

8 March 2019

Committee Secretary
Economics and Governance Committee
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane Qld 4000

Email: egc@parliament.qld.gov.au

8th March 2019

Dear Secretary,

RE: **Police Service Administration (Discipline Reform) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019**

The Women's Legal Service Queensland (WLSQ) is a specialist community legal centre, established in 1984, that provides free legal and social work services and support to Queensland women. We assist women in the areas of family law, domestic violence, child protection and sexual violence. WLSQ provides State-wide assistance through our legal Domestic Violence Helpline, and have a designated Rural, Regional and Remote telephone line to increase women's access to our service in non-metropolitan regions.

We undertake outreach work at the Brisbane Women's Correctional Centre and at Family Relationship Centres in Brisbane. We also conduct duty lawyer services at three Courts: Holland Park, Caboolture and Ipswich. Our specialist Domestic Violence Units in Brisbane, Southport and Caboolture provide intensive case work and court representation for our most vulnerable clients. As part of the Caboolture office we employ a First Nation's cultural liaison support worker to assist First Nation's women's access to WLSQ. We conduct Health Justice Partnerships with a domestic violence solicitor visiting weekly the Gold Coast, Logan, Redlands, RBH hospital and being on call to the PA and QE2 hospitals and the Caboolture and Redcliffe hospitals. We also in partnership with Legal Aid Queensland run the Counselling Notes Protect Service for sexual violence complainants and provide legal information and assistance to clients in this service. We thank the Parliamentary Committee for the opportunity to provide this submission.

In our work predominantly with sexual violence survivors (although our domestic violence survivors as well) their experience with the Queensland Police Service (QPS) is unfortunately not positive. Of course these may be the clients that report to us but we have concerns that our client's experience may be evidence of broader systemic issues. The survivor/ clients regularly report being treated disrespectfully by QPS, not being told about where the Police investigation is up to, they often feel dismissed and forgotten after they have made their complaint, they state that they are left in a position of having the "chase up" the QPS for information about the criminal matter, about bail conditions that might actually protect them.



Women's Legal Service Qld www.wlsq.org.au

Address: 8 Ponsonby Street (cnr Ipswich Road) Annerley Qld 4103 | PO Box 119, Annerley Qld 4103

Administration Line: (07) 3392 0644 | Fax: (07) 3392 0658

Helpline: 1800 WLS WLS (1800 957 957) | Email: admin@wlsq.org.au

WLSQ sought to provide rights to these victims through the recent Human Rights Act in Queensland but our advocacy to include victims of criminal offences (including children) was unfortunately rejected. This means the Human Rights Commission does not have oversight for human rights breaches by government agencies (including QPS) for victims of serious crime such as domestic and sexual violence under a specifically identified provision. This is a great shame and lost opportunity for Queensland women who are victims of violent crime in the context of sexual or domestic violence.

In relation to this bill we believe that victims of serious crime should be protected as much as possible or at least have grounds for making a complaint for unprofessional and/or disrespectful behaviour.

In 7.4 Grounds for Disciplinary Action we therefore support a cross reference to the current Queensland Charter on Victim's Rights and that a breach be a ground for disciplinary action.

WLSQ also supports in particular Section 7.4.(1) (c) *The subject officer may be disciplined under this part if the subject officer has – performed the subject officer's duties carelessly, incompetently or inefficiently.*

If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully,



Angela Lynch
CEO

