit or miss a lot of the time. Perhaps I could address that in the further submission that we are making and consider that in a little bit of detail there.

Mr BOOTHMAN: Thank you.

CHAIR: Is that another question on notice?

Mr BOOTHMAN: Yes.

CHAIR: We have run out of questions for you, but there are two questions on notice: the first was in regard to the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act in relation to the section that dealt with nefarious purposes; and the second was in relation to the human rights element. Again, if we could receive them by close of business on 21 March 2024 addressed to the secretariat. Thank you for your time and thank you for presenting and giving evidence to the committee.

MURPHY, Mr Joseph, Lawyer, Legal Department, Bar Association of Queensland

SCOTT, Mr Angus KC, Barrister, Bar Association of Queensland

CHAIR: I welcome representatives from the Bar Association of Queensland. Good morning and thank you for joining us. I invite you to make an opening statement of up to five minutes, after which committee members will have some questions for you.

Mr Scott: My name is Angus Scott. I am a King's Counsel. I am here to speak on behalf of the Queensland Bar Association, and I thank the committee for the opportunity to do so. I intend to briefly speak to the written submission that the association has made, which really goes to a couple of points that relate to the proposed bill. The first, and perhaps principally, relates to the proposed section 340AA of the Corrective Services Act, the effect of which will be, if enacted, to exempt certain requirements to provide reasons in respect of certain categories of information that are identified in that provision. Whilst the association acknowledges that there is a legitimate object that is sought to be achieved by the proposed bill, the association's submission is that it goes beyond what is necessary to achieve that object and, in fact, will have unintended consequences.

The first is that it creates an automatic exemption from the requirements to provide reasons in the Corrective Services Act in respect of certain information that falls within the categories identified in the section. That differs from the common law with respect to procedural fairness obligations which ordinarily, whilst it acknowledges those types of information might be withheld, it does not necessarily require disclosure to be withheld because of the nature of the public interest considerations that are associated with them. In common law, there is a weighing exercise that is required normally. What the association submits is that it would be more consistent with that approach to instead recognise those categories of information as information that may not be in the public interest to disclose, but then retain a general discretion to weigh the competing public interest considerations rather than an automatic exemption.

The next feature relates to what we say is some inconsistency with the Judicial Review Act. Presently there is a general statutory obligation for decision-makers to give reasons for decisions when requested. This legislation would have the effect of applying to that obligation. Unlike the Judicial Review Act however, where there is a discretionary power for the Attorney-General to exempt certain information from that obligation, again there is an automatic exemption here which would seem inconsistent and unnecessary given what the Judicial Review Act provides.

The other thing is that there is no obligation provided for decision-makers to keep a record of their reasoning process that might be provided to a court in a judicial review, but not to the particular prisoner who is challenging the decision, which is unlike the process that is available in certain Commonwealth legislation for these types of situations. The association submits that such an obligation would be appropriate and achieve a better balance and greater compatibility with the Human Rights Act.

The final point we make relates to the proposed amendments to the Child Protection (Offender Reporting and Offender Prohibition Order) Act which, on its face, is designed to extend certain of those provisions and powers to offenders who are the subject under the Dangerous Prisoners (Sexual Offenders) Act 2003. The point that the association simply makes is that offenders under the dangerous prisoners act are already subject to stringent conditions which often already empower Corrective Services officers to do that which is proposed by this legislation. The association submits that, in those circumstances, the further legislation that is proposed is unnecessary. That is my opening statement.

Mr BOOTHMAN: Thank you for making your submission here today. You actually answered the question I was going to ask, so thank you.

Ms BUSH: Can you step me through section 340AA? I have read the act and the proposed amendments and listened to what you have said, but can you help me, as a layperson, to understand the effect of your concern?

Mr Scott: Certainly. For example, there is presently an obligation imposed on the Parole Board to give reasons for decisions to cancel parole. That is a statutory obligation. The way that works is that the board can cancel parole without first affording procedural fairness, but it is then obliged to provide the reasons for their decision which effectively gives procedural fairness. The prisoner has the opportunity to make submissions and respond and the board then considers those submissions and may potentially change their decision. The effect of this provision will be if any of the categories—

Ms BUSH: If information that is relevant to a refusal of parole endangers another person's life if disclosed then they may opt to not include that, which then does not give them review rights on that particular piece of information.

Mr Scott: That is right. It affects procedural fairness and it affects review rights in the sense that if that person wants a statement of reasons either under this legislation or the Judicial Review Act then there is an automatic exclusion for that information whereas at common law the way it normally works is there is a public interest balancing exercise. For example, the public interest in nondisclosure is weighed against the public interest in disclosure. There are long established principles of law that deal with that. This effectively overrides all of that.

In terms of if someone seeks a statement of reasons under the Judicial Review Act, presently there is already legislation or provisions in the Judicial Review Act where the Attorney-General can grant a certificate over certain information and say that certain information is not in the public interest to disclose and is not included in the statement of reasons under the Judicial Review Act. Importantly, that is a weighing exercise undertaken by the Attorney-General. It is not an automatic blanket exclusion.

Ms BUSH: Yes, it is not an administrative decision-maker coming up with that.

Mr Scott: Yes.

Ms BUSH: What I am reading into this is obviously there is a competing concern that the disclosure of information that might endanger someone's wellbeing or health or threaten national security ought not to become public. How do you weigh that interest up? Are you saying that the current system of the AG writing a certificate grants that ability?

Mr Scott: Yes.

Ms BUSH: So you are saying there is no need for this particular—

Mr Scott: That is right. There is a well-known case in administrative law called Harms v Queensland Parole Board where the Parole Board was making a decision in relation to a prisoner's parole and had regard to prison informant information. The Supreme Court held that it was perfectly permissible in those circumstances for the information to be withheld from the prisoner so as not to reveal the identity of an informant. It was based on a weighing of the public interest. It was not a blanket exemption and the law effectively was able to deal with that without legislation like this. The issue here is that, for example, the obligation to provide reasons under section 205 of the Corrective Services Act does not presently deal with circumstances where there is legitimate confidential concerns and does not enable, for example, the Parole Board to withhold information because of those concerns.

Ms BUSH: You are talking about parole specifically?

Mr Scott: Yes. The association accepts that, for that reason, there does need to be an exclusion but it does not need to be a blanket exclusion. It should be consistent with the common law and the Judicial Review Act, which for the common law there is a weighing exercise and then the weighing exercise under the Judicial Review Act is undertaken by the Attorney-General.

Ms BUSH: On proposed section 340AA, you have given the example of parole. Are there other primary areas that relate to QCS as well? Mostly where we would see it played out would be, I guess, decisions to transfer and decisions on parole—any decision that is a reviewable decision?

Mr Scott: Absolutely, because if you look at 340AA it is any decision.

Ms BUSH: Any reviewable decision or—

Mr Scott: It says a decision-maker need not, in giving reasons for a decision. But that must be in the context of there being an obligation to provide reasons. So in certain kinds of decisions there is an obligation to provide reasons under the Corrective Services Act, but beyond that, for a reviewable decision, that engages the duty under the Judicial Review Act so it would include any reviewable decision.

Ms BUSH: Thank you. I need to think it through a little more. The chair is our lawyer. He might have questions on that too.

CHAIR: We have been talking about this. I think in your opening statement you mentioned something about the judges having the final say in relation to confidential information. I may have misheard you. For example, if the Attorney-General has certified that this is information that should not be made available to the applicant, does the judge have the final say in relation to that information being provided? I am not talking about what the amendments will do; I am trying to understand how it stands at present.

Mr Scott: There are two parts to the answer to that question. In terms of procedural fairness, undoubtedly the judge has the final say in terms of whether or not public interest considerations override procedural fairness. Harms v Queensland Parole Board is the example of that. As to who has the final say when the Attorney provides a certificate in respect of a request for a statement of reasons under the Judicial Review Act, I am not aware of any case that has tested the question of whether or not the Attorney-General's determination is reviewable. Having said that, though, the general thrust of jurisprudence in this country is that that type of determination by the Attorney-General is reviewable and no doubt we will see a case sometime when that is confirmed.

CHAIR: Jonty and the other questioners have touched on this: if this legislation is introduced in this form, what does it basically do?

Mr Scott: What it does is, for example, with a prisoner who has their parole cancelled, if the information that is relied upon includes any of the information in proposed section 340AA then that will be excluded from the reasons for cancellation of parole and no-one will be able to scrutinise that aspect of the board's reasons. That is what it does.

CHAIR: Therefore, it is doing away with the procedural fairness that is being established, as you have stated, by a long line of common law decisions?

Mr Scott: That is right. It is doing away with the ability for the judge to scrutinise that information essentially, either in relation to procedural fairness and also in relation to the reasoning of the decision-maker. Effectively, the reasoning of the board becomes inscrutable and unchallengeable and there may be important information that is withheld that might give rise to a challenge to the decision that is withheld and, therefore, defeats a legitimate challenge.

CHAIR: Basically, the person who is subject to a cancellation of parole really will not be able to have that decision reviewed.

Mr Scott: That is right. Something I touched on but did not develop fully is, beyond the fact that the legislation creates this absolute rule, one thing that would be sensible to include, even if there is some kind of exclusion, is that which has been used for certain kinds of decisions at the Commonwealth level where, even if in those categories of decisions the person affected cannot see the material, the reviewing court is allowed to see it so that at least there is some kind of scrutiny.

I note that footnote 4 on the third page of our submission cites a case of Graham v Minister for Immigration. Actually, that is not the correct case. It is a case called SDCV v Director-General of Security & Anor, 2022, volume 405, Australian Law Reports 209, where that type of legislation is considered by the High Court and found to be valid and also useful for someone who is affected by a decision but, for valid security reasons, should not see the information because it means that there can be independent scrutiny of the decision.

Ms BUSH: I was thinking about that as well. Is there a way of putting a safeguard or something into the proposed section to either restrict or really narrow the focus of when we would use this particular clause? I think you know where I am going. Is there something else that can be added to this clause to sharpen it a bit?

Mr Scott: There are three things. No. 1: instead of it being an automatic exclusion, provide that the exclusion happens when it is in the public interest. Those factors that are listed in proposed section 340AA become factors that are relevant to the public interest but not necessarily conclusive. No. 2: provide that it does not affect the duty to provide reasons in the Judicial Review Act because there is already a safeguard there that can protect this kind of information through the Attorney-General's certificate. No. 3: requiring a decision-maker to keep a confidential record of their reasons when there is a public interest and nondisclosure, which can then be disclosed to a court on a judicial review that would then be able to be viewed by the court but not by the prisoner.

Ms BUSH: Understood.

Mr Scott: Those are the three things. Again, it might seem draconian but the reality is that the law does recognise there are legitimate circumstances in the public interest for persons affected not to see certain information. The law has developed mechanisms to balance that against the need for proper scrutiny. I mentioned the case of SDCV as a case that acknowledges that.

CHAIR: Mark or Jon, do you have any questions?

Mr KRAUSE: Negative.

Mr BOOTHMAN: No.

CHAIR: Steve?

Mr ANDREW: No, not at this stage, Chair.

Ms BUSH: This is a question that I ask a lot of people. I understand Queensland is unique, as all states are, but is there something in another jurisdiction that you could point us to or recommend?

Mr Scott: I think the legislation considered in SDCV would be an example. I think from memory that considered provisions relating to the Australian Administrative Appeals Tribunal. If it would be of assistance, perhaps we could provide some further information in writing.

CHAIR: That would be helpful.

Mr Scott: Okay.

CHAIR: In the drafting of this legislation, do you know whether the Bar Association had the opportunity to talk as a stakeholder to the drafters?

Mr Murphy: There was an earlier opportunity, I believe, in January, Chair.

CHAIR: These proposed amendments were raised with the Bar Association?

Mr Murphy: They were but we are not sure at what time, in terms of consideration, they were. The submission was made later in the month than we had first been requested so there was a bit of a delay and it is unclear to what extent those submissions were considered at that stage.

CHAIR: That brings to a conclusion this part of the hearing. Thank you for your written submission and for coming today. Could we have the information that you said you could provide by close of business on 21 March 2024?

Mr Scott: Certainly. No trouble.

CHAIR: Thank you very much.

THOMPSON, Mr Brett, Chief Executive Officer, Queensland Homicide Victims' Support Group.

CHAIR: Good morning and thank you for joining us. I invite you to make an opening statement of up to five minutes after which committee members will have some questions for you.

Mr Thompson: Thank you, Chair. Good morning, everybody. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today and the opportunity to provide input into the proposed legislation. The Queensland Homicide Victims' Support Group was established 29 years ago in Townsville, North Queensland, by a group of volunteers. It has grown since that point in time, increasing its paid staff through the ability to have funding through Victim Assist Queensland. Since that time, QHVSG has provided support in terms of over 1,200 homicides. Since commencing in 2017, I have dealt with 350 homicides. In terms of support, the organisation has supported thousands of people. I do not have a legal background. My background is in education, so I do learn pretty quickly. I certainly relate to some of the points I just heard.

The knowledge and experience that I have comes from conversations with people who have lost family members or friends as a result of homicide, whether that be manslaughter or murder. Regardless of the legal aspects, someone has killed someone that they love dearly and they are deeply traumatised for the remainder of their life. Many areas of homicide have not been researched. When we talk about 'evidence-based', many of our conversations are certainly valid and reliable in terms of what victims talk about, specifically around their interactions with systems including the QPS, the courts, Queensland Corrective Services, the Parole Board and all things in between. Our support and our knowledge of the journey is strong because we interact with the families from day one post homicide. Even as late as last week I was providing support for families who wish to provide submissions to the Parole Board both in relation to someone applying for parole and someone whose parole may have been suspended pending a decision whether that was going to be cancelled. What I speak to you about is not my own thoughts but the thoughts of the collective. We are talking about hundreds of conversations over a period of eight years.

The submission speaks for itself. I want to acknowledge what I see as the very healthy relationship between QHVSG and the stakeholders with whom we interact. In relation to this bill, that is Corrective Services as a whole but also specifically the QCS Victims Register and the Queensland Parole Board. I have firsthand knowledge of the work of the Queensland Parole Board because I sat on that as a victims' representatives for approximately two years post 2017 when the amendments were made. I can give people confidence that the interactions and the willingness for conversations between the Corrective Services Victims Register and the Parole Board are healthy, respectful and robust. Even though we may not necessarily agree on certain things, we keep the doors open so we can continue to work on things. From our perspective, it is certainly in the best interests of the people impacted but with a balanced view to understand that we cannot have it all of our own way.

If you speak to 90 per cent of the victims—and I think some of the comments made by the previous speaker highlight this fact—you find that the law is not designed to be very supportive of victims. It is a technical discussion where human emotions are left on the side, particularly in relation to what we are talking about. There is clear uncertainty, as I have just learnt, when a very highly regarded and highly qualified man talks about the ability for the Attorney-General to sign a certificate to say, 'That is going to be your assurance.' Well, it is not. He has just said that because it has not been tested. Things stay the same. The Attorney-General signs off and says, 'Okay. The fear for the victim is pretty simple. They are scared because that person killed someone.'

CHAIR: Do you want to stop for a minute?

Mr Thompson: I am good, sorry. Instead, people do not put in a submission. I am sorry—

CHAIR: It is alright. Just take your time. When you are ready for us to ask questions, just give us the nod.

Mr Thompson: I will. I just wanted to point to—

CHAIR: It is important.

Mr Thompson: It forms the entire basis of the 'why' from our perspective. Thank you for your patience. If it is the case that the current mechanism is in fact untested, that is not much assurance for victims to say, 'Well, put the submission in, say how it is. You do not need to fear doing that, because the person is never going to see it.' That is the reality of it. You write down those things you really want to say, and you do not very often get that opportunity in the process. You are largely on the sideline as a spectator. This is an opportunity. It is very tough for members to do it. I help them to write those submissions because I understand what is going to give traction. That is a process for them because

they have to tell the story again, and that is tough enough. If you say to them, 'By the way, the prisoner may see this because there might be a JR', then that is a different conversation. Many people do not want that to happen. They simply will not do it. Then the Parole Board does not have the information. If the status quo is, as we have just seen, it is untested and therefore it could get through, then you have to tell people that. You cannot say, 'It should be okay. It hasn't been tested. It should be right. Just leave it like it is.' That is not good enough at all.

In terms of changing it and saying, 'There is currently a process in that a court could say, "You can't disclose that information"', just give it to the Attorney-General. If it is good enough for the current process that you can go to the Attorney-General to sign a certificate, put it the other way so that if it is challenged the Attorney-General can look at the information and say, 'That is simply not going out.' You do not have the right to do that. If you leave it in that place of uncertainty, you know that there is going to be a very talented lawyer trying to ram a hole through that system. That is what happens. They take pride in doing that, and that is exactly what will happen. How do we get through that gap? I will be the person to do it.

We 100 per cent support protecting information. If there are implications with common law then guess what, common law has always been shown to need to change so change it. I am sorry if the public interest outweighs the need of the individual's safety. It does not and it cannot. That is probably all I need to say at the moment.

Mr BOOTHMAN: Brett, thank you for everything you do and all the work you put in in looking after victims' families and ensuring they are well and truly listened to and heard. Thank you for that. I notice you have highlighted in your submission some concerns regarding the deportation of individuals. I was reading through the bill last week and went over the section about giving eligible persons other information. I understand you are concerned that, once a person needs to be deported, that information ceases. Can you elaborate on examples that you have personally seen or have heard about?

Mr Thompson: Yes, absolutely. Again, my knowledge comes from conversations and advocating to try to get this information released. I have had direct contact with the offices of federal ministers of both political parties in successive governments, and the answer was still the same. Person A: a prisoner, who in this case has killed someone and has been sentenced for that action, whether that is manslaughter or murder, gets to the end of their custodial sentence or has been granted parole. At that point in time they are going to be released from a Queensland jail. The AFP or ABF—whoever it may be—is going to say, 'Right, we are going to collect that person.' At that point in time the person fails the test and they say, 'You are not sticking around because you are not a citizen of Australia. We are going to deport you to the place of your citizenship.' Families are very happy with that and I think the community should be happy with that because that certainly creates a sense of safety—not necessarily for where they are going to, but I guess sometimes you have to be selfish. That person is collected from the gates or inside—wherever that process is done—and then there is a cone of silence. Everything locks down.

In terms of my experience with families, the first example involved my getting a phone call. The person had seen the killer of their ex-partner on the tarmac at Brisbane Airport being put onto a plane to be taken back to the UK. A couple of things happened. One was that she was not registered with the VR. That has been covered by the bill in this amendment. We have had some success before that. She was not notified, but no-one in the family was, that that person was being deported or when or whatever. That was the first news. If you talk to any person who has experienced homicide, surprises are not very good. Certainly, that was a big surprise.

What we said was, 'Can we just have an understanding that, if the person is in fact going to be deported, in that little period of time between being picked up from the gates of the correctional facility to deportation are they in fact in the community? Are they walking around? Are they on some sort of bail? What happens there? They're detained, but let us know.' If they are detained, you do not need to get out of your car and be concerned that that person is going to be following you or even in the community. The person may have no intention of hurting them. They might even know them. However, that is not the point. The point is that there is this massive uncertainty if someone is in the community and they are out. We can send a message to the people impacted saying, 'This person is not in the community. They've been detained and don't worry because in the next month they're going to be escorted on to a plane and they're going to leave the country and they're not going to come back.' So then I can go down to my local shopping centre or I can go on holiday not being concerned that I am going to bump into that person accidentally. There is a significant difference. Think of your biggest fear and then put that just outside the door and wonder if it is going to be there. It is not trauma informed in any way, shape or form.

We cannot get information—we simply cannot—and you can see the letter that I copied into that from previous minister Hawke where it says that under exceptional circumstances information can be provided. What is more exceptional than someone killing someone? What is it? The alien arrives and starts sucking stuff out of your brain with a needle? That is also exceptional. Let us talk about that but, failing that, they have killed someone. The feedback that I got from people who make the decisions was, 'It's in the public interest to have cameras on the tarmac to show that.' I do not disagree with that, but tell the family first because the most important part of this is the person who is about to be impacted by that, and particularly if you do not tell them.

I do understand, because I have been knocking on this door for a few years now, that it is a federal level issue. If something can be done in terms of communication and legislation at a state level where corrective services are able to provide information, then let us do that. I am advocating this at different levels, but at this point in time it is at lockdown. That is one example of this happening, but when I spoke with Victorian cohealth they explained to me that there are millions of dollars being spent on people living in safety refuges because they simply do not know if some of these individuals are out and about. People do not want to leave that safety because they simply do not know if that perpetrator who is to be deported is still around.

Mr BOOTHMAN: If you think that we can put a national heavy vehicle regulation across the eastern states, surely we can do something like this also—

Mr Thompson: Yes.

Mr BOOTHMAN:—working together as different jurisdictions and making sure that there is some type of reporting.

Mr Thompson: Yes, absolutely, and where this will come unstuck is of course there is always someone arguing against that. Our point is it is not unreasonable to just tell people. We are not asking what flight they are on. We do not want to set people up to be able to put someone else in danger. That would be hypocritical.

Mr BOOTHMAN: But just not knowing, that is the issue?

Mr Thompson: The word 'uncertainty' you can put into any of these situations. If the process or the legislation increases uncertainty, it is worse. If it decreases uncertainty, it is generally better. That is a pretty good rule of thumb, and that happens from the moment of the homicide investigation. Say nothing to the families and it makes it worse. If you give them what information you can, it does make it better, even if the news is not great.

Mr ANDREW: I want to know what else you think this bill lacks. Is there something else where we need to go a little bit deeper or dig a bit deeper where we could make this bill better?

Mr Thompson: I think I put in some recommendations. One thing—and it does again relate to that word 'uncertainty'—is that when people have the courage to write down the situation and to write down reasons they do not want that person around, and it might even be that they just do not want them living near them, that is a really big thing for someone to spend their time on. It is really difficult for people. This is nothing that I have not discussed with Michael Byrne on the Parole Board, but providing some really clear feedback about whether the conditions were supported—specific ones—helps if someone says, 'Can we please put a GPS on them?' or 'Can we please make sure they can't go here or they can't go there?' It has been a couple of years since I have been on the Parole Board, so maybe there have been some adjustments there, but letting people know the case if they ask for certain specific conditions above the standard conditions so they have something where they can say, 'Okay, I know that this person's technically not going to be anywhere near me here.'

This is where you are expanding the legislation for the VR which is great because, for example, if I am living in a house and I was friends with the person next door and they were killed and in fact two doors up was where the murderer lived, I do not want them coming back there. That is not an ideal situation, so I want to be able to say, 'Please don't put that person back there. I don't want them to read that because that will make them upset and I've seen what happens when they're upset, so let me know if you support that because I don't just want to see them rock up one day, because guess what? I'm moving out.' Some really clear understanding of, 'Have you supported what I've said?' would be very useful for victims, and these are the consistent messages that I am hearing.

Ms BUSH: Thanks, Brett, for coming in and advocating, as you always do, on behalf of all of the members. We all appreciate you being here. I need to unpack it a little bit with you, if that is okay. My read—and my colleagues will help me—of the Corrective Services Act as it stands is that decision-makers when either approving or denying parole are required to give all the reasons for that decision. What proposed section 340AA is suggesting is there might be some examples where certain

information should not be given and I think what the Bar Association was saying is that it would prefer to have that transparency and that information handed over, so that was the point it was making in my interpretation. What I hear you saying might be something different which is victims may not want their submissions being made available to the offender on request which is not something that is captured in 340AA, so you are asking for something additional. Help me understand. There are some victims who want to make a submission to the Parole Board and they are happy for that material to be made available or might want that to be made available to an offender. There are some victims who might say, 'I'm actually still really anxious and scared and I don't want them to know that I've made a submission.' Is your request that you would like to see an additional consideration in this bill that gives victims more of an opt-out of having their information handed over?

Mr Thompson: Yes. For a while the conversation has been—and Michael and I have spoken about it—that at the moment there is an avenue for them to see it if I write down something and I am angry and I am putting that in words. That is not necessarily going to sway the Parole Board decision, but it is cathartic for me.

Ms BUSH: Correct, yes.

Mr Thompson: So I do not want to make that person angrier because, as I have said, we have seen what happens when they do not balance their emotions very well, so why would I want them to see that? I do not if there is not a mechanism in place. As he said, that has not been tested. It has been shown that it could be shown because it went to the JR, I think it was last year or the year before, and it was shown that there is a concern there, hence this. If there is not something in place that is ironclad, then that is what we say to victims: 'There's no guarantee that what you write here isn't going to be read by that perpetrator.'

Ms BUSH: If they seek a JR review of it?

Mr Thompson: Absolutely, yes, so currently that is right. When the Parole Board provides their reasons for the decision, there will be a number of reasons. Whether it is that they are getting out or not, they write that very clearly. However, there is the opportunity for them to say that it is not in the public interest to disclose, which is like the victim said something. So, no, the victim does not want them to read that necessarily because that is frightening and so, no, they do not want that disclosed at all. If there is not a mechanism, then the Parole Board do not get the full picture. There may be information that is not provided that they can make a valid and reliable decision over based upon evidence. It might be new information that they were not aware of previously.

Ms BUSH: Because the Parole Board of course receives a lot of information. They can read that information, but they do not have to particularise that in their notice of decision. They can say, 'I've given consideration to the victim's statement.'

Mr Thompson: They can just say that it is not in the public interest and it can be included in that generic umbrella, not even to mention the victim. This is what I saw, and that is a safety net for the victim so they are not afraid to speak.

Ms BUSH: It sounds like you are also asking—and I do not know if you put this as a recommendation—for some kind of further information to be given to victims after a parole decision, because you are right: they will be given some information but they will not be given particulars of where they have been paroled to or some of the conditions of their parole. You are asking that victims have greater access to that where it is relevant to their safety?

Mr Thompson: Absolutely, psychological safety, and this is something else that I talk about often. When we talk about community safety, community safety is not only a physical safety; it is a psychological safety. If we have some confidence that we know what the conditions are, then okay. We know that if someone is that motivated to break conditions, then they will do that. However, if the victim wants to put something in writing and they are brave enough to do so, then there needs to be a mechanism where that information cannot be seen by that prisoner. This may be a family member. It may be a work colleague. It could be someone they have never met before. It is every situation you can imagine in terms of the relationship with the offender, but the situation is the same. If the victim cannot be confident that the information is not going to be shared, then you decrease the likelihood of that person submitting something being up-front, honest, robust, and truthful because they are scared. That is the experience and they are the conversations I have had with scores of people over the years when we are sitting down to help them write these documents—the submissions—to the Parole Board. They are called victim submissions.

Ms BUSH: You are obviously supportive of the proposed clause to ensure that a victim or victim's rep is included on the Parole Board?

Mr Thompson: Absolutely, yes. I think having the insight of someone with firsthand experience is incredibly important. I also think that there needs to be a great deal of caution made on making sure that the people who are involved with that process are not going to be harmed by it, because the reading is tough. You are reading content where the risk of vicarious trauma is very real for people who have not experienced personal violence and it is going to increase for those who have. They will have mechanisms in place, but it does not override the need to have people with firsthand experience there because you do not learn that from a university degree.

Ms BUSH: Your submission also talks about an opt-out mechanism for the Victims Register. Can you talk a little bit about your reasons for that?

Mr Thompson: Yes, absolutely. At the moment it is a cumbersome process. Sadly, there have been for many years people impacted by crime. You can apply for the Victims Register to get updates around various things. When I first started in 2017 it was only that one person could be involved with that. That was problematic because some people do not talk within the families and did not find any information out. We then advocated to become a backup agency to get the provided information so we could then contact families. We still had to say, 'Make sure you've done your VR form.' After you have been through a trial, what is another piece of paper?

Let's make it easy. It should be opt out. As an organisation, we can help with that and say, 'You are going to receive this information. Are you happy with that?' We can check in again in six weeks or in six months: 'If you do not want to have the information, no worries. Let's take you off that system.' If you say, 'Yes, I do absolutely,' then, 'Let's keep you on the system.' The risk of not doing that is that the paperwork may not get done and then people will not get told. They will see it in the paper or hear about it second hand, and that is not good. Yes, opt out.

Mr KRAUSE: Brett, thanks for your submission here this morning. It has been very informative. I can see how much effort and how much of yourself you put into it.

Mr Thompson: Thank you. I appreciate that. I apologise for coming undone at the seams.

CHAIR: There is no need to apologise.

Mr HUNT: There is no need to apologise when in the same submission you talk about the dangers of vicarious trauma.

Mr Thompson: That is exactly right.

Mr HUNT: I hate to tell you that, Brett.

Mr Thompson: No. I am really aware of it. Everyone who works with us need to have things in place to make sure they are okay—and you have to, too, on this committee. Sometimes something hits you and you do not even know what it was. I thank you for your patience and time.

I think there are some really positive changes with what has been put forward. I have grave concerns around the conversation that I heard previously around things not being tested but let's go with that. That is not good enough in terms of confidence from victims. Hopefully we will come up with something where people can be confident to put a submission in and feel safe to do so. Then you will get more submissions. Otherwise it is not going to happen.

CHAIR: There were no questions taken on notice. That concludes this part of the hearing. Thank you, Brett, for your time and for your written submission.

LYNCH, Ms Angela, Executive Officer, Queensland Sexual Assault Network (via teleconference)

CHAIR: I now welcome Angela Lynch, Executive Officer, Queensland Sexual Assault Network, who joins us via teleconference. I invite you to make an opening statement of up to five minutes, after which committee members will have some questions for you.

Ms Lynch: QSAN is the peak body for sexual violence prevention and support organisations in Queensland. We represent 23 members including specialist services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait women, culturally and linguistically diverse women, people with intellectual disability, young women, men and children. Our membership is located throughout Queensland including rural and regional Queensland. We are funded to provide specialist sexual assault counselling, support and prevention in Queensland.

All in all we welcome many of the changes in the legislation, specifically the easier registration process in relation to the Victims Register and also other changes such as clarification that an entity can represent a victim-survivor in the process of registration and can be nominated to receive correspondence and also increasing the diversity of the board and the appointment of someone to represent a victim perspective to the board. However, we do advocate that improved communication is required to victim-survivors about accessing the registration process for the Victims Register. Many are unaware of the process and therefore fail to get this information.

We do believe that there is some confusion in the legislation around victims being advised about Parole Board hearings. We would advocate for clarification about their right to make a submission to be made very clear in the legislation, if that is what the government is seeking with this legislation. There seems to be some sort of internal inconsistency. The legislation needs to make it clear that a victim does have a right to know about an upcoming parole application before a decision is made; that victim-survivors have a right to provide a submission to the board and the board will be required to consider in submission before making its decision; that eligible persons can make submissions other than just in writing—some may want to make submissions via alternative means; and that eligible persons should be provided information about release dates and release conditions.

There should be a reasonable time to provide this information to the board, if that is what a victim chooses. At the moment it seems to be 21 days. We would advocate a longer period of time of around six to eight weeks. It could take quite a degree of emotion and time to get the information together, to get their thoughts together and to get in to see a counsellor. Sometimes victim-survivors want to do that with a support person. If a victim-survivor does not want to make a submission and they were in some sort of relationship with the prisoner, it also provides time to ready themselves emotionally for the release and to undertake safety planning if that is required—for example, domestic violence protection orders and the like. That is the submission. I am happy to take questions.

Mr KRAUSE: I want to ask you about your recommendation in relation to proposed section 323A, which relates to a parent or guardian of a child or a person with an impaired capacity perhaps being included as an eligible person. I note that there is a recommendation that once a child turns 18 they should receive communication directly. That is in your submission. Could you expand a little on your submission in relation to that?

Ms Lynch: At 18 years old you are recognised under law as an adult in Queensland and, more broadly, in Australia. This is to ensure that communication, if that is what they want—or at least an option is given to them that they can get that information—is directed to them so you do not have anyone vetting information and they are available to make decisions as an adult. That is what is behind it.

Mr KRAUSE: If a parent or guardian has previously been included, do you think that they should still be included after the person turns 18?

Ms Lynch: If they meet the definition of eligible person under the legislation, it may be that they still get information about the release date. I presume that in many ways they probably would meet that definition. It is really about the recognition of the legal status of the child and their ability to make decisions for themselves.

Mr KRAUSE: In relation to the Parole Board changes, what benefits do you see for the board for the addition of a professional providing a victim perspective? I think you might have touched on this already. Could you elaborate for the committee on what you see as those benefits?

Ms Lynch: We hear time and time again—the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce heard this and a victims of crime inquiry report was released in Victoria today—about victims not feeling part of the criminal justice system process. They are often forgotten. Their perspectives are often not taken into account.

It provides that victim perspective on the Parole Board so that the board can take it into account. There is a range of information that the Parole Board takes into account. This is one aspect. Without having somebody on the board with that perspective, it can tend to be lost as we know from working with victims every day. They do not really feel part of the process. We know from a huge number of reports that that is something that is felt by victim-survivors across Queensland, across Australia and, quite frankly, across the world. Having the victim-survivor representative on the board ensures that that perspective is placed before the Parole Board to take into account.

CHAIR: Steve?

Mr ANDREW: That covers me, Chair. That is where I was going with my questions.

Ms BUSH: Thanks, Angela, for a fantastic submission and for representing the views of your membership. I concur with a lot of what you have recommended here, so a lot of my questions will be around exploring that a little bit further. In terms of the issue around when a child turns 18, a practical example would be where a child has been directly offended against—it could be a sexual assault—the parent is deemed the eligible victim under the Victims Register so they get the updates. What you are saying is that when that child turns 18 they should have the option of getting on to the Victims Register. Is that the point?

Ms Lynch: Yes, that is correct so that communication goes directly to them.

Ms BUSH: You have recommended that victims are given a heads-up about parole hearings prior to the hearing. I thought under the act that the QCS is required to notify victims prior and to give them 21 days. Are you saying that that is not happening or that is only happening if someone is registered? Can you expand on that comment?

Ms Lynch: It seems that under the act section 188(3)(c) does provide that victims, or eligible persons, are given 21 days after notice of the upcoming hearing, but when you look at the section that is contained in this bill, under section 325(2)(g) it provides that eligible persons may be provided only information about the results of the prisoner's parole application and, under 325(2)(h), other information relevant to the parole. It is just not specific and consistent with other terms of the existing act. Obviously we know of the case of Jack Beasley's parents that was in the *Courier-Mail* and in the media around Christmas time where they were, it would seem, not given the appropriate notice of the parole hearing or the ability to provide a submission. I am just wondering whether there is just a little bit of internal confusion in the act around giving of notice around a parole application before obviously the decision is made. I just think that other provision needs to be clarified, section 325(2)(g) and (h), to ensure that it is consistent with section 188(3)(c) which says that notice must be given to eligible persons before the Parole Board hearing. I have no idea, but it just does not seem to be consistent.

Ms BUSH: That makes sense. Thank you for that clarification. That is the first step. The second step is you are recommending a period of six to eight weeks not the existing 21 days.

Ms Lynch: I just think that it is the reality. Many victim-survivors of sexual violence and rape, some of them already do use a sexual assault service to receive the notifications and/or they may receive the notifications themselves. Sometimes they may well not be linked in anymore—they may not be going to counselling anymore around the sexual assault—so then they have to reinitiate contact with the sexual violence service because they may need assistance. They may want to participate in the process and put something before the Parole Board and if they do it just takes time to make an appointment and get in and see a counsellor. It is going to be possibly more than three weeks, I suppose. It just allows that time for processing and getting themselves ready. Even if they do not want to put in an application, it is just that kind of getting themselves ready psychologically for the release. Obviously if you have been in an intimate partner relationship or a family relationship and it is part of a domestic violence relationship, they may well want to seek legal advice, get a protection order. I just know of many instances when I was at the Women's Legal Service of women having to scurry at the last moment. They are told a release date in relation to a parole, that he is being a released, and they had to really scramble to get a protection order in place immediately for their own protection. It just allows that time for those engagements with professionals to occur and to get advice if that is what they want. It just allows a bit more time than three weeks. The reality is many services across Queensland are under a lot of pressure, they have waitlists, so it is difficult to get someone in within three weeks. It is just the reality of where things are at at the moment in the service system.

Ms BUSH: That goes to the heart of my question which is where does that figure come from, but it is sounding like, from what you are saying, that the lived experience of service providers is that that is the practical time frame it often takes survivors to turn that around.

Ms Lynch: Yes.

Ms BUSH: Brett Thompson was in here from the homicide support group and he referred to having victims automatically included in to getting notifications from the victims register with an opt out service. So rather than nominating to get notifications you would automatically be included and opt out. I am after your views on that from a women's and sexual assault perspective.

Ms Lynch: I heard Brett talk to that. I think there is some attraction to that proposal. I just think I might want to go back to the network. I can take that on notice and just check in with them what they feel about that and come back to you. Obviously the submission recognises many of the things that Brett spoke to about the cumbersome nature of the current process. People sometimes are not aware. I will come back, if that is okay, about that.

Ms BUSH: I do not think it is part of the bill so I probably would not want you consulting on something that is not included in the scope unless you thought it was really relevant and useful. I was after your gut response to it. It might give you extra work.

Ms Lynch: There is some attraction to it. I would just have to check if that was a solid proposal.

Ms BUSH: Understood.

CHAIR: Thank you, Angela, for your written submission and your attendance. I am not really sure whether you are taking a question on notice. I understand you are not.

Ms Lynch: I do not think I am, no.

CHAIR: You are off the hook. That concludes this hearing. Thank you to everyone who has participated today and all those who have helped organise this hearing. Once again, thank you to the helpful secretariat, also thank you to our wonderful Hansard reporters. A transcript of these proceedings will be available on the committee's webpage in due course. Thank you committee members. I declare the public hearing closed.

The committee adjourned at 11.36 am.