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To the Committee Secretary  
 Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee  
 Parliament House  
 George Street  
 Brisbane QLD 4000

### Regarding: The Criminal Code (Choking in Domestic Settings) and Another Act Amendment Bill 2020

The Queensland Domestic Violence Service Network (QDVSN) is a network of 19 Queensland regional domestic violence services as well as the Centre for Domestic and Family Violence Research, the Immigrant Women's Support Service and DVConnect.

As the network of specialist domestic and family violence services across the state, QDVSN works collaboratively and strategically to:

- Advance understanding of, and to eliminate gender, structural, political, economic, legal and cultural inequalities and inequities, which result in gender based violence in all its forms;
- Provide peer support, information sharing and debriefing within our membership;
- Be a change agent by providing education, a reference point and a collective voice to Government, non-government and member services on State and National issues relating to domestic and family violence.

QDVSN is in support of the above, as summarised:

**1. Strengthening of the offence of choking, suffocation or strangulation in a domestic setting (non-lethal strangulation offence) as provided for in section 315A of the Criminal Code by addressing the ambiguity of the words 'choke', 'suffocate' and 'strangle'.**

Comments: Whilst specialist services have been reporting that we have seen an increase in disclosures of non-lethal strangulation, we acknowledge that even these disclosures may not accurately reflect the reality of women's experiences, and that many individuals seeking our support might not associate what they went through as being "strangled". Addressing the ambiguity of the language used in the legislation is supported to assist understanding and clarity of this offence for survivors, victims and perpetrators of strangulation.

**2. An increase in the maximum penalty for the non-lethal strangulation offence to adequately punish offenders and deter other persons from committing the same offence.**

Comments: QDVSN are in support of an increase in the maximum penalty for offenders, and believe increased accountability for individuals who choose to use violence is necessary as a means to deter violence and prioritise the safety of individuals experiencing domestic and family violence. Incorporating stronger penalties into the legislation also signifies the value that we as a community place on the lives of women across Queensland, women predominantly being the victims of non-lethal strangulation in intimate partner settings.

**3. Recognition of the seriousness of the non-lethal strangulation offence by classifying the offence as a serious violent offence.**

As a sector we have increasingly been made aware of the potential long term physical health consequences and psychological trauma that many women experience following an incident that involves non-lethal strangulation. As research into this area has advanced, and training has rolled out across a variety of sectors across Queensland, we also now know that there is an increased likelihood of

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homicide in cases where women have been subjected to strangulation by their partners, and as such, we have a responsibility to use our knowledge of the gravity of this offence, and fully endorse recognition of the seriousness of this offence by classifying it as a Serious Violent Offense.

We support the reform, and are happy to be contacted for further comment.

Regards,

Stacey Ross

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&

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On behalf of the Queensland Domestic Violence Services Network (QDVSN)