



THE HON MICHAEL KEENAN MP
Minister for Justice

Minister Assisting the Prime Minister on Counter-Terrorism



MC15-010035

2 FEB 2016

Dr Dennis Jensen MP
 Chair
 Standing Committee on Petitions
 PO Box 6021
 Parliament House
 CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Dr Jensen *Ann's*

Thank you for your letter of 2 December 2015 about a petition regarding the effectiveness of intervention orders to protect victims of domestic violence (your reference 1102/1600).

The Government takes the issue of domestic violence very seriously and recognises the devastating impact it has on women, children, families and the community. It is our strong view that domestic violence in any form is unacceptable, and governments should do all they can to stamp it out.

The petition asks the Parliament to take action relating to the use, effectiveness and enforcement of intervention orders relating to domestic violence (domestic violence orders, or DVOs). While laws regarding DVOs are generally a matter for states and territories, the Commonwealth recognises their importance in combating domestic violence and has been actively supporting efforts to strengthen the national approach to DVOs.

I am pleased to advise the Council of Australian Governments agreed to model laws for a national DVO scheme at its recent meeting on 11 December 2015, and to jurisdictions implementing these laws in the first half of 2016. This is a significant outcome—it will allow a DVO issued in one Australian jurisdiction to be automatically recognised across Australia and enforceable nationwide. A national approach will remove the need for a protected person to manually register a DVO with courts in other jurisdictions, as is currently the case. To maximise the effectiveness of the national DVO scheme, the Commonwealth is leading efforts to improve information sharing on DVOs. The Council also agreed to a national domestic violence summit in 2016 to review progress of key initiatives.

These efforts complement broader Commonwealth measures taken in response to domestic violence, which highlight the Government's ongoing commitment to addressing this issue.

On 25 November 2015, the Government introduced the Family Law Amendment (Financial Agreements and Other Measures) Bill 2015, which contains measures that improve the family law system's response to domestic violence. The Bill includes measures allowing interim DVOs of state and territory courts to vary, suspend or revive a parenting order until a further court order. Interim DVOs of state and territory courts are currently only able to override parenting orders for up to 21 days, which could put children and family members at risk. This Bill also strengthens the Family Court's powers to dismiss unmeritorious applications, ensuring that the family law system is not used as a mechanism to perpetuate abuse.

On 24 September 2015, the Government announced a \$100 million Women's Safety Package to respond to family and domestic violence. This package included \$59 million for practical initiatives to keep women safe, \$36 million to improve front-line support, including \$15 million for legal assistance services, and \$5 million to develop online resources promoting respectful relationships.

The Government welcomes the continued engagement of the community on important issues such as domestic violence, including through the petitions process. Further information from particular perspectives and contexts from within the community helps us to develop effective policy responses.

Thank you again for writing on this matter.

Yours sincerely

Michael Keenan