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Dear Colleague

**Submission on Limitations of Actions (Institutional Child  
Sexual Abuse) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016**

**Recommendations**

1. We recommend that the *Limitations of Actions (Institutional Child Sexual Abuse) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016* ("the Bill") be enacted.
2. Many victims of child sexual abuse are girls, and for many, it takes years or decades to come to terms with the childhood trauma caused by sexual abuse. Greater access to justice, as provided for under the Bill, for victims of child sexual abuse is an important social and legal step within Queensland.
3. If enacted, we recommend that appropriate educational materials and support services are available to victims to educate them about the:
  - 3.1. removal of limitation periods for actions for child sexual abuse;
  - 3.2. information on how to initiate proceedings; and
  - 3.3. services and support for victims pursuing an action.

**Background**

4. Soroptimist International works to ensure that the voices of women and girls around the world are included in international decision making and the policy setting, as well as within Australia. Soroptimist International is active at all of the major United Nation centres around the world maintaining a network of permanent representatives. The organisation holds a General Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council and maintains official relations

with several agencies and technical bodies.

5. Soroptimist International is committed to supporting actions to end all forms of domestic violence against women. Violence endangers women and girls physically, mentally, emotionally and economically, perpetuating and reinforcing unjustifiable inequalities in all aspects of women's lives.
6. As part of the vision of Soroptimist International, we intend to raise awareness about violence against women, advocate for full, meaningful, and substantial government accountability and responsibility for protecting women and girls from acts of violence and ensuring adequate and accessible support services and act to implement international, national and local level projects aimed at ending violence against women and supporting women who have experienced violence.
7. Further to this, Soroptimist International supports the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the 1990 Declaration of the World Summit for Children, which gave priority to the girl child's survival, development and protection as well as all other international instruments which serve to protect the girl child and promote her well-being in subordinated positions within the family, community, and society.
8. The Region of Soroptimist International of South Queensland supports the implementation of the *Limitation of Actions (Institutional Child Sexual Abuse) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016*, as a means by which to address the promotion of the wellbeing of women and girls.
9. We believe the Bill will greatly help female victims of child sexual abuse by giving them access to a proper means of redress that is not restricted by limitation periods.

### **Submissions**

10. It is well documented that many victims of child sexual abuse do not disclose their experiences or act on them until decades after the abuse, if ever.
11. One of the reasons for this is the secondary harms caused by child sexual abuse, including depression and post-traumatic stress. The removal of a limitation period will cater to this unique aspect of child sexual offences.
12. Another reason, may be that the perpetrators of child sexual offences most often are known to the child. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistic's *Personal Safety Survey* (2005), of respondents who reported having been victimised

sexually before the age of 15, 43.7% of abuse was perpetrated by a male relative, including the child's father or stepfather. For females, this may normalise the idea of abuse in a domestic relationship and this experience may also desensitise them to the significance of their complaint.

13. The Bill creates a more accessible civil litigation system for survivors of child sexual abuse in institutional contexts, as the removal of limitation periods allows child survivors to pursue actions after they have been removed from the institutional environment in which the abuse occurred, have matured and are more capable of pursuing their own legal actions.

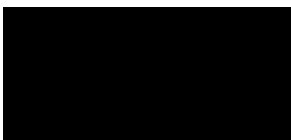
### **Conclusion**

14. We support the implementation of the *Limitation of Actions (Institutional Child Sexual Abuse) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016* in its current form and applaud the policy objectives of the proposed legislation.

15. We note the positive impact this should have on women and girls by allowing them access to justice by catering to the unique circumstances of child sexual abuse and being no longer confined.

16. We are happy to be involved in any additional consultation that may take place on this submission and the Bill, as well as later reviews of the Act and establishment of the surrounding infrastructure.

**Sincerely,  
Kylie Hillard**



**For:  
Cesarina Gigante  
President  
Region of Soroptimist International of South Queensland**

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