

Qld Homicide Victims' Support Group
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QUEENSLAND HOMICIDE VICTIMS' SUPPORT GROUP SUBMISSION

CRIMINAL LAW AMENDMENT BILL 2012

On behalf of the 1500 members of the Queensland Homicide Victims' Support Group (QHVSG), we acknowledge the invitation dated 21 June 2012 and received on 26 June 2012 from the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee to make a submission in respect of aspects directly affecting our members.

We wish to submit the following comments for consideration by the Committee in relation to the following intended amendments;

- Amending the *Corrective Services Act 2006* to increase the non-parole period for murder from 15 to 20 years imprisonment.
- Amending the Criminal Code to increase the non-parole period for multiple murders from 20 to 30 years imprisonment.

The members of QHVSG submit that they are eminently qualified to comment upon the proposed amendments, given that we feel that we serve greater 'sentences' than the offenders responsible for the loss of our loved ones. We believe that a period of 20 years imprisonment, whilst substantial, is not commensurate with the level of community expectation associated with the term of imprisonment appropriate for the taking of two or more human lives.

Our members are cognisant of the need to compare 'apples' to 'apples', yet believe that a 20 year period for two or more murders currently 'cheapens' the lives of our lost loved ones, denigrating the value placed upon their lives in the eyes of the Courts to merely a 10 year penalty. It is not uncommon to see a 10 year term of imprisonment imposed upon a drug trafficker. The incongruity between a penalty for drug offences and the penalty for the deliberate and intended taking of a life further traumatises our members for the rest of their lives.

QHVSG submission
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The proposed amendment would see the non-parole period for multiple murders increased to 30 years, effectively making each life 'valued at' a period of 15 years imprisonment in the eyes of the criminal justice system. The current non parole period for a single murder is a minimum of 15 years imprisonment, and it is noted that this is also the subject of an intended increase.

Whilst QHVSG fully supports the further amendment of the 15 year non parole period for a single murder being increased to a period of 20 years, we feel that maintaining a difference for multiple murder (eg, the intended increase from 20 years to 30 years non parole period) propagates a repugnant negative perception of an offender 'getting a discount' for multiple murders. If anything, we feel the opposite should apply, with multiple murders attracting an even higher penalty.

Accordingly, QHVSG fully supports the increase in non parole periods for single murders from 15 years to 20 years imprisonment yet believes that no 'discount' should be given for multiple murders. It is the firm stance of QHVSG and its members, that the criminal justice system should not 'give discounts' when the crime is the most serious on our statutes. We submit that the non parole period for multiple murders should be in line with multiples of the 20 year period for a single murder (eg, 40 years for a double murder).

In summary, on behalf of our members, QHVSG wishes to make the following submissions;

- Single murder – 20 year non parole period.
- Multiple murders – 20 year non parole period *for each murder*

There is one further matter of procedure that QHVSG would like to make a submission on in respect of this matter. We acknowledge the importance of the amendments put before Parliament, and appreciate the offer to make a submission, however we feel that the consultation process has been poorly executed.

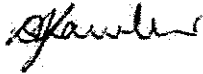
We received the Committee's request for a submission on 26 June 2012, with a stipulated return date of 28 June 2012. It was merely a matter of good fortune that our Board met on 27 June 2012 and was able to give this important submission its consideration and then late night attention.

The Board of QHVSG requests that the public consultation process be carried out more professionally in future in order to enable you Committee to receive submissions that have been able to be given greater than 48 hours consideration and preparation.

QHVSG submission
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QHVSG wishes your Committee success in your endeavours to amend the afore-mentioned legislation and, as an organisation, consents to this submission, or parts thereof, being made publicly available in any form that the Committee so desires.

Yours sincerely,



Debbie Lawler
President

QHVSG

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