



**Submission prepared by Zig Zag Young Women's Resource Centre
to the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee**

September 2016

Zig Zag Young Women's Resource Centre Inc welcomes the opportunity to provide a brief submission to the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee for consideration in relation to the following two proposed legislative Bills in Queensland:

- 1. Limitation of Actions (Institutional Child Sexual Abuse) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016**
- 2. Limitation of Actions and Other Legislation (Child Abuse Civil Proceedings) Amendment Bill 2016**

We respectfully submit recommendations relating to specific areas of expertise and concern based on our extensive knowledge and experience in providing sexual assault support and prevention services to young women who have been victims of violent crime, specifically childhood sexual offences.

Organisational Details

Zig Zag Young Women's Resource Centre Inc. (hereafter referred to as 'Zig Zag') was established in 1988 to respond to specific identified needs of young women, namely sexual violence, accommodation, and the provision of a safe and confidential place for young women to obtain information, advice, and support. Zig Zag is an incorporated community managed organisation that currently receives funding from the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services (DCCSDS) and the Department of Housing and Public Works (DHPW) to provide two programs to young women in the wider Brisbane region and one program specific to the Inala and surrounding region:

1. Sexual Assault Support and Prevention Program:

This program provides direct support services to young women aged 12 years to 25 years who have experienced sexual assault at any time in their lives. Services include:

- Information, referral and advocacy;
- Individual counselling (including crisis support);
- Court support (limited availability as this is not directly funded);
- Therapeutic group work; and
- Community education to prevent and reduce sexual violence.

2. Supported Accommodation and Assistance Program:

This program provides direct support services to young women aged 16 years to 25 years who are experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness. Services include:

- Information, referral and advocacy;
- Supported medium term accommodation; and
- Practical assistance to access emergency accommodation and long-term, secure, and affordable housing.

Zig Zag greatly values its joint service capacity to respond to the needs of young women survivors of sexual assault *and* young women who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness. Sexual violence within the home has been found to be a major cause of homelessness for young women. In fact, 50 - 90% of young women who are homeless are homeless due to childhood sexual abuse. It must also be noted that a lack of secure housing will, quite obviously, place young women at a far greater risk of subsequent and repeated sexual assault. A survey of homeless young people in Sydney found that 76% of females reported having been sexually assaulted since becoming homeless highlighting the need for increased resourcing to respond to this issue.

Submission Details

Zig Zag has significant experience in providing direct therapeutic support services to young women who have been victims of violent crime namely sexual offences against children, young women, and young adults under the age of 25 years. Zig Zag respectfully submits recommendations relating to the importance of considering the removal of civil statutory time limitations and procedural time limits for personal injury actions arising from *all* forms of child abuse, not just those acts that occurred within an institutional context.

We are concerned that the introduction of legislative changes in one area only (the institutional context) as proposed in the *Limitation of Actions (Institutional Child Sexual Abuse) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016* essentially establishes significantly different legal responses made available to victims/survivors of childhood sexual abuse depending on where the abuse took place.

Under the proposed legislation, *Limitation of Actions (Institutional Child Sexual Abuse) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016*, those who experienced child sexual abuse within the narrowly defined 'institutional context' would be afforded greater protections under the law than those who were subject to similar offences within a private context for example, intrafamilial child sexual abuse within the home. We strongly believe that all victims/survivors of childhood sexual abuse should have the same access to civil proceedings for personal injury arising from acts of child abuse irrespective of whether this abuse took place in an institutional setting or in another context. The *Limitation of Actions and Other Legislation (Child Abuse Civil Proceedings) Amendment Bill 2016* provides for legal protections being available to all forms of child sexual abuse, not just those acts that occurred within an institutional context.

Key Recommendations

- 1. Ensure the removal of civil statutory time limitations and procedural time limits for personal injury actions arising from child sexual abuse irrespective of the context in which it occurred, not just those acts that occurred within an institutional context.**
- 2. Ensure the civil statutory time limitations and procedural time limits are removed with retrospective effect to enable greater access for victims/survivors of childhood sexual abuse to civil legal proceedings.**

Zig Zag acknowledges that this written submission has been developed within significant time constraints and invites opportunities to provide further comment to any recommendations made herein. For further information or commentary please contact: Stephanie Anne, Manager, Zig Zag Young Women's Resource Centre Inc [REDACTED]

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