

a global voice
for women

Soroptimist  International

Federation of the South West Pacific

Brisbane Inc

ABN: 80 232 074 742
2016

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Dear Colleague

***Submission on Court and Civil Legislation Amendment Bill
2017***

Background

- On 23 March 2017, the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for Training and Skills, the Hon Yvette D'Ath MP, introduced the ***Court and Civil Legislation Amendment Bill 2017 (the Bill)*** in the Queensland Parliament.
- Soroptimist International Brisbane Inc provides a submission in relation to the Bill.

Recommendations

- The Bill includes a number of amendments. Of most concern to women and our members are the amendments that:
 - Facilitate the making of domestic violence notations on a person's criminal history or a formal record of conviction; and
 - Those that clarify the functions and powers of the Public Guardian in relation to a relevant child under the Child Protection Act 1999 (Child Protection Act)
- We otherwise recommend and support the Bill as it would improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the courts and agencies and clarify, strengthen and update the relevant legislation within the justice portfolio.
 - Soroptimists International Brisbane strongly supports the objective to facilitate the making of specific domestic violence notations on a person's criminal history or a formal record of conviction when circumstances of domestic violence are present. Recording these conviction will support the recently strengthened

Domestic Violence legislation, and ongoing legislative amendment to help eradicate domestic and family violence.

About Soroptimist International and this submission

5. Soroptimist International works to ensure that the voices of women and girls around the world are included in international decision-making and the policy setting, as well as within Australia. Soroptimist International is active in all of the major United Nations centres around the world maintaining a network of permanent representatives. The organisation holds a General Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council and maintains official relations with several agencies and technical bodies.
6. As an organisation, Soroptimist International promotes the improvement of the lives of women and girls with consistent human rights and empowerment and enabling opportunities.
7. The Brisbane Club of Soroptimist International is providing this submission as an advocacy body for women. Our membership base consists of business and professional women who work to support other women impacted by the consequences of Domestic Violence.
8. We also support the Queensland Government Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Strategy 2015-2025 which articulates a Key Outcome with a primary long-term outcome '*all Queenslanders feel safe in their own homes and children can grow and develop in safe and secure environments.*'¹, and we regularly provide submissions on domestic and family violence matters as we are committed to the eradication of domestic and family violence.

Impact of domestic and family violence issues on women

9. Research from the 2012 ABS Personal Safety Survey and Australian Institute of Criminology shows that both men and women in Australia experience substantial levels of violence. Australian women are most likely to experience physical and sexual violence in their home, at the hands of a male current or ex-partner.²
10. The 2012 Australian National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS) to *Reduce Violence against Women & their Children* data showed 73% had experienced more than one incident of violence and 61% had children in their care when the violence

¹ <https://www.communities.qld.gov.au/gateway/end-domestic-family-violence/dfvp-strategy>, page 15, website accessed 27 February 2017
www.abs.au/ausstats/abs@nsw/mf/4906.0

- occurred, including 48% who stated the children had witnessed and heard the violence.³
11. In 2013-14, there were 66,016 occurrences of domestic and family violence reported to Queensland Police. Seventeen (17) homicides relating to domestic and family violence occurred in Queensland in 2012-13. On average, across Australia, one woman is killed by her partner every week. One in three Australian women have experienced physical violence since the age of 15, and almost one in five have experienced sexual violence.⁴
 12. Women with children are three times more likely to be subjected to domestic violence than childless women and Domestic and Family Violence has broad implications for the welfare and development of children. Witnessing Domestic and Family Violence can cause children to experience trauma and have negative consequences for their physical, emotional, and social wellbeing. Children living in families where Domestic and Family Violence is occurring also face an increased risk of entering or re-entering the child protection system. The work of Dr Fraser Mustard, and Dr Bruce Perry⁵, shows that the experiences of very young children determine their brain development, potentially affecting their ability to speak and learn, their temperament, behaviour and health, as well as their later vulnerability to certain diseases, including addiction and mental health.
 13. Mothers experiencing Domestic and Family Violence can have difficulty empathising with their child and have difficulty establishing a safe environment for the child.
 14. It is for the above reasons that we support the amendments in the proposed Bill to facilitate the recording of Domestic Violence offence convictions.

Indigenous women

15. As an advocacy body for women, our members regularly advocate for issues affecting Indigenous women.
16. There are a variety of disadvantages experienced by Indigenous persons and women in Australia that arise from a complex set of historical, economic and social issues.
17. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are reported to be 45 times more likely to experience Domestic and Family Violence than non-Indigenous women. There is also a higher incidence of Domestic and Family Violence involving extended family members in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.⁶
18. It is for the above reasons that we support the amendments in the proposed Bill to facilitate the recording of Domestic Violence offence convictions.

³ www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/women/programs-services/reducingviolence/the-national-plan-to-reduce-violence-against-women-and-their-children2010-2022

⁴ "Not Now Not Ever" – Putting an End to Domestic and Family Violence in Queensland, (2015-6)

⁵ ecereport.ca/early-years-study3-2011, www.gymbaroo.com.au McCain, M.N., Mustard, J.F., & Shanker, S. (2007) *Putting Science into Action*

⁶ "Not Now Not Ever" – Putting an End to Domestic and Family Violence in Queensland. (2015-6)

Conclusion

19. We support the Bill and are happy to be involved in any additional consultation that may take place on this submission and the Bill.

Sincerely,



Helen Atkinson
Spokesperson
Region of Soroptimist International of South Queensland

Enquiries to:

