



17 June 2014

Domestic & Family Violence
Protection OLA Bill 2014
Submission 001

Research Director
Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE Q 4000

Dear Sir/Madam

**Re: Domestic and Family Violence Protection and Other Legislation Amendment
Bill 2014**

We refer to the letter from the Chair dated 29 May 2014 seeking submissions on the above-mentioned Bill by 18 July 2014.

Protect All Children Today Inc. (PACT) is a non-profit community organisation established in 1986 as a service provider of court support as well as advocating on behalf of children, young people and their families.

PACT's Child Witness Support Program provides support for children and young people who are required to give evidence in the courts, either as victims of, or witnesses to, a crime.

We are supportive of any legislative amendments that better protect victims of, and witnesses to, domestic violence, especially vulnerable children and young people. We appreciate the broadening of the **Victims of Crime Assistance Act 2009** to include both victims of criminal and non-criminal domestic violence. Further, we commend the provision that the victim need not to have been injured, but must have suffered harm, to be eligible for practical assistance. We believe the emotional distress caused by various controlling behaviours encompassed by domestic violence can have far reaching and long-term effects on victims and witnesses. Social research providing mounting evidence of the damaging effects on the development of children who are exposed to domestic violence.

PACT is also supportive of the amendments to the **Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act 2012** to increase penalties for contravening a domestic violence order, police protection notice or release conditions as this will likely lead to the enhanced protection of children and young people.

We strongly support the amendment to the **Penalties and Sentences Act 1992** that changes the sentencing guidelines to remove any doubt that where an offence is committed in the context of a domestic or family relationship, the fact of the relationship cannot be used as a mitigating factor at time of sentencing. We believe that crimes of this nature are likely to have a greater negative impact on adult and child victims and witnesses due to the breach of trust.

Vice Regal Patron: Her Excellency, Ms Penelope Wensley AC, Governor of Queensland

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In relation to amendments to the ***Evidence Act 1977*** to make admissible evidence of the history of domestic violence in a court proceeding where the offender and victim are involved in a domestic or family relationship, we believe this history is important information for the judiciary to consider when imposing a sentence, as domestic violence often involves an ongoing pattern of behaviour, rather than a series of isolated incidents.

We greatly appreciate the opportunity to provide comment on this Bill and commend the Government for their efforts in trying to reduce crime in Queensland.

Yours sincerely



Alexandra Marks
Chairperson



Jo Bryant
Chief Executive Officer