



Media Release (11/01/2017)

SASS welcomes proposed changes to sexual assault provisions

The Sexual Assault Support Service (SASS) welcomes the Government's proposed changes to the sexual assault provisions within the Tasmanian Criminal Code. The draft Criminal Code Amendment (Sexual Assault) Bill 2017, released on 10th January of this year, adopts the changes suggested in a 2016 Bill put forward by Labor to redefine the criminal offence of rape.

Presently the Tasmanian criminal offence of rape does not include all forms of penetration without consent of the other person, including a female raping a male or another woman. Instead, a perpetrator may be found guilty of the lesser crime of aggravated sexual assault, which carries a much shorter sentence than rape. Tasmania is the last state to have this kind of limited definition of rape, despite the fact that rape through other means than penile penetration is still a traumatic event that can have significant and ongoing consequences for the victim. SASS therefore supports broadening the definition of sexual penetration to include a greater scope of sexual assaults. These amendments mark a significant, positive change from historically gendered and restrictive definitions of sexual intercourse and assault.

SASS will be providing feedback on the Bill, and will be suggesting the addition of Objectives and Guiding Principles clauses. These types of clauses assist in interpretation of the provisions relating to sexual assault, and help to guide cultural change around this critical issue. The inclusion of an objectives clause and guiding principles concerning Tasmanian sexual assault provisions would bring multiple benefits, including providing an aid to judicial and practitioner interpretation, serving an educational function in dispelling myths surrounding sexual assault and articulating a clear policy message regarding the nature and context of sexual assault.

For more information on this media release please contact Jill Maxwell, SASS CEO, on (03) 6231 0044 or 0427 230 067.