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Queensland Law Reform Commission
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**Review of Section 280 of Queensland Criminal Code – domestic discipline
Response to changing laws surrounding Domestic Discipline**

To the Queensland Government Law Reform Commission,

We were heartened to read your review of Section 280 of the Criminal Code (domestic discipline) in your recent report. It is encouraging to see the Commission recognise the importance of protecting children from violence under Queensland law. We also welcome your acknowledgement of the continued prevalence of physical punishment in Australia, and that its harmful effects are now far better understood than when the Criminal Code was first written. We strongly encourage the selection of Option 1: Repeal the defence.

Governments have a history of intervening in family matters when evidence clearly shows harm to children—such as in the introduction of seatbelt and car seat laws. The evidence surrounding corporal punishment is now equally compelling. Over the past decade, research has consistently demonstrated its adverse impact on children’s emotional, behavioural, neurological, and social development. It is also associated with an increased risk of involvement in intimate partner violence later in life. The strong link between physical discipline and physical abuse cannot be ignored—where physical punishment is permitted, there is always a risk of escalation to abuse and even death. A complete ban on physical violence is essential to eliminate this dangerous grey area.

On behalf of our 130+ members in the *End Physical Punishment of Australian Children* (EPPAC) advocacy group (<https://www.pafra.org/eppac>), we fully support Option 1: repeal the defence that allows corporal punishment. Any alternative leaves room for interpretation and increases the risk of harm. For many parents, the line between "discipline" and abuse is unclear, and that ambiguity is dangerous.

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We would also like to draw your attention to two recent and relevant studies that provide an important long-term perspective on the impact of corporal punishment:

1. **An Australian study** (Poulsen et al, 2025) found that children who experienced corporal punishment (especially from fathers) were at greater risk of later involvement in physical intimate partner violence in adulthood. This highlights a critical issue—normalising violence in a loving parent-child relationship can set the foundation for accepting violence in adult intimate relationships. If we are serious about addressing Australia’s domestic violence crisis, early prevention must start in the home.
2. **A recent international country comparison** (Cramm et al., 2023) found lower rates of adolescent suicide in countries that banned corporal punishment, with reductions in rates occurring on average 12 to 13 years after laws are changed.

Imagine if Queensland led the nation by aligning with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and offering full legal protection to children from violence. This would be a powerful step toward reducing societal violence and improving the long-term health, wellbeing, and productivity of all Australians.

We urge the Commission to adopt **Option 1: Repeal the defence**, as endorsed by the members of our EPPAC group, and fully ban corporal punishment.

Yours sincerely,

End Physical Punishment of Australian Children (EPPAC)

Auspiced by the [Parenting and Family Research Alliance](#)



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