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To: [LA Committees](#)
Subject: Submission against mandatory sentencing for domestic violence
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Domestic and Family Violence and Victims Legislation Amendment Bill 2025

I am writing to agree with the experts in vehemently opposing mandatory sentencing. The proposed domestic and family violence legislation amendment will increase the strain on our already overburdened prison system and ultimately exacerbate the social issues that lead to family dysfunction.

Family violence is a serious issue in the Territory that requires evidence-based strategies to protect women and children. The North Australian Aboriginal Family Legal Service and the Central Australian Aboriginal Family Legal Unit have long been asking for more to be done to keep women and children safe. They have asked for things they know to work including more housing for survivors, funding for men's behaviour change programs, investment in DV court initiatives and alternatives to custody, but at no point have they ever suggested mandatory sentencing for offenders. In fact, they have made it clear that they oppose mandatory sentencing for its counterproductive effects on social wellbeing. Why aren't we listening to these Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations who specialise in family violence prevention? Why don't we respect these organisations and their expertise to achieve self-determination?

The NT Law Reform Committee itself found in 2021 that mandatory sentencing would at best achieve nothing, as it is an ineffective deterrent of crime, and at worst it would cause a long-term increase in violent offending due to the inadequacy of our prison system to rehabilitate. As Katherine Women's Legal Service have said, 'Jail is a blunt and ineffective instrument in addressing the complex drivers of domestic and family violence.'

I also fear that underreporting may occur as a result of this bill amendment. Knowing they will be denied non-prison alternatives, women may hesitate to report violent crimes. This is deeply concerning for the safety of the most vulnerable Territorians.

Given there is a desperate need for solutions that work, I implore you to not chase a baseless, knee-jerk reaction that will worsen the Territory's family violence crisis. Now is the time to listen to experts to keep women and children safe. I fear this bill amendment is making a political stunt out of social cohesion and the safety of our most vulnerable.

Yours sincerely,

Olivia Conan-Davies