



National Network of Incarcerated
& Formerly Incarcerated Women & Girls

23 May 2024

Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC)
Justice Responses to Sexual Violence
jrsv@alrc.gov.au

Dear Commissioners

As a National Network, we welcome the opportunity to provide input into the Justice Responses to Sexual Violence inquiry.

The National Network of Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Women and Girls (National Network) represents women, girls, feminine identifying and non-binary people who are currently in prison, who have been to prison, those who are currently living within the confines of the criminal injustice system and those who have exited the system. Our membership is drawn from all over so called Australia.

Our Network in Australia was founded in 2020 and remains an abolitionist organisation committed to ending the incarceration of women and girls. Collectively we argue that prison will never be a safe place for women or girls, and in fact they are spaces and places that deepen poverty, increase trauma and cause further social and economic harm. Prisons, in our opinion, do not result in an increase in public or community safety.

The basis of our submission to the inquiry is to fully support and endorse Sister Inside's submission that the ALRC must consider transformative justice approaches for responding to sexual violence. As an abolitionist organisation, and a national network of women who have been incarcerated, and many of us having been subjected to sexual violence in various situations, we argue that transformative justice approaches are entirely distinct from the criminal punishment system. They focus on prioritising the needs of survivors, encouraging those responsible for sexual violence to take accountability for their actions, and involving the wider community in addressing and changing the conditions that enabled such violence.

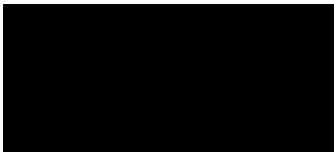
Current responses to sexual violence, driven by police and the criminal punishment system, are based on the belief that sexual violence is perpetrated by a few 'bad' individuals who will be 'reformed' and 'rehabilitated' after being punished, and that this punishment will deter others from committing similar acts. These misguided beliefs underpin policies, laws, and practices that emphasise individual punishment, surveillance, and isolation. Instead of promoting accountability and healing for people who cause sexual harm, the criminal punishment system perpetuates further violence, including state sanctioned violence within prisons.



Many of the women in our network want their voices to be heard and for their stories to be validated. As victim-survivors of sexual and other forms of violence we seek respect for our voice and agency, accountability from the person who harmed us, and assurance that such harm will not happen again. Prisons and punishment do not deliver this kind of justice. Transformative justice, on the other hand, is a practice that focuses on supporting and honouring the wishes and feelings of victim-survivors without inflicting further harm. The process of transformative justice enables victim-survivors to define what accountability would look like for them.

As a National Network, we urge the inquiry to consider new approaches to addressing sexual violence that more effectively meet the needs of victim-survivors, accountability practices, and benefit the wider community. It is time that we do something different. It is time that we think about how we can work towards safety for all.

Yours sincerely



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