

Your Ref: Deputy Commissioner Peter Bottomley

Our Ref: Criminal Law Committee: 21000339/64

14 March 2011

Honourable Neil Roberts MP
Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services
PO Box 15195
City East QLD 4002

By Post and Email to:



Dear Minister

PAROLE BOARD COMMUNICATIONS WITH LEGAL PRACTITIONERS

The Queensland Law Society ("the Society"), on behalf of the Criminal Law Committee, writes to raise the issue of communication between Queensland Parole Boards and prisoners.

Our members who practise in the area of criminal law are often engaged by clients in relation to parole matters. To ensure proper carriage of a matter, a legal practitioner will often obtain a written authority from a client. Typically, this written authority should enable a legal representative to liaise directly with a Parole Board and to act on their client's behalf in parole matters.

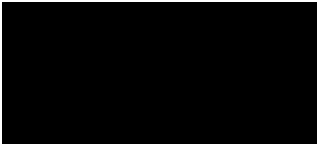
Despite the existence of a written authority, we have received reports that a Parole Board will refuse to deliver a response to a legal representative until that same response has been provided to the prisoner in question. This response often relates to the outcome of a parole application or a parole release date. This Parole Board practice creates undue delay in the process. This delay is compounded by the fact that a Parole Board decision must first be communicated to the relevant prison before being communicated to the prisoner directly. We strongly urge that the Parole Board practice mandate that legal representatives be advised of the outcome of a parole decision, which affects their clients, at the time of the decision being made.

This issue of unnecessary delay is also being applied with respect to the communication of the outcome of home assessment reports. In our view, in the event of a negative home assessment report, legal practitioners can work with their clients to locate an alternate residence if practitioners are promptly advised of this decision. Again, we strongly urge that the Parole Board practice mandate that legal representatives be advised of the outcome of a home assessment report, which affects their clients, at the time of the decision being made.

We would be pleased to meet with you to discuss these issues further. Please contact Ms Binari De Saram, a Senior Policy Solicitor with our office, on [REDACTED] or [REDACTED], to arrange a mutually convenient meeting time.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully



Dr John de Groot
President