

31 March 2016

Mr Mark Furner MP  
Chair  
Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee  
Parliament House  
Alice and George Street  
BRISBANE Q 4000  
Email: [lacsc@parliament.qld.gov.au](mailto:lacsc@parliament.qld.gov.au)

Dear Mr Furner MP

**Re: *Penalties and Sentences (Queensland Sentencing Advisory Council) Amendment Bill 2016***

We refer to your letter dated 17 March 2016 seeking submissions on the above-mentioned reforms by 4 April 2016. Firstly, we would like to commend the Palaszczuk Government on its commitment to re-establishing the Queensland Sentencing Advisory Council (QSAC).

Protect All Children Today Inc. (PACT) is a non-profit community organisation, established in 1986 as a service provider of court support. PACT also advocates 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.

Given our role is primarily to support children and young people in the Queensland Criminal Justice System, we offer comments from that perspective.

PACT is appreciative of the Government's commitment to promoting public confidence in the Criminal Justice System and in particular, in sentencing practices. The previous Chairperson of PACT, Mr Nicholas Tucker, was a member of the former Sentencing Advisory Council and we were saddened by its abolishment by the Newnham Government in 2012, which occurred without adequate consultation or apparent justification.

We concur with this Government's view of the important role the QSAC plays in improving the effectiveness of sentencing practices to support the principles of sentencing, punishment, deterrence, rehabilitation, community protection and denunciation. In addition, we support the identified functions of the QSAC.

For your information, PACT has established formalised key stakeholder mechanisms and advocates on behalf of children and young people through the provision of evidence-based feedback. This feedback is gained through the following established practices:

- Incident Reports

The PACT Incident Report process enables Child Witness Support Volunteers to submit written reports on any instances where they observe children and young people being positively or negatively impacted upon throughout their dealings with the Criminal Justice System.

The information contained in these Reports is de-identified, summarised and provided to Key Stakeholders by email (if urgent) or tabled at regular meetings. This factual and transparent feedback has resulted in tangible improvements for child witnesses across the policing, legal and child protection sectors.

- Post Evidence Feedback Surveys

In July 2012, PACT introduced the Post Evidence Feedback Survey. Child Witness Support Volunteers have children and young people complete a short survey just after they have given evidence, wherever appropriate. This initiative has given child victims and witnesses the opportunity to provide feedback, voice any concerns about their experience and offers some closure to the court process. The comments from the children and young people surveyed are verbatim and PACT firmly believes that the information gained from the child's perspective is valuable for informing future change.

We give a commitment to share any information obtained from our clients with the QSAC on issues of relevance.

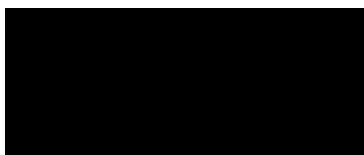
Should your staff require clarification or further information on any of the issues raised, please do not hesitate to contact Jo Bryant, PACT's Chief Executive Officer [REDACTED]

We greatly appreciate the opportunity to provide comment on these valuable reforms and trust that our input has been of value.

Yours sincerely



Alexandra Marks  
Chairperson



Jo Bryant  
Chief Executive Officer