

Dr Marisa Paterson MLA – 3 May 2022

MEMBER FOR MURRUMBIDGEE

MEDIA RELEASE

SEXUAL CONSENT BILL TO BE DEBATED IN THE ASSEMBLY

Dr Marisa Paterson MLA's Crimes (Consent) Amendment Bill 2022 will be debated in the Assembly on Thursday 5 May.

Following the introduction of the Bill in February 2022, the Justice and Community Safety (JACS) Scrutiny Committee has provided comment on the Bill, and the Government's Response has been finalised.

Dr Paterson has worked with the Parliamentary Counsel Office to further strengthen and refine the Bill on the basis of some technical matters that were brought to her attention. There have been no significant policy or other changes; and the fundamental nature of the Bill, its objectives and provisions remain largely unchanged.

"There has been overwhelming support for legislative change and, in particular, the introduction of an affirmative model of sexual consent in the ACT" Dr Paterson said.

"I'm excited to bring forward my first major legislative reform just 18 months into my role as a representative for the people of Murrumbidgee. And that this is no trivial piece of legislation – it is complex and comprehensive and is intended to make a significant difference to how sexual assault cases are prosecuted in the ACT. This is an important day for victim/survivors in the ACT" Dr Paterson said.

The reforms introduce a communicative model of consent in the ACT.

Dr Paterson is confident that the Bill will achieve its intended policy intent and objectives, stating: "the development of this Bill has been an iterative process, strengthened at each step of the way by feedback and input from key stakeholders, community members and those with lived experience".

Ms Heidi Yates, Victims of Crime Commissioner, provides her support for this Bill stating that: "This is an important reform which reflects the need for consent to be actively demonstrated in respectful relationships, and which will help bring about justice for victim-survivors as part of a comprehensive suite of community and cultural changes to reduce sexual violence".

Ms Chrystina Stanford, CEO of the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre also gives her support, noting: "law reform in relation to sexual assault remains a crucial platform for cultural and attitudinal change in all Australian jurisdictions, including the ACT. Consent within sexual assault has continued to be a problematic and at times devastating barrier for victims of sexual assault seeking justice through our legal systems. Legislation needs to lay a foundation for accountability and a path for healing from harm so that the impacts of this type of trauma are reduced.

"Sexual assault is an abuse of power, however that power sits and consent is central to whether or not a crime has occurred. Therefore, it is essential that the rules of consent are as clear and accessible as possible for all members of our community".

The provisions of the Bill come into effect the day after its notification on the ACT's Legislative Register. As soon as practicable after two years of the operation of this Bill, the Minister must conduct a review. A report must be presented to the ACT Legislative Assembly within 12 months after the review is started.

Full details: <https://marisapaterson.com.au/issues/sexual-violence/crimes-consent-amendment-bill-2022/>

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