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Research Director
Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee
Parliament House
George Street
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Via email: lacsc@parliament.qld.gov.au

Dear Committee

Criminal Law (Domestic Violence) Amendment Bill (No. 2) 2015

White Ribbon Australia (White Ribbon) appreciates the opportunity to provide comment in relation to the Criminal Law (Domestic Violence) Amendment Bill (No. 2) 2015 (The Bill).

White Ribbon commends the review by the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee (the Committee) of proposed legislative changes to address recommendations 118 and 120 of the Special Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence report *Not Now, Not Ever*.

Our interest in the proposed changes to the legislation stems from our role in the prevention of men's violence against women. White Ribbon Australia is a unique, national primary prevention social change organisation that works through a primary prevention approach based on the understanding that men are central to achieving the social change necessary to prevent men's abuse of women. We engage men to stand up, speak out and act to influence the attitudes and behaviours of some men who commit abuse against women.

Fundamental to driving social change in this space is ensuring men are held accountable for their actions, reinforced by a strong, united community voice speaking out and acting to prevent all types of men's abuse against women, including family and domestic violence.

The amendments proposed by the Committee contribute to addressing the urgent need for changes in legislation in Queensland to provide fair justice and due recognition of the seriousness of the crime. The revised sentencing is a strong acknowledgment of the grave abuse of human rights experienced by victims of domestic and family violence.

The assignment of aggravating factor to the domestic violence setting reflects the insidiousness of a crime where power and control are used over prolonged periods to abuse, coerce and inflict harm on another individual. The amendment provides greater clarity that such abuse is widely condemned by the community and thus reflected in the legal system charged with protecting the community. This acknowledgement is commensurate with the demand of the community to have in place the legal response required in relation to aggravation. It also sends a clearer message to perpetrators regarding the seriousness and criminal nature of domestic abuse.

White Ribbon abhors all types of violence, both physical and non-physical that sit along the continuum of violent behaviours. Strangulation, choking and suffocation are dangerous acts of abuse and the inclusion of these as an offence in a domestic setting is critical.

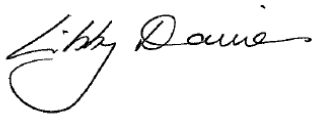
White Ribbon supports the amendment to allow courts to receive submissions from a party so as to enhance the evidence that can be presented to assist the judicial investigation and decision making.

White Ribbon Australia appreciates the work of the Queensland Government to enhance the judicial processes that will deliver a more effective response to incidents of abuse against women now and in the future. This Bill is a positive step to improve consistency in sentencing and assist courtroom efficiency that will benefit victims of domestic violence and abuse.

The Bill demonstrates the Queensland Government's commitment to ensure sentencing reflects the seriousness of domestic and family violence. The amendments provide for a more robust platform for protection of victims, and accountability of perpetrators of violence. These changes are critical to send a stronger message to those who perpetrate violence against women about the seriousness of their actions and of the consequences under our legal system.

White Ribbon looks forward to continuing to work with the Queensland Government and the broader community, as together we progress change that will deliver a safer community for our women and children.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Libby Davies". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large loop at the end of the name.

Libby Davies
Chief Executive Officer