



Corrective Services (Parole Board) & Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2017

**Submission to Research Director
Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee
Parliament House
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Introduction

Gold Coast Centre Against Sexual Violence Inc. (GCCASV) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee in relation to the *Corrective Services (Parole Board) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2017*. GCCASV supports efforts from both sides of politics to address violence against women by increasing victim safety and holding perpetrators accountable for their behaviour.

Gold Coast Centre Against Sexual Violence Inc.

GCCASV (formerly Gold Coast Sexual Assault Support Service) was founded in 1990 to deliver specialist sexual violence intervention and prevention programs to the Gold Coast community. It is a feminist, community based, community controlled charitable organisation funded by Department of Communities, Disability and Child Safety. Run by women for women, the agency services the geographic area from Coolangatta to Upper Coomera. The organisation provides a safe, supportive, woman-centred environment in which sexual assault survivors can become aware of their own strengths and gain confidence and control of their lives.

Mission Statement

The Gold Coast Centre Against Sexual Violence Inc. will provide all women and young women in the Gold Coast Community access to a comprehensive array of services and programs designed to prevent victimisation, offer crisis intervention, provide ongoing counselling and support services that will assist women to recover from the impact of sexual violence.

Services provided

To survivors of immediate and/or past sexual and intimate partner sexual violence

- Crisis support
- Ongoing professional counselling
- Support through the criminal justice system
- Support through related legal and medical processes
- Therapeutic and educational groups

To Friends and Family

- Information/support for partners, friends and relatives of victim/survivors

To General Community

- Resource information developed and disseminated
- Information on legal and medical issues in relation to sexual violence
- Public education campaigns
- Anti-violence presentations to students and the community
- Training to other professionals

Director

Di Macleod is currently the Director of the *Gold Coast Centre Against Sexual Violence Inc.* which she founded in 1990. She was also instrumental in the development of both the Gold Coast Domestic Violence Service and Macleod Accommodation Support Service, which is named after her. Di has over 30 years of experience in the area of domestic and sexual violence including working as a care provider, counsellor, refuge worker, court support worker, educator, trainer, service manager and consultant. Di was an inaugural board member of the Australian National Association of Services Against Sexual Violence and a member of the Queensland Attorney General's Taskforce on Women and the Criminal Code. Di is currently on the Board of *Ending Violence Against Women Queensland.* and the Secretary of the *Red Rose Foundation* a new National organisation which has a focus on preventing domestic homicide.

The *Corrective Services (Parole Board) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2017* takes up some of the recommendations the Sofronoff review delivered in December 2016. GCCASV, as an organisation involved in the rights of rape victims in Queensland for over 27 years, would like to make the following brief comments based on victim and community safety.

One Queensland Parole Board

Agree.

One single modernised Parole Board in Queensland will be more efficient, will provide more consistency and has the potential to lower risk to the community and enhance community safety.

Membership of Parole Board

Agree.

Range of professional backgrounds and both gender and cultural diversity needs to be reflected in the membership of the Parole Board.

Caution.

Need to ensure that all efforts are utilised in referencing and evidence of qualifications for any proposed members to avoid recent situation that could have called into question past decisions.

Agree

Needs to be a different composition of Parole Board when considering prescribed prisoners as serious violent offenders and serious sexual offenders pose the most serious risk to the community.

Serious violent offence

Strangulation has only recently been identified as one of the most lethal forms of domestic violence where unconsciousness may occur within seconds and death within minutes. When domestic violence offenders choke (strangle) their victims, not only is this a serious assault, but it may be an attempted homicide. Non-fatal strangulation is an important risk factor for homicide of women. Research shows that women who have been strangled are over 7 times more likely to be killed by their partner than those who have not been strangled. (Glass et al, 2008).

Within the *Criminal Law (Domestic Violence) Amendment Act 2016* was the insertion of the new Section 315A of the criminal code - *Choking, suffocation or strangulation in a domestic setting*.

Need to ensure that strangulation is taken into account as a serious violent offence.

Electronic monitoring of parolees

Agree

Include the capacity for certain parolees to be monitored via electronic devices based on the assessed risk of each of each parolee.



Di Macleod

Director