



Justice & OLAB 2014
Submission 011

22 December 2014

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

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: *Justice and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2014*

We refer to the letter from the Chair dated 2 December 2014 seeking submissions on the above-mentioned legislation by 2 January 2015.

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.

Therefore, we only offer comments on the areas of the proposed Legislation that relate to our work with child and young person victims and witnesses of crime.

Policy Objectives:

PACT is supportive of the Government's initiative to make miscellaneous amendments to over 30 Acts administered by the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice. We are particularly interested in the amendments that strengthen penalties and sentencing, and protections for victims of crime.

Part 11 – Amendment to the Corrective Services Act 2006

We believe the introduction of the new offence prohibiting prisoners from sending correspondence which is likely to cause a victim distress or trauma is especially important for vulnerable children and young victims of crime. Any steps that can act as a deterrent in prisoners contacting victims and ensures they are treated with courtesy, compassion, respect and dignity, should be considered and implemented.

In our experience, children and young people become very traumatised if they inadvertently see the Defendant on the CCTV screen whilst they are recording their evidence. Therefore, we would recommend that prisoners be deterred from any contact with children or young person they have offended against, as this vulnerable client group are unlikely to have the emotional maturity to cope with this contact.

Vice Regal Patron: His Excellency, the Honourable Paul de Jersey AC, Governor of Queensland

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Part 19 Amendment of Justices Act 1886

We believe that the proposed amendment for a Defendant to enter a plea, in the Magistrates Court for a number of charges at the same time without each charge, or the substance of each charge, being read separately will likely streamline court processes and timelines leading to a better outcome for victims of crime. However, communication will need to be enhanced to ensure that all parties (Defendants and victims) are clearly aware of the impacts of the combined charges. Sadly, we anticipate this will increase the responsibilities and workload burdens of Police.

Part 25 Amendment of Public Guardian Act 2014

PACT expresses concern of the Act being amended to define a **relevant child**. It is our experience that vulnerable children and young people often move in and out of care. We appreciate that the Public Guardian may continue to provide support if the child is no longer considered a "relevant child" or if they believe the child may be subject to future applications. Concern is expressed over the potential for vulnerable children to be overlooked, especially in cases where informal care arrangements occur.

In addition, we believe the ability for not-for-profit Agencies, such as PACT, to provide input into legislative reform and government initiatives such as this, can only strengthen the relationship between all those involved in supporting victims of crime.

We greatly appreciate the opportunity to provide comment on these legislative amendments and commend the Government for their efforts in strengthening protections for vulnerable children and victims of crime.

Yours sincerely



Alexandra Marks
Chairperson



Jo Bryant
Chief Executive Officer