



**Southern Downs**  
REGIONAL COUNCIL

24 February 2017

Post Acting Research Director  
Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee  
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Dear Chairperson Pegg

**Re: Bail (Domestic Violence) and Another Act Amendment Bill 2017**

Thank you for the opportunity for seeking feedback from Southern Downs Regional Council in relation to this important matter.

The issue of domestic violence has a direct impact on the health and wellbeing of communities. This impact is especially apparent in rural and regional areas where social and community networks cause a high level stress for individuals living in relatively small communities where interaction between parties cannot always be avoided, which is different to larger urban environments.

The impact of domestic violence places demands on all aspects of community services, whether it is those services are delivered by local government or other agencies on behalf of State or Federal Government. Whilst the issue of domestic violence has been highlighted in the media, Southern Downs Regional Council remains concerned that additional funding to assist those impacted has not been forthcoming from State or Federal Government in recent times.

Additionally, it is noted that domestic violence impacts upon local workplaces, specifically in rural and regional areas where it is not uncommon for husbands and wives to be employed in the same workplace, or even extended families. This creates a greater deal of complexity in dealing with issues and supporting a safe and secure environment.

Southern Downs Regional Council recognized that issues associated with domestic violence need to be addressed. In the Southern Downs 2030 Community Plan, in the section titled *The Southern Downs Sense of Community* under Goals and Directions, the following is noted;

1.9 Address social issues of equity and access, bullying, domestic violence, social isolation, mental health, disability and homelessness through education programs, policy debate and targeted services.

Southern Downs Regional Council supports initiatives that would provide a greater level of safety and security to those people who lives are directly impacted by the actions of others in a domestic violence situation. Council intends to undertake these actions in both the community and the Council workplace, as demonstrated by the intent in the Community Plan.

It is noted that the objectives of the Bill are to:

- Reverse the presumption of bail for an alleged offender charged with a relevant domestic violence offence
- Establish a special bail condition for a tracking device (or GPS tracker) to be imposed by a court or a police officer authorized to grant bail, against a person charged with a relevant domestic violence offence
- Introduce a new system to alert the victim of a relevant domestic violence offence when the defendant applies for bail, is released on bail or receives a variation to a bail condition
- Introduce a mandatory reporting provision to the parole system for when a prisoner applies for and receives parole so that a victim of domestic violence can receive information about a prisoner, even if the offence that the prisoner was convicted for is not a domestic violence offence, and Introduce a provision to allow for an urgent review of a bail decision in a higher court. The original bail decision would be stayed for up to three business days ensuring that the alleged offender would not be released during that period.

Southern Downs Regional Council supports each of these objectives and endorses the approach being undertaken if it supports those impacted by domestic violence.

Southern Downs Regional Council will continue to support where possible the local groups such as Warwick Save Haven which partners with the Domestic Violence Action Centre (DVAC) to provide specialist support services, and face-to-face counselling in the Southern Downs. Warwick Safe Haven is the sole funding source to DVAC for these services, without which, these services would not be delivered in the region.

Additionally, Southern Downs Regional Council will continue to support White Ribbon Day and other events that highlight the issue of domestic violence in the community.

Yours faithfully

David Keenan  
Chief Executive Officer