



27 March 2020

The Hon Anastacia Palaszczuk MP
Premier and Minister for Trade

The Hon Deb Frecklington MP
Leader of the Opposition

By email only

Dear Premier and Leader of the Opposition

Urgent response needed to COVID-19 in Places of Detention

We write regarding the growing threat that prisons and youth detention centres pose to the spread of COVID-19 in the Queensland community.

The news that a corrections officer in Brisbane has tested positive for COVID-19 highlights the very real possibility that corrective institutions could be a source of an outbreak, with the virus spreading between inmates and staff, and then affecting people in the community.

We welcome the planning that agencies have undertaken to date regarding the safety of officers and the wellbeing of those in your care.

We are conscious, all the same, that the youth detention centres are at capacity and the prisons are nearing that position. This situation makes it extremely difficult for agencies to manage social distancing within the facilities.

We request that the Government and the Opposition urgently support the establishment and resourcing of a streamlined process for bail applications and for parole applications. This may require some legislative amendment, or it may be a matter of relevant government agencies, the courts and the legal profession working together to put in place an efficient process to handle a high volume of applications in the coming weeks.

This will ensure that the health and safety of the community is protected and that sound decisions are made according to law in individual cases.

We would be very happy to contribute to the co-ordination of such a scheme, the drafting of appropriate legislation if necessary and, in any case, to discuss this issue further with each of you.

We would be grateful for your urgent response.

Yours sincerely



Rebecca Treston QC

President, Bar Association of Queensland



Luke Murphy

President, Law Society of Queensland



Scott McDougall

Human Rights Commissioner

CC:

The Hon Yvette D'Ath MP

Attorney-General and Minister for Justice



The Hon David Janetzki MP

Shadow Attorney-General and Shadow Minister for Justice

