



28 January 2016

The Research Director  
Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee  
Parliament House  
Brisbane QLD 4000

Level 5, 192 Ann Street, Brisbane 4000  
GPO Box 967, Brisbane Q 4001

Phone 3253 4000  
Fax 3236 0929

ABN 28 728 322 186

[www.uccommunity.org.au](http://www.uccommunity.org.au)

Email: [lacsc@parliament.qld.gov.au](mailto:lacsc@parliament.qld.gov.au)

Dear Ms Watson

UnitingCare Community welcomes the opportunity to make a submission on the *Criminal Law (Domestic Violence) Amendment Bill (No. 2) 2015*. We welcome continued action by the Queensland Government to reduce domestic and family violence; including the introduction of legislative measures as recommended by the Special Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence in Queensland.

We support the proposed amendments to the *Penalties and Sentences Act 1992* and the Criminal Code to make provision for domestic and family violence an aggravating factor on sentence and to create an offence of choking, suffocation or strangulation in a domestic setting.

UnitingCare Community has a long history of providing support for families and individuals in need. We deliver a wide range of community services across the life course to a diverse range of individuals, families and communities across Queensland. Our [REDACTED] accommodation for victims of domestic and family violence and programs that give perpetrators the opportunity to take responsibility for their use of violence in intimate relationships and develop and maintain respectful attitudes and behaviours within the family.

While legislative changes are essential to provide appropriate disincentives and penalties for perpetrators it is important that these measures are accompanied by appropriate support for both the victims and perpetrators of domestic and family violence. Evidence based perpetrator programs, such as the United Kingdom's accredited perpetrator program Respect, have been shown to deliver significant outcomes. On completion of the Respect program most women reported that physical and sexual violence had stopped, the percentage of women who reported having a weapon used against them dropped from 29 per cent to zero and those who said they were slapped, punched or had something thrown at them reduced from 87 per cent to seven per cent<sup>1</sup>.

Uniting Care Community believes that in order to address the high rates of domestic and family violence in Queensland communities the provision of a comprehensive range of specialist services is required, including supports for victims and their families, perpetrator programs to address offending, place-based responses for vulnerable communities and universal and targeted prevention programs which address known risk factors.

---

<sup>1</sup> Project Mirabel report, *Domestic Violence Perpetrator Programmes – Steps towards change 2015* <https://www.dur.ac.uk/resources/criva/ProjectMirabalfinalreport.pdf> accessed 20 January 2016



[www.uccommunity.org.au](http://www.uccommunity.org.au)

As legislative changes are implemented to reduce domestic and family violence, we would encourage the Queensland Government to set a time for an appropriate evaluation of the full suite of amendments to assess impact, identify outcomes and pick up any unintended consequences.

We fully support a Queensland based response and reinforce the need to continue to work towards a national response. In regard to criminal offences there is an urgent need to prioritise the development and implementation of a National Domestic Violence Order Scheme to achieve automatic mutual recognition and enforcement of domestic and family violence related orders. These actions require designated financial support from all levels of government and could be an important outcome of a national summit on domestic and family violence.

Thank you for the opportunity to further support the work of the Queensland Government to eliminate domestic and family violence. If you have any questions about the issues raised in this letter please contact Nina MacKenzie, Strategic Policy Manager, on [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bob Gilkes".

Bob Gilkes  
Executive Director  
UnitingCare Community