

June 20, 2011.

Mr. Paul McKnight,
Executive Director,
NSW Law Reform Commission,
Level 13,
10 Spring Street,
SYDNEY.

Dear Mr. McKnight,

I am writing with regard to the proposed review of the bail legislation which, in my view, is long overdue. My interest stems from the 20 years spent as an Official Visitor in NSW prisons. During this time I have worked in major prisons in Sydney and visited others in country areas.

Why I believe a review is warranted is the long established practice of holding in prison often for months, even years, a large number of alleged offenders awaiting trial. On examination many are on remand for alleged crimes where the offender would not be a threat to the community.

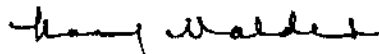
This time-honored practice of refusing bail to so many costs the State a great deal of money and has done so for many years particularly since the bail laws were changed so I welcome this review for that alone.

A major reduction in numbers would not only save money and avert the overcrowding of prisons but would have the twin benefit of providing a much fairer system of dealing with many (but not all) of the men and women awaiting trial, especially those finally acquitted.

Denying bail to those suffering a mental illness has been of great concern to me where they can find themselves exposed to various forms of physical and mental abuse, often from "seasoned" prisoners. Cognitive impaired and mentally unstable people have difficulty in stating their case in court and invariably end up in prison on remand. Inflicting this type of punishment on the mentally disabled has been a disgrace.

Another point worth mentioning is the burden of mortgage repayment. Without an income families suffer when the prime provider is incarcerated for lengthy periods, the worst case scenario being when an inmate is acquitted and has lost everything.

Yours sincerely,



Kay Valder OAM - Parklea CC