

## **National Legal Aid welcomes the passage of legislation to establish a Commonwealth Parole Board**

National Legal Aid (NLA) welcomes the passage of legislation to establish an independent Commonwealth Parole Board, marking a significant step forward for fairness, transparency and community safety in the federal parole system.

The legislation will bring the Commonwealth into line with every Australian state and territory by removing parole decision-making from elected officials and vesting it in an independent, expert body.

NLA has long advocated for reform of the federal parole framework. Under the former arrangements, Commonwealth offenders were afforded fewer procedural safeguards than state and territory prisoners, with no prescribed procedure that must be followed in considering and determining parole, and no express requirement that the person be given legal assistance or the opportunity to make submissions.

“The establishment of an independent Commonwealth Parole Board is an important step that strengthens procedural fairness and improves confidence in parole decision-making,” said Yvette D’Ath, Executive Director of National Legal Aid.

“Independent, expert decision-making is essential to ensuring parole decisions are transparent, evidence-based and made in the interests of community safety.”

The legislation recognises the protective role of parole in reducing reoffending by supporting supervised reintegration into the community. Research consistently shows that parole supervision improves public safety outcomes and reduces long-term costs within the justice system.

One of the primary benefits of an independent authority is that it can be constituted by a panel of statutorily appointed members with a broad range of expertise and qualifications, better reflecting the diversity of our community.

NLA also welcomes the commitment to review the operation of the Board and the federal parole framework within three years of commencement.

“Access to legal assistance will also be critical to support the effective implementation of these reforms, particularly where counsel has been appointed to assist the Commonwealth Parole Board or where the offender has mental health, cognitive or physical disabilities or is from a non-English speaking background,” said Ms. D’Ath.

“NLA looks forward to working with the Commonwealth Parole Board and the Attorney-General’s Department to ensure the new system delivers fair, accountable and effective parole outcomes.”

**For further comment, please contact: [nla@nationallegalaid.org.au](mailto:nla@nationallegalaid.org.au)**