



TOP END WOMEN'S LEGAL SERVICE INC.

FREE LEGAL ADVICE FOR WOMEN

Advice | Information | Referral | Advocacy

A | 2/17 Lindsay Street, Darwin NT 0801
P | GPO Box 1901, Darwin NT 0801
ABN | 42 830 944 178

T | (08) 8982 3000 or 1800 234 441
F | (08) 8982 3009
E | admin@tewls.org.au

26 January 2020

Ms Isabel Roper
Law Reform Legal Officer
By email to: Isabel.roper@pfes.nt.gov.au

Dear Ms Roper,

Stakeholder consultation: implementation of coronial findings for a new police power of entry in the *Police Administration Act 1978* (NT) (“the Act”)

The Top End Women's Legal Service Inc. (**TEWLS**) welcomes the opportunity to provide comment on the proposed amendment to the Act.

About TEWLS

TEWLS is a community legal centre focused on the advancement of women's rights. TEWLS provides high quality, responsive, and culturally appropriate free legal advice, casework and representation services, community legal education and advocacy in civil and family law to women living in the Greater Darwin region.

TEWLS' service area includes Darwin, Palmerston, the Royal Darwin Hospital, Dawn House Women's Shelter, six Indigenous communities in the Greater Darwin region, at Adult Migrant English Programs, and women incarcerated at the Darwin Correctional Centre.

Advice and representation services are provided for civil and family law matters, and the most frequently requested areas of assistance are family law, domestic and family violence, housing and tenancy, consumer law, credit and debt, fines, sexual assault, discrimination, employment law, compensation for victims of crime, and complaints.

The context – Requesting welfare checks

By way of background, the NT is the epicentre of the domestic and family violence epidemic in Australia. In 2017, there were 1,815 victims of domestic and family violence per 100,000 persons in the NT (ABS: Recorded Crime - Victims, Australia, 2017).

The Northern Territory Coroner has described domestic and family violence as a 'contagion', and in the financial year 2018 to 2019, over 70% of TEWLS clients have experienced or are at risk of domestic and family violence.

In TEWLS experience, particularly in a context of domestic and family violence where children can be weaponised by one party, and both direct and indirect victims of that parties domestic and family violence, welfare checks are an essential part of a police response toolkit in seeking to promote child safety and to address child welfare concerns and safety risks.

TEWLS Submission

In the above context, TEWLS endorses the proposal to amend the Act to provide police with a power of entry for the purpose of confirming a child's welfare if they believe on reasonable grounds that it is necessary to do so in order to evaluate whether there is a serious imminent risk to the welfare of the child.

Should you require anything further regarding this letter, please do not hesitate to contact Vanessa Lethlean, TEWLS Managing Solicitor by telephone to (08) 8982 3000 or by email to vlethlean@tewls.org.au.

Yours faithfully,

TOP END WOMEN'S LEGAL SERVICE INC.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'V. Lethlean', followed by a horizontal line and a period.

Vanessa Lethlean
Managing Solicitor