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The Hon John Dowd AO QC
President
Community Justice Coalition
PO Box 345
BROADWAY NSW 2007

Dear Mr Dowd

Thank you for your email dated 13 December 2016, in which you attached a proposal in relation to the delivery of rehabilitation programs to domestic violence offenders serving a custodial sentence.

I can see that online counselling in prison cells may answer a need for correctional centres that are unable to provide the professional resources needed to address offending behaviours in face-to-face group programs.

In the Northern Territory, the correctional centres utilise clinical resources (psychologists and social workers) to address the issue of violent offending, including domestic violence, in a number of ways:

- Psycho-Educational Programs:
 - Family Violence Program: this program is run in both NT correctional centres, the Alice Springs Correctional Centre and the Darwin Correctional Centre. The program is also run in a number of communities across the Top End and Central region of the Northern Territory.
- Treatment Programs:
 - Violent Offender Treatment Program: this program is run in NT correctional centres for a period of six months.
 - Violent Offender Treatment Program-Moderate: this program is run in NT correctional centres for a period of three months.

Prior to participation in any of the above programs, an extensive assessment is undertaken with each prisoner to determine criminogenic risks and needs that require treatment. Outcomes from such assessments, together with clinical interviews, determine what level of intensity and duration of treatment is required for each offender to adequately address their offending behaviour. In essence, one size does not fit all.

The NT has very high rates of domestic violence and the Department of the Attorney-General and Justice is acutely aware that clinical resources must be utilised to address this issue. Offenders in NT correctional centres are not bypassed but are actively engaged in the therapeutic process.

Certainly offending behaviours are challenged by clinicians, but clients are not 'confronted' and are, in fact, treated with the utmost respect. The programs are delivered in a culturally sensitive manner, utilising experiential hands-on learning techniques, storytelling, art, music, poetry, role plays etc, rather than classroom style learning with overheads and giving out written homework tasks. In addition, the programs are developed in collaboration with Indigenous Elders across the NT.

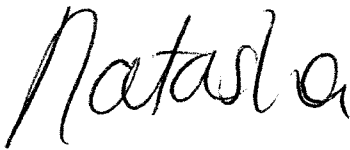
The Department of the Attorney-General and Justice has ensured that statistics related to treatment program participation and completion rates, together with statistics related to other variables such as employment, education and non-government organisation support have been collected over the past few years. Such data collection will assist to determine how rehabilitation programs are helping to cut recidivism rates.

The Northern Territory Government is committed to reducing domestic violence in the community and agrees that the online learning tool within prisons may help with this problem.

To this end, I have asked the Department of the Attorney-General and Justice to investigate its ability to support a web-based Domestic Violence Program and it appears that this is achievable.

The appropriate contact is Ms Barbara Sampson, Director, Offender Services and Programs who can be contacted by telephone on (08) 8935 7580.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Natasha' followed by a stylized flourish.

NATASHA FYLES

13 MAR 2017