EXPOSURE DRAFT

Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence

(Prepared by Parliamentary Counsel's Office)

Domestic Violence Agencies (Information Sharing) Amendment Bill 2022

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Domestic Violence Agencies (Information Sharing) Amendment Bill 2022

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Domestic Violence Agencies (Information Sharing) Amendment Bill 2022

A Bill for

An Act to amend the Domestic Violence Agencies Act 1986

The Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory enacts as follows:

Name of Act

This Act is the *Domestic Violence Agencies (Information Sharing)* Amendment Act 2022.

Commencement

This Act commences on a day fixed by the Minister by written notice.

- Note 1 The naming and commencement provisions automatically commence on the notification day (see Legislation Act, s 75 (1)).
- Note 2 A single day or time may be fixed, or different days or times may be fixed, for the commencement of different provisions (see Legislation Act, s 77 (1)).
- If a provision has not commenced within 6 months beginning on the Note 3 notification day, it automatically commences on the first day after that period (see Legislation Act, s 79).

Legislation amended

This Act amends the *Domestic Violence Agencies Act 1986*.

New section 3A

in part 1, insert

3A Offences against Act—application of Criminal Code etc

Other legislation applies in relation to offences against this Act.

Note 1 Criminal Code

> The Criminal Code, ch 2 applies to all offences against this Act (see Code, pt 2.1).

> The chapter sets out the general principles of criminal responsibility (including burdens of proof and general defences), and defines terms used for offences to which the Code applies (eg conduct, intention, recklessness and strict liability).

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Note 2 Penalty units

The Legislation Act, s 133 deals with the meaning of offence penalties that are expressed in penalty units.

5 Use and disclosure of protected information Section 16U

omit

6 Part 4

substitute

Part 4 Information sharing between certain entities

Division 4.1 Purpose and principles

17 Purpose—pt 4

The purpose of this part is to promote the safety, protection and wellbeing of at-risk people by—

- (a) providing for information sharing entities to disclose information to other information sharing entities to identify, assess, manage and reduce risks of domestic and family violence; and
- (b) promoting and supporting the coordination and collaboration between information sharing entities to identify, assess, manage and reduce risks of domestic and family violence.

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18 Principles for information sharing—pt 4

- (1) In disclosing information under this part, an information sharing entity must take reasonable steps to disclose the information only to the extent necessary for a protection purpose.
- (2) In disclosing information about a person under this part, an information sharing entity must take reasonable steps to disclose the information in a way that—
 - (a) takes into account the person's—
 - (i) cultural, sexual and gender identity; and
 - (ii) religious or spiritual beliefs (if any); and
 - (b) if the person identifies as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander—
 - (i) promotes the person's right to self-determination and cultural sensitivities; and
 - (ii) considers the person's family and community connections; and
 - (c) if the person is a child or young person—takes into account the age, maturity and developmental capacity of the child or young person.

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Division 4.2 Important concepts

19 Meaning of *information*—pt 4

(1) In this part:

information—

- (a) means information, whether true or not, in any form and includes an opinion and advice; but
- (b) does not include excluded information.
- (2) In this section:

excluded information means information that, if disclosed, could reasonably be expected to—

- (a) endanger a person's life or physical safety; or
- (b) prejudice an investigation of a contravention, or possible contravention, of a territory law; or
- (c) prejudice a coronial inquest or inquiry; or
- (d) enable the existence or identity of a confidential source of information for the enforcement or administration of a territory law to be revealed; or
- (e) prejudice the effectiveness of a lawful method or procedure for preventing, detecting, investigating or dealing with a contravention, or possible contravention, of a territory law; or
- (f) prejudice a proceeding in a court or tribunal; or
- (g) contravene a court order; or

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(h) be contrary to the public interest.

Note The Legislation Act, s 170 and s 171 deal with the application of the privilege against self-incrimination and client legal privilege.

20 Meaning of information sharing entity—pt 4

(1) In this part:

information sharing entity means any of the following:

- (a) the information sharing coordinator;
- (b) an ACT education provider;
- (c) the chief executive officer, Calvary;
- (d) the chief police officer;
- (e) a commissioner under the *Human Rights Commission Act* 2005;
- (f) a court or tribunal, when acting in an administrative capacity;
- (g) the DFVR coordinator;
- (h) the director-general;
- (i) any other director-general of an administrative unit allocated responsibility for 1 or more of the following matters:
 - (i) children and young people;
 - (ii) community services;
 - (iii) corrective services;
 - (iv) disability services;
 - (v) education, including early childhood development;
 - (vi) emergency services and policing;

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- (vii) family safety and support services;
- (viii) health services and facilities, including mental health;
 - (ix) housing services, including homelessness services;
 - (x) restorative justice;
 - (xi) youth justice;
- (xii) other services or facilities for at-risk people or people of concern;
- (j) the public trustee and guardian;
- (k) the registrar of firearms;
- (1) the sentence administration board;
- (m) any other entity declared to be an information sharing entity under subsection (2).
- (2) The Minister may declare an entity to be an information sharing entity.
- (3) A declaration is a notifiable instrument.
- (4) In this section:

ACT education provider—see the Children and Young People Act 2008, section 25 (3).

chief executive officer, Calvary—see the *Health Act 1993*, section 50.

(5) For subsection (1), a court or tribunal is *acting in an administrative capacity* other than when it is exercising its jurisdiction in relation to any proceeding before it.

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21 Meaning of at-risk person—pt 4

For this part, a person is an at-risk person if—

- (a) the person has been subjected to domestic or family violence; or
- (b) there is a risk that the person will be subjected to domestic or family violence.

22 Meaning of person of concern—pt 4

For this part, a person is a *person of concern* if—

- (a) the person has committed domestic or family violence; or
- (b) there is a risk that the person will commit domestic or family violence.

23 Meaning of connected person—pt 4

For this part, a person is a connected person if—

- (a) information about the person is relevant to a protection purpose; and
- (b) they are not—
 - (i) an at-risk person; or
 - (ii) a person of concern.

Example

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For example, Anna is an at-risk person, David is a person of concern for Anna, they have children at a school. An information sharing entity has concerns about Anna because she has not been seen recently. The entity asks the school if there has been any change to Anna's routine in picking up the children from school. The children are picked up some days by Anna and some days by Aunty Jo. Aunty Jo is a connected person in this situation.

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24 Meaning of protection purpose—pt 4

In this part:

protection purpose means any of the following purposes:

- (a) assessing whether an at-risk person is being subjected to, or is likely to be subjected to, domestic or family violence;
- (b) assessing whether a person of concern is committing, or is likely to commit, domestic or family violence;
- (c) taking action to prevent or reduce the risk of domestic and family violence occurring, including by providing assistance or a service to an at-risk person or a person of concern;
- (d) responding to domestic and family violence, threatened domestic or family violence or suspected domestic or family violence, including by providing assistance or a service to an at-risk person or a person of concern.

Division 4.3 Information sharing coordinator

25 Information sharing coordinator

- (1) The Minister may declare an entity to be the *information sharing coordinator* if satisfied that the entity is a suitable entity to exercise the functions of the information sharing coordinator.
- (2) A declaration is a notifiable instrument.

26 Functions of information sharing coordinator

The main functions of the information sharing coordinator are—

(a) to facilitate the disclosure of information between information sharing entities for protection purposes; and

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- (b) facilitate the use of information by information sharing entities for a protection purpose; and
 - **Example—coordinating information sharing entities in taking action** holding a service coordination meeting with information sharing entities
- (c) any other function given to the information sharing coordinator under this part.

Division 4.4 Disclosure of information

27 Information sharing entity may request information

- (1) An information sharing entity (the *requesting entity*) may ask another information sharing entity to disclose information held by the other entity for a protection purpose.
- (2) The information sharing entity asked to disclose information under subsection (1) must, as soon as practicable, but not later than any time prescribed by regulation, disclose the requested information to the requesting entity.
- (3) However, the information sharing entity need not disclose the information if the entity advises the requesting entity of a reasonable excuse for not disclosing it.
- (4) If an information sharing entity does not disclose information under this section, the entity must notify the information sharing coordinator, in writing or orally, of the following:
 - (a) the name of the requesting entity;
 - (b) the nature of the information requested;
 - (c) the reasonable excuse for not disclosing the information.

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(5) If a notification under subsection (4) is given orally, the information sharing entity must, as soon as practicable, but not later than any time prescribed by regulation, notify the information sharing coordinator, in writing, of the information mentioned in subsection (4) (a), (b) and (c).

28 Information sharing entity may disclose information

An information sharing entity may, on its own initiative, disclose information to another information sharing entity for a protection purpose.

29 Requirements for disclosure

In disclosing information under this division, an information sharing entity must—

- (a) comply with any requirements for consent under section 30, section 31 or section 32 that are relevant to the information; and
- (b) act in accordance with the following:
 - (i) the principles for information sharing in section 18;
 - (ii) any guidelines made by the Minister under section 41;
 - (iii) any guidelines made by the entity under section 42.

Note Mandatory reporting obligations under the *Children and Young People Act 2008* are not affected by the operation of this part (see s 43).

30 Consent—at-risk adults

- (1) This section applies to the disclosure of information under this division in relation to an adult who is an at-risk person.
- (2) An information sharing entity must not disclose the information without the consent of the at-risk person.

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- (3) However, an information sharing entity may disclose the information without the at-risk person's consent if the information sharing entity—
 - (a) has taken reasonable steps to obtain the at-risk person's consent;
 - (b) reasonably believes that seeking the at-risk person's consent may cause a risk to the life, health or safety of the at-risk person; or
 - (c) reasonably believes that the circumstances are so serious and urgent that immediate disclosure of the information is necessary for a protection purpose.

31 Consent—at-risk adults with impaired decision-making capacity

- (1) This section applies if an information sharing entity—
 - (a) is seeking the consent of an adult who is an at-risk person under this division; and
 - (b) reasonably believes that the at-risk person requires support to make or communicate a decision about consent in relation to the disclosure of information under this part.
- (2) The information sharing entity must provide, as far as practicable, access to all reasonable supports necessary for the person to make and communicate their decision.

Examples

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- 1 offering the person an opportunity to contact a support person
- 2 offering additional time to make the decision

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- (3) If, despite all reasonable support, the at-risk person does not have decision-making capacity in relation to the disclosure of information under this part, the information sharing entity—
 - (a) may disclose the information without the consent of the at-risk person; but
 - (b) if the at-risk person has a guardian—must not disclose the information without the consent of the at-risk person's guardian.
- (4) However, the information sharing entity may disclose the information without the consent of the at-risk person's guardian if the information sharing entity—
 - (a) has taken reasonable steps to obtain the guardian's consent; or
 - (b) reasonably believes that the guardian is a person of concern in relation to the at-risk person; or
 - (c) reasonably believes that seeking the guardian's consent may cause a risk to the life, health or safety of the at-risk person; or
 - (d) reasonably believes that the circumstances are so serious and urgent that immediate disclosure of the information is necessary for a protection purpose.
- (5) In this section—

decision-making capacity—a person has decision-making capacity in relation to the disclosure of information if the person can, with assistance if needed—

- (a) understand when a decision about the disclosure of information about the person needs to be made; and
- (b) understand the facts that relate to the decision; and

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- (c) understand the main choices available to the person in relation to the decision; and
- (d) weigh up the consequences of the main choices; and
- (e) understand how the consequences affect the person; and
- (f) on the basis of paragraphs (a) to (e), make the decision; and
- (g) communicate the decision in whatever way the person can.

guardian—see the Guardianship and Management of Property Act 1991, dictionary.

32 Consent—at-risk children and young people

- (1) This section applies to the disclosure of information under this division in relation to a child or young person who is an at-risk person.
- (2) An information sharing entity must not disclose the information without the consent of the carer of the child or young person.
- (3) However, an information sharing entity may disclose the information without the consent of the carer of the child or young person if the information sharing entity—
 - (a) has taken reasonable steps to obtain the carer's consent; or
 - (b) reasonably believes that the carer is a person of concern in relation to the child or young person; or
 - (c) reasonably believes that seeking the carer's consent may cause a risk to the life, health or safety of the child or young person; or
 - (d) reasonably believes that the circumstances are so serious and urgent that immediate disclosure of the information is necessary for a protection purpose.

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(4) In this section:

carer, of a child or young person, means a person with parental responsibility for the child or young person under the *Children and Young People Act 2008*, division 1.3.2.

33 Consent of person of concern not required

An information sharing entity may disclose information under this division about a person of concern without the consent of the person of concern.

34 Information sharing coordinator may require disclosure

- (1) This section applies if an information sharing entity has not disclosed information requested under section 27 (2) (a *responding entity*).
- (2) The information sharing coordinator may, on application by the information sharing entity that requested the information (a *requesting entity*) or on the information sharing coordinator's own initiative, require the responding entity to disclose the information to the requesting entity.
- (3) However, the information sharing coordinator must not require the responding entity to disclose the information to the requesting entity unless the information sharing coordinator—
 - (a) believes on reasonable grounds that—
 - (i) the responding entity holds the requested information; and
 - (ii) the requesting entity requires the requested information for a protection purpose; and
 - (iii) disclosure of the information is necessary for a protection purpose; and

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- (b) takes into account—
 - (i) any requirements for consent under section 30, section 31 and section 32 that are relevant to the information; and
 - (ii) any guidelines made by the Minister under section 41.
- (4) The information sharing coordinator must give the requirement in writing and must state—
 - (a) how the responding entity must comply with the requirement; and
 - (b) the period within which the responding entity must comply with the requirement.
- (5) The responding entity must comply with the requirement.

Note In disclosing the information, the responding entity must comply with the requirements for disclosure in s 29.

35 Disclosing entity must tell person about disclosure

- (1) An information sharing entity that discloses information in relation to an at-risk person or a connected person must, as soon as practicable, but not later than any time prescribed by regulation, take reasonable steps to tell the person about the disclosure, including—
 - (a) the name of the information sharing entity to which the information was disclosed; and
 - (b) when the information was disclosed; and
 - (c) the nature of the information disclosed; and
 - (d) any outcomes of the disclosure.

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- (2) However, the information sharing entity need not tell the person about the disclosure if—
 - (a) the person has indicated, in writing, that they do not wish to be told about the disclosure; or
 - (b) another entity has already told the person about the disclosure; or
 - (c) it is not possible or practical in the circumstances to tell the person about the disclosure.
- (3) An information sharing entity must not tell a person of concern that information in relation to the person of concern has been disclosed.

Information sharing entity taking action must tell person about risks

- (1) This section applies if—
 - (a) an information sharing entity proposes to take action as a result of information disclosed under this part; and
 - (b) the information sharing entity reasonably believes that the proposed action may cause a risk to the life, health or safety of an at-risk person or connected person.

Example—information sharing entity proposes to take action

the chief police officer proposes to increase the monitoring of a person of concern

(2) The information sharing entity must take reasonable steps to tell the at-risk person or connected person about the proposed action and the risk as soon as practicable, but within the period prescribed by regulation.

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- (3) However, the information sharing entity need not tell the at-risk person or connected person if—
 - (a) another entity has already told the person; or
 - (b) it is not possible or practical in the circumstances to tell the person.

Note If the disclosed information is to be used for a purpose other than a protection purpose, the information sharing entity must consult with the information sharing coordinator (see s 39).

Division 4.5 Use of disclosed information

37 Use of disclosed information by receiving entity

- (1) An information sharing entity that receives information under this part may only use the information—
 - (a) for a protection purpose; or
 - (b) in a way provided under this division.
- (2) In deciding how to use information disclosed under this part, the safety, protection and wellbeing of the at-risk person must be the paramount consideration.

38 Use of disclosed information by information sharing coordinator

- (1) If the information sharing coordinator receives information in relation to an at-risk person, the coordinator—
 - (a) must consider the information; and

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- (b) may take any action in relation to the information that the coordinator considers appropriate for a protection purpose, including the following:
 - (i) seeking information from an information sharing entity to decide the most appropriate action to take;
 - (ii) giving advice to an information sharing entity about appropriate action to take;
 - (iii) providing assistance to the at-risk person and, if appropriate, their family members, for example, by giving advice or providing or arranging support services;
 - (iv) referring the at-risk person and, if appropriate, their family members to a government or non-government entity for advice or support services;
 - (v) if the information sharing coordinator suspects on reasonable grounds that a matter arising from the information relates to a family violence offence—referring the matter to the chief police officer.
- (2) In deciding whether to take action under this section, the safety, protection and wellbeing of the at-risk person must be the paramount consideration.
- (3) In this section:

family member—see the Family Violence Act 2016, section 9.

39 Use of disclosed information for another purpose

(1) This section applies to an information sharing entity (other than the information sharing coordinator) that receives information under this part.

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- (2) The information sharing entity must not use the information for a purpose other than a protection purpose without consulting the information sharing coordinator.
- (3) In making a decision about the use of the information—
 - (a) the information sharing entity must consider whether the proposed use of the information would be in the best interests of the at-risk person; and
 - (b) the safety, protection and wellbeing of the at-risk person must be the paramount consideration.

Examples—using disclosed information for another purpose

- activities relating to care and protection of a child
- charging a person for an offence
- (4) Subsection (1) does not apply to the extent that the information sharing entity that receives the information needs to use the information immediately in the performance of the entity's functions.
- (5) In this section:

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use, in relation to information, includes disclose, or give access to, the information to someone else.

40 Information sharing coordinator must tell person about additional risks

- (1) This section applies if—
 - (a) an information sharing entity proposes to take action as a result of information disclosed under this part; and
 - (b) the information sharing coordinator reasonably believes the information sharing entity's proposed action may cause a risk to the life, health or safety of an at-risk person or connected person.

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- (2) The information sharing coordinator must take reasonable steps to tell the at-risk person or connected person about the proposed action and the risk as soon as practicable, but within the period prescribed by regulation.
- (3) However, the information sharing coordinator need not tell the at-risk person or connected person if—
 - (a) another entity has already told the person; or

Example—another entity has already told the person

- if the information sharing entity is aware of the risk, the information sharing entity must tell the person about the risk (see s 36)
- (b) it is not possible or practical in the circumstances to tell the person.

Division 4.6 Miscellaneous

41 Information sharing guidelines—Minister

- (1) The Minister may make guidelines about the disclosure of information under this part, including the following:
 - (a) arrangements for seeking the consent of a person;
 - (b) arrangements for disclosing information without consent;
 - (c) operating requirements for information sharing entities.

Examples

- 1 information and data storage requirements
- 2 who may give or receive information on behalf of an entity
- 3 processes to support clients who have intersecting vulnerabilities
- (2) A guideline is a notifiable instrument.

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42 Information sharing guidelines—entities

- (1) An information sharing entity may make guidelines about the disclosure of information by the entity under this part.
- (2) A guideline must not be inconsistent with any guideline made by the Minister under section 41.
- (3) A guideline must be—
 - (a) available for inspection by anyone, without charge, during ordinary office hours at the office of the information sharing entity; or
 - (b) published on a website controlled by the information sharing entity.

43 Relationship with other laws

- (1) This part does not affect the operation of any other law that requires or enables an information sharing entity to disclose information to another information sharing entity.
- (2) An information sharing entity must refuse to give a person access under an information law to information in relation to an at-risk person received under this part if—
 - (a) the person is a person of concern in relation to the at-risk person;
 - (b) the information sharing entity believes on reasonable grounds that giving the person access to the information may cause a risk to the life, health or safety of the at-risk person or a connected person.

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Amendment bill 2022

(3) In this section:

information law means the following:

- (a) Freedom of Information Act 2016;
- (b) Health Records (Privacy and Access) Act 1997;
- (c) Information Privacy Act 2014.

44 Protection from liability—territory employees

- (1) A territory employee is not civilly liable for conduct engaged in honestly and without recklessness—
 - (a) in the exercise of a function under this part; or
 - (b) in the reasonable belief that the conduct was in the exercise of a function under this part.
- (2) Any civil liability that would, apart from this section, attach to the territory employee attaches instead to the Territory.
- (3) In this section:

conduct means an act or omission to do an act.

territory employee means a person who is—

- (a) a public servant; or
- (b) employed by a Territory authority.

45 Protection from liability—generally

(1) Civil or criminal liability is not incurred only because a person discloses information as permitted under this part, honestly and without recklessness.

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- (2) Also, disclosing information honestly and without recklessness under this part is not—
 - (a) a breach of confidence; or
 - (b) a breach of professional etiquette or ethics; or
 - (c) a breach of a rule of professional conduct.

46 Review of part

- (1) The Minister must review the operation of this part as soon as practicable after the end of its 2nd year of operation.
- (2) The Minister must present a report of the review to the Legislative Assembly within 12 months after the day the review is started.
- (3) This section expires 4 years after the day it commences.

Part 5 Miscellaneous

47 Approval of crisis support organisations

- (1) The Minister may approve an organisation to be a crisis support organisation for this Act.
- (2) An approval is a disallowable instrument.

Disclosure of information to an approved crisis support organisation

(1) This section applies if a police officer or a staff member of the Australian Federal Police suspects on reasonable grounds that a family violence offence has been, is being or is likely to be committed in relation to a person.

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- (2) The police officer or staff member may disclose to an approved crisis support organisation any information that is likely to aid the organisation in rendering assistance to the person or to any child of the person.
- (3) In this section:

carer, of a child or young person, means a person with parental responsibility for the child or young person under the *Children and Young People Act 2008*, division 1.3.2.

child, of a person, includes—

- (a) a child or young person who normally lives with the person; and
- (b) a child or young person for whom the person is a carer.

49 Use and disclosure of protected information

- (1) An information holder commits an offence if—
 - (a) the information holder uses information; and
 - (b) the information is protected information about someone else (the *protected person*); and
 - (c) the information holder is reckless about whether the information is protected information about the protected person.

Maximum penalty: 50 penalty units, imprisonment for 6 months or both.

- (2) An information holder commits an offence if—
 - (a) the information holder does something that discloses information; and
 - (b) the information is protected information about a protected person; and

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- (c) the information holder is reckless about whether—
 - (i) the information is protected information about the protected person; and
 - (ii) doing the thing would result in the information being disclosed to someone else.

Maximum penalty: 50 penalty units, imprisonment for 6 months or both.

- (3) Subsections (1) and (2) do not apply if the information holder uses or discloses protected information about the protected person—
 - (a) under this Act or another territory law; or
 - (b) to the chief police officer in connection with a possible offence; or
 - (c) in relation to the exercise of a function, as an information holder, under this Act or another territory law; or
 - (d) in a court proceeding; or
 - (e) with the protected person's consent.

Note The defendant has an evidential burden in relation to the matters mentioned in s (3) (see Criminal Code, s 58).

- (4) An information holder need not disclose protected information to a court, or produce a document containing protected information to a court, unless it is necessary to do so for this Act or another territory law.
- (5) In this section:

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court includes a tribunal, authority or person having power to require the production of documents or the answering of questions.

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disclose includes—

- (a) communicate; or
- (b) publish.

information means information, whether true or not, in any form and includes an opinion and advice.

information holder means anyone who exercises, or has exercised, a function under this Act.

produce includes allow access to.

protected information means information about a person that is disclosed to, or obtained by, an information holder because of the exercise of a function under this Act by the information holder or someone else.

50 Regulation-making power

The Executive may make regulations for this Act.

7 Dictionary, note 2

insert

- public employee
- public trustee and guardian
- registrar of firearms
- sentence administration board
- working day

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8 Dictionary, definition of approved crisis support organisation

substitute

approved crisis support organisation means an organisation approved under section 47.

9 Dictionary, new definition of at-risk person

insert

at-risk person, for part 4 (Information sharing between certain entities)—see section 21.

10 Dictionary, definition of *child*

substitute

child—see the Children and Young People Act 2008, section 11.

11 Dictionary, new definition of connected person

insert

connected person, for part 4 (Information sharing between certain entities)—see section 23.

12 Dictionary, definition of *DFVR* coordinator

substitute

DFVR coordinator—see section 16D (1).

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13 Dictionary, new definitions

insert

information, for part 4 (Information sharing between certain entities)—see section 19.

information sharing coordinator, for part 4 (Information sharing between certain entities)—see section 25 (1).

information sharing entity, for part 4 (Information sharing between certain entities)—see section 20.

person of concern, for part 4 (Information sharing between certain entities)—see section 22.

protection purpose, for part 4 (Information sharing between certain entities)—see section 24.

use, in relation to information, includes make a record of the information.

young person—see the Children and Young People Act 2008, section 12.

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Endnotes

1 Presentation speech

Presentation speech made in the Legislative Assembly on 2022.

2 Notification

Notified under the Legislation Act on 2022.

3 Republications of amended laws

For the latest republication of amended laws, see www.legislation.act.gov.au.

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