

Research Director  
20th January 2012  
Legal Affairs, Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services Committee  
Parliament House  
George Street  
Brisbane Qld 4000  
by email to [lapcsesc@parliament.qld.gov.au](mailto:lapcsesc@parliament.qld.gov.au).

Dear Sir/Madam, re the **Law Reform Amendment Bill 2011**

I am writing in regard to the effect of passing this bill would have on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people though I am confident that my comments will also apply to the majority of other prisoners.

I strongly disagree with the proposed legal changes which will impose standard non-parole periods for certain crimes.

The suggested changes to the law will not reduce crime, nor will they improve the rehabilitation of prisoners.

On the contrary, they will suck significant amounts of money and resources away from activities which can reduce crime and recidivism such as:

- well-resourced and implemented efforts to reduce crime by tackling the problems of those at risk of committing crimes;
- culturally effective programs in prison to help prisoners to make real changes;
- well-planned community controlled rehabilitation and post-prison support especially for institutionalised prisoners trying to rejoin the world after years in a controlled environment.

As the Sentencing Council of Queensland has reported the NSW experiment with SNPP has had negative results in that it has cost a great deal of money for virtually no perceptible positive results in reducing crime.

Their consultations also revealed that, in Queensland, the Law Society, the Bar Association and the Chief Justice are concerned that the proposed legal changes will be expensive, make it harder to provide justice quickly and consistently and will not reduce crime rates.

I am particularly concerned that the proposed changes fly in the face of the recently released **Just Futures for Aboriginal and Torres Strait People. Dec 6 2011**. This Just Futures Strategy is being led by the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships and the Attorney General.

The proposed SNPP will make it harder for them to implement the forward-looking and evidence base actions as outlined in the report, especially when they divert money from Key strategies outlined on page 15, and 40-41 of Just Futures.

- *Increase support for CIGs and Murri Courts.*
- *Increase involvement of Indigenous people in law enforcement.*
- *Improve support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victims.*
- *Involve Elders and respected persons in the rehabilitation and transition of Indigenous people, from prisons and youth detention centres, by providing assistance with accommodation and transitioning to education, training and jobs.*
- *Establish a cross-agency team to improve pre-release preparation and transition from prison for Indigenous people with cognitive and intellectual impairments.*
- *Improve transition programs from adult correctional centres and youth detention centres.*

#### **Improved transitions from prison p40-41**

*Target: The DCS will support transitions from adult correctional centres by:*

- *ensuring that all Indigenous offenders in prisons have the opportunity to maintain connections with their families through video-link ups and face-to-face visits where appropriate.*

- ensuring all Indigenous offenders leaving prison will have enhanced support to source accommodation, transition to education, training or employment and access to health services.
- working with Elders, CJGs, Indigenous communities and other government and non-government agencies to deliver appropriate programs and services for Indigenous offenders.
- taking steps to reduce non-compliance with parole orders, for example by ensuring that parole order requirements are clearly explained to offenders.

A range of improved support will be provided to assist the successful transition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander offenders from prison. For example, breach of parole and supervised orders contribute to the high rates at which Indigenous offenders return to custody and this issue will be examined to determine what steps can be put in place to reduce this level of non-compliance.

The DoC will deliver a short-term recovery oriented support service to people with a moderate to severe mental illness being released from a correctional facility so they can access appropriate accommodation, connect with the local resources, participate in activities to reduce social isolation and enhance quality of life (transition from Correctional Facilities Program). QH, through their Mental Health Services, has a legislative obligation to provide a Limited Community Treatment Plan for individuals who are subject to a forensic order.  
Timeframe: 2012–2015

It makes no sense to have the Attorney General developing a punitive, keep people locked up without hope of parole policy whilst another section, which includes the Attorney-General, is developing and supporting a policy of supporting people who are at risk because of socio-economic circumstances. They also support courses and programs to rehabilitate the people who do commit crimes and to help them become law-abiding citizens as soon as possible.

It is economic madness to continue increasing financial support to imprisonment policies. Both the Commonwealth and many State Governments are examining the principles and processes of Justice Reinvestment which is aimed at significantly reducing imprisonment rates, length of sentences and recidivism rates whilst also improving community safety and quality of life.

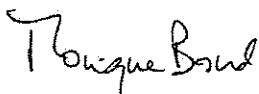
As a founding member of Project 10% and a Director of Project 10% Queensland Ltd, I have spent many hours listening to the stories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people working in the area of prevention, prison and post-prison. I have also listened to both prisoners and victims and to people who work with them and have myself facilitated Alternatives to Violence workshops in the old Moreton B and Borallon Correctional Centres. I am confident that SNPP is the wrong way to go: Just Futures will give better results for everyone.

When I have met with the Premier and Government Ministers, and with the former Leader of the Opposition and former Indigenous Shadow Minister Bruce Flegge, they have all agreed with the aim to reduce the rate of imprisonment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and especially to reduce the rate of people first going to prison/detention and then returning after release.

It makes no sense to pass this Bill. It is counter-productive and works against good social policy.

I strongly urge you to scrap this Bill and to focus all available resources on evidence-based, community supported projects to help people in prison and stop them returning in accordance with the Just Futures Strategy 2012-2015.

Yours sincerely



Monique Bond