



30.07.2012

Committee Secretary
Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia

Dear Colleagues,

**Crimes Legislation Amendment (Slavery, Slavery-like Conditions and People Trafficking) Bill
2012**

I am writing to you on behalf of the Women's Law Centre of Western Australia. The Women's Law Centre of WA Inc. (WLCWA) is not for profit Community Legal Centre funded by the Commonwealth Attorney General's Department to provide quality legal services for women of Western Australia. WLCWA operates through a human rights framework and aims to achieve improved access to justice for women in Western Australia. WLCWA provides free legal advice and casework specifically to women facing disadvantage. We prioritise our services to assist women facing disadvantage with family law, family and domestic violence issues, care and protection proceedings, criminal injuries compensation and sexual harassment and sexual assault. In addition to these services, the Women's Law Centre undertakes several outreach projects to specific target groups. At present our target areas focus on assisting Indigenous women in remote Communities through a partnership with the NPY women's Council and providing services to women in prison. The WLCWA also provides law reform, advocacy, community legal education and professional development training in our casework areas.

WLCWA is also a member of the Women's Legal Services Australia (WLSA), which is a national network of community legal centres specialising in women's legal issues. WLSA undertakes policy and law reform activities on a national level to reduce disadvantage faced by women and children in the legal system.

WLCWA welcomes the expansion of slavery and slave-like offences in order to criminalise a broader range of exploitative behaviour. Unfortunately, due to our lack of resources at present, we are unable to provide a comprehensive submission outlining our arguments and concerns. Our client's experiences closely mirror the experiences of clients from our sister organisations

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throughout Australia. We therefore share similar concerns regarding forced marriage and slavery or servitude in intimate relationships. We wish to use this opportunity to warmly endorse submissions to this Inquiry by other Women's Legal Centres to ensure the voice of our clients is heard, despite our current lack of capacity.

In conclusion WLCWA are supportive of the expansion of slavery and slave-like offences. Our client's experiences are similar to the client's of Women's Legal Centre ACT and Women's Legal Service NSW, and we therefore share similar concerns regarding prevention and non-legislative measures to reduce the instances of forced servile intimate relationships and support both the legal and non-legislative recommendations of both organisations.

If you have any questions or concerns or require further information, please feel free to contact us at the details provided.

Sincerely,

Heidi Guldbaek
Law Reform Coordinator
WOMEN'S LAW CENTRE OF WA INC