

Stalking Law Submission Consultation Paper (Celeste's Law)

I have been struggling to put this submission together for the past few months, it's been pulling at my heart strings and been an ongoing battle in my head, and it continues to break my heart that as a family member of Celeste Manno [REDACTED] I need to put pen to paper so to speak, to ensure that I too play a role in pushing for the stalking law to urgently change to protect victims from Stalking [REDACTED]

My name is Carmela Melinda Di Mauro, Aggie Di Mauro is my sister and Celeste is my precious niece, goddaughter and for me a daughter, Alessandro, is my nephew and godson, My other sister Grace who is also Celeste's and Alessandro's godmother, and her son Jesse, my nephew is also my godson and Aggie's godson, our family unit consists of 6 people, a very close knit family, [REDACTED] [REDACTED], this has completely devastated, traumatized and broken us all, our life is over!

My beautiful Celeste was born with an amazing aura around her, she opened those beautiful blue eyes and I was instantly mesmerized by her, I discovered what true love was, her heart was bigger than her chest, always ready and willing to help anyone that needed help, always ready to give advice, always doing quirky things to put a smile on your face, always a kind word, always looking at the best in people and the positive side of things, she had hopes, dreams and aspirations, she was looking forward to finally moving to the next phase of her life where she could build new wonderful memories, memories she could cherish for the rest of her life, but her life was cut far too short [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

I have to visit her resting place now, that's all we have, look at her photo's, her videos, I am not able to see that beautiful smile of hers, or listen to that full hearted laughter of hers, I don't get to hear her tell me about her plans and how she's looking forward to them, or hear her sing with her beautiful voice or even hear her make that annoying screeching sound, I'm not able to kiss those gorgeous cheeks of hers or hug her for as long as I want, I don't get to have any of that anymore, I don't get to have her, I have no kids of my own and my 3 precious sweethearts, Celeste, Alessandro and Jesse have always known that they are my life, I live for them, now, I don't get to have her with me anymore!

When a victim goes to the Police and makes a report about a person harassing them via social media, emails, phone, snail mail, in person, it doesn't matter in what context, it should always be taken seriously by the police, to treat it anything less than serious, is a CRIME, [REDACTED]

Knowing my precious Celeste, [REDACTED] [REDACTED], she was meant to be safe, sleeping in her bed in the safety of her home, how could such a thing happen, [REDACTED]

So, in honor of my beautiful niece, I am going to put this submission in, so that her death may not be in vain, and she will be the reason many lives will be saved in future once Celeste's Law is passed.

[REDACTED] we were in lock down from March 2020 and those few times the Government gave us our liberty again, she was stressed, worried, pensive, never at peace, not wanting to worry us, and promising us all that she was always been vigilant when at work or out with her friends, or driving home, always looking out [REDACTED] what kind of a life was that for a 22 year old then, to nearly 24 years old?

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Victoria police must pay attention to what victims say and listen to their fears, they need to treat a stalking report as an urgent matter and not trivial, saying to a victim “close your social media accounts” shows that they don’t want their time or resources wasted, this makes victims shy away from even reporting further incidents to police as they won’t feel like they are being taken seriously. The police must have a priority system in place to ascertain what defines as a serious claim and if so, act on it urgently, and what falls into a trivial dispute. If this means having police officers trained in some form of stalking behaviour assessment, then it needs to be put in place urgently.

The adaptation of the Netherlands’ model of policing stalking offences would be a good place to start from, it should be mandatory that all police and court officials be put through an introduction of training modules and programs on stalking. Information sharing scheme on stalking in Victoria should be accessible, a stalking unit specifically specialized in stalking should be introduced

The system needs to give Law enforcement wider powers to monitor offenders that have contravened PSIO’s or IVO’s.

Once police recognize that the stalking offences are in fact of a serious nature, and they, the police put in place the Safety Intervention Order equivalent to that of a Family Violence Safety Notice, it then must be treated the same as the offences that apply to the family violence act which has the higher penalty of 5-years maximum for breaching as opposed to the PSIO of 2-years imprisonment, should an offender breach an intervention order, meaning they are a clear high-risk offender, as they have shown to have no regard for the law, the GPS ankle monitor should instantly be placed on them and the victim be simultaneously informed and given a device that alerts her/him should the perpetrator remove their tracking device or camera at any time, so the victim can place themselves in a safe place or go straight to the police station.

Tasmania’s ‘Project Vigilance’ model should be introduced and applied to certain, high-risk, stalkers or suspected stalkers.

A trial, run and administered by Tasmania Police and the State’s Department of Justice, commenced in 2018 and applied specifically to family violence offenders. Through the use of ankle bracelets and

body-worn cameras, the police concentrated in that trial on a group of perpetrators who were each subject of a family violence order. The police were then able to shortlist the candidates on the basis of which of them were most prone to making serious threats and/or engaging in high level emotional abuse and/or committing physical violence – that is, the likely level of safety risk they potentially represented to their victims.

The bracelets and/or cameras were linked to alarms that would begin sounding immediately if or when the tracked individual entered any of two warning zones and a one-kilometre exclusion zone around a victim's location. These alarms alerted the relevant victim (through a small portable device) and the staff in a dedicated 24/7 monitoring unit.

The preliminary results of the trial, across 52 of the participants, demonstrated a 70% reduction in assaults, 80% decrease in threats, an 82% reduction in high-risk family violence incidents, an 89% fall in allegations of emotional abuse, and a 100% decrease in reports of stalking.

A more recent analysis of the actions of 39 of the participants in the trial also showed that at least 69% of them committed no violence and/or only technical offences whilst they were electronically monitored. There also continued to be a notable reduction in family violence offending across the participants in the period following the trial. [REDACTED]

*Recommendations need to be made around risk assessment training for law enforcement officers.

*Recommendations need to be made around electronic monitoring for high-risk offenders, stalkers or suspected stalkers.

*Recommendation should be made to amend the PSIO Act to be in line with the Family Violence protection Act in relations to breaches of an IVO to include the higher penalty of 5-years maximum imprisonment.

*Recommendation should be in place with a dedicated stalking unit that is able to take action in the first instance by investigating the stalking allegation.

*Recommendations should be made as per the same risk management framework in the family violence context which include police, practitioners, and other organizations to identify risk of serious harm, as opposed to putting the onus exclusively on Victoria Police.

*Recommendations should be made to make it known to potential Stalkers that any crime leading to serious injury or death, will have them facing life imprisonment without the possibility of parole, life meaning the remaining years of their natural lives and or the death penalty if that were in place as I believe it should be in place.

*Recommendations should be made to put in place the adaptation of the Netherlands' model of policing stalking offences

*Recommendations should be made to put in place the Tasmania's 'Project Vigilance' model.

It is disgraceful that in a country like Australia, the public is not made aware that they have a say in Law Reform and Government are stagnant in changing laws that clearly have not been working and need to be reviewed. We should not have to wait for a death like my sweetheart's Celeste to take place before a law is reviewed, and it is just as disgraceful that there is more emphasis on the civil liberties of an offender than in protecting victims. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Melinda Di Mauro

Broken, shattered aunty to my precious Celeste Manno!

#hernamewascelestemanno

#saynernamecelestemanno

#justiceforcelestemanno