Parole Legislation Amendment Bill 2017

Explanatory note
This explanatory note relates to this Bill as introduced into Parliament.

Overview of Bill
The objects of this Bill are to amend the Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act 1999 (the Principal Act) and the Children (Detention Centres) Act 1987 as follows:

(a) to provide for the making of re-integration home detention orders for the release of suitable adult offenders under home detention conditions for a period of not more than 6 months before their parole orders take effect and for procedures for the revocation of those orders,

(b) to require the State Parole Authority (the Parole Authority) and the Children’s Court to consider risks to the safety of the community before making changes to parole conditions,

(c) to impose supervision as a condition of all parole orders and to provide for exemptions from or suspension of supervision in certain circumstances,

(d) to require the Parole Authority and the Children’s Court to consider risks to the safety of the community before revoking a parole order before the release of the offender and to enable the Attorney General, the Minister for Corrections (the Minister), the Commissioner of Corrective Services (the Commissioner) or a community corrections officer to request such a revocation,

(e) to require the Parole Authority not to make a parole order unless it is satisfied that it is in the interests of the safety of the community and to set out the principal matters to be considered for that purpose,

(f) to provide for parole orders (statutory parole orders) to be imposed automatically for offenders subject to terms of imprisonment of 3 years or less where a non-parole period is imposed on the sentence,
(g) to enable the Governor, in exercising the prerogative of mercy, to make a parole order in respect of an offender and to apply the legislative provisions for parole orders (other than those relating to making orders or restricting the making of orders) to any such parole order,

(h) to provide for notice to be given to registered victims of an adult offender of parole or re-integration home detention events, to provide an opportunity for victims to make submissions in response and to require or enable other information relating to an adult offender to be given to registered victims of the offender,

(i) to require health service providers to provide information about whether an adult offender on parole has attended a program or other activity as required under the parole order,

(j) to confer on the Parole Authority power to impose sanctions (up to and including revocation) for the breach of a re-integration home detention order by an adult offender,

(k) to confer on community corrections officers additional powers to impose sanctions for the breach of a parole order in less serious cases and to set out sanctions that may be imposed by the Parole Authority or Children’s Court in more serious cases (up to and including revocation),

(l) to confer on the Parole Authority and the Children’s Court power to revoke a parole order if satisfied that the offender poses a serious and immediate risk to the community that cannot be sufficiently mitigated or, in the case of an adult offender, if there is a breach of an associated re-integration home detention order,

(m) to provide for separate legislation for the parole system for juvenile offenders,

(n) to retain the current jurisdiction of the Children’s Court to determine matters relating to the parole of juvenile offenders and to provide for parole proceedings before the Court,

(o) to provide for the promotion of community safety to be the principal matter when considering parole for juvenile offenders, while also recognising that the rehabilitation and re-integration of juvenile offenders may be highly relevant to the safety of the community,

(p) to make procedures relating to further applications for parole after refusals more flexible than under the adult parole system,

(q) to re-enact for juvenile offenders provisions relating to terrorism offenders, parole conditions and the Supreme Court’s power to give directions to the Children’s Court if it finds that a parole order has been revoked on the basis of false, misleading or irrelevant information,

(r) to make other consequential amendments and to provide for savings and transitional matters consequent on the enactment of the proposed Act.

Outline of provisions
Clause 1 sets out the name (also called the short title) of the proposed Act.
Clause 2 provides for the commencement of the proposed Act on a day or days to be appointed by proclamation.

Schedule 1 Amendment of Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act 1999 No 93

Re-integration home detention
Schedule 1 [3] inserts proposed Part 5A into the Principal Act. The proposed Part provides for a scheme for the release of offenders subject to a home detention condition, by order of the Parole Authority (a re-integration home detention order), for a period of up to 6 months prior to their release on parole. Offenders serving sentences for certain domestic violence offences, child sexual offences, serious violence offences and terrorism offences will not be eligible for release under the scheme. An order may be made only at the request of a community corrections officer who has prepared an assessment report as to the offender’s suitability for the order that states that the
offender is suitable for an order. An assessment that an offender is not suitable for an order is to be referred to the Parole Authority which may request further reconsideration of suitability. An order can be made only if a parole order is also made or a statutory parole order is in force in relation to the offender, the Parole Authority is satisfied that it is in the interests of the safety of the community to make the order and the offender signs an undertaking to comply with the obligations under the order. For the purpose of considering whether to make an order relating to an offender who was sentenced to imprisonment for more than 3 years, the Parole Authority must consider the question of whether to grant a parole order at the same time. The standard conditions of re-integration home detention orders are to be prescribed by the regulations and other conditions may be imposed by the Parole Authority.

All offenders with sentences of more than 3 years, and other offenders recommended by community corrections officers, must be assessed and then considered by the Parole Authority for suitability for release on parole before the parole period commences. After considering suitability, the Parole Authority may revoke the parole order or the re-integration home detention order, change the conditions of either order, impose a home detention condition on the parole order or take no further action.

Regulations may also be made about other matters in connection with re-integration home detention orders, including additional matters for consideration by the Parole Authority when determining whether or not to make an order. Schedule 1 [2] makes a consequential amendment.

Schedule 1 [19] inserts proposed Division 2A of Part 7 into the Principal Act. The proposed Division sets out procedures for dealing with breaches of re-integration home detention orders and for revocation of those orders.

Power is conferred on the Parole Authority to conduct an inquiry into a suspected breach of a re-integration home detention order.

The Parole Authority may revoke a re-integration home detention order for a failure by the offender to comply with obligations under the order or impose lesser sanctions, including merely recording the breach, giving a formal warning or changing the conditions of the order. The Parole Authority may also revoke a re-integration home detention order if satisfied that the offender poses a serious and immediate risk to the safety of the community, that there is a serious and immediate risk that the offender will leave New South Wales or that there has been a significant change in the offender’s circumstances that warrants revocation or if the offender’s re-integration home detention order is revoked. An order may be revoked if an offender fails to appear for an inquiry before the Parole Authority or applies for the order to be revoked.

A revocation order can be made with or without holding an inquiry and can be made by the Parole Authority on its own initiative or on the recommendation of the Commissioner.

Power is conferred on the Commissioner or a judicial member of the Parole Authority to suspend a re-integration home detention order in the same circumstances in which a parole order may be suspended by those persons (those circumstances include a serious and immediate risk of harm to another person).

Schedule 1 [22] applies the requirements that apply to revocation notices for parole orders to revocation notices for re-integration home detention orders.

Schedule 1 [24] provides that an offender has no entitlement to seek a review hearing before the Parole Authority about the revocation of a re-integration home detention order.

Schedule 1 [25] and [26] enable other orders to which an offender is subject to be revoked if a re-integration home detention order for the offender is revoked.

Schedule 1 [27] enables the Parole Authority to issue a warrant to commit an offender to custody if it revokes a re-integration home detention order.

Schedule 1 [28] permits the Parole Authority to exercise functions relating to sanctions and other matters even if a re-integration home detention order has expired.

Schedule 1 [29] confers general power on the Parole Authority to determine matters with respect to the granting of re-integration home detention orders and the conditions of orders.
Schedule 1 [30] authorises a member of the Parole Authority, or a person authorised by the Parole Authority, to have access to an offender whose release under a re-integration home detention order is being considered.

Schedule 1 [31] requires the Commissioner of Corrective Services to provide reports on the character and conduct of an offender who is subject to consideration for a re-integration home detention order or who is subject to such an order.

Schedule 1 [32]–[36] require the Parole Authority to record its reasons for making decisions relating to the making, refusal to make or revocation of a re-integration home detention order in the minutes of its meetings.

Schedule 1 [37] enables the Commissioner to approve of the use of residential facilities for accommodating offenders who are subject to re-integration home detention orders.

Parole orders

Schedule 1 [4], [5], [8] and [14] make amendments that are consequential on the establishment of statutory parole orders.

Schedule 1 [6] requires the Parole Authority, when determining whether to impose a condition on a parole order or to vary or revoke a condition of a parole order, to have regard to whether the change will assist in the management of a risk to community safety arising from the offender’s release on parole, the likely effect on any victim of the offender and whether the change will assist in the management of the risk of breaches of parole.

Schedule 1 [7] makes it clear that the powers to change parole conditions after reconsideration of parole where an offender is subject to a re-integration home detention order or where the offender has breached a parole order do not enable a change that affects a standard condition of parole.

Schedule 1 [9] makes it a condition of parole that the offender be subject to supervision for the period specified by the parole order. A person released for exceptional health reasons will be supervised for the whole of the parole period. The Parole Authority may grant exemptions from supervision conditions in exceptional circumstances. A community corrections officer may suspend the operation of a supervision condition for a period or periods or indefinitely. A community corrections officer may also suspend the operation of a non-association, place restriction or curfew condition for a period or periods. Regulations may be made limiting the periods of exemption or suspension and for other purposes. The power to suspend a condition will not apply to an offender subject to lifetime supervision or released on the ground that the offender is dying or there are exceptional extenuating circumstances.

Schedule 1 [10] extends the circumstances in which a parole order may be revoked before the release of the offender to include where the Parole Authority is satisfied that the offender, if released, would pose a serious identifiable risk to the safety of the community and the risk cannot be sufficiently mitigated by directions from a community corrections officer or changing the conditions of parole. A parole order may also be revoked if there has been a failure to comply with a re-integration home detention order or a re-integration home detention order has been revoked.

Schedule 1 [11] enables the Parole Authority to revoke a parole order on its own initiative or on the recommendation of the Commissioner or a community corrections officer. It also enables the Attorney General or the Minister to request the Parole Authority to revoke a parole order before the release of the offender. The grounds for release are limited to those for which the Parole Authority may revoke the order.

Schedule 1 [12] replaces the test for the granting of a parole order with a requirement that the Parole Authority must be satisfied that it is in the interests of the safety of the community. The principal matters to be taken into account for this purpose are the risk to the safety of members of the community of releasing the offender, whether release on parole is likely to address the risk of re-offending and the risk to community safety of releasing the offender at the end of the sentence without a period of supervised parole or for a shorter supervised period. Other matters that are currently to be considered by the Parole Authority have also been retained as matters for consideration. The Parole Authority will not be required to consider parole under the provisions if it determines that parole cannot be granted on terrorism grounds under other provisions relating
to terrorism offenders. The provision setting out requirements or assessment reports is repealed by the amendment and will be re-made under the regulations.

**Schedule 1 [13]** deems a person to be subject to a statutory parole order, directing the person’s release on parole at the end of the person’s non-parole period, if the person is serving a sentence of 3 years or less. Release under a statutory parole order is subject to the offender being otherwise entitled to release.

**Schedule 1 [15]** enables the Governor, when exercising the prerogative of mercy, to make a parole order in respect of an offender, whether or not the offender is eligible for release on parole. Provisions that are generally applicable to parole, including provisions relating to conditions and revocation, apply to parole orders made by the Governor. The Parole Authority is to exercise functions in relation to the parole orders as if the orders had been made by the Parole Authority, subject to any direction by the Governor.

**Schedule 1 [16]** imposes a duty on a health service provider who provides services to an offender who is on parole to provide information about the offender’s attendance or participation in a program, activity or appointment required under the conditions of the parole or by a direction of a community corrections officer, if the provider is requested to do so by a community corrections officer.

**Schedule 1 [20]** provides for a hierarchy of actions that can be taken in the event of a failure by an offender to comply with a parole order. A community corrections officer may record the non-compliance with no further action, give an informal warning, give or arrange for a formal warning, give a reasonable direction about the non-compliant behaviour or impose a curfew. If the failure to comply is more serious, the Commissioner or a community corrections officer may refer the matter to the Parole Authority. The Parole Authority may deal with a failure to comply with the obligations of a parole order by recording the breach with no further action, giving a formal warning, changing the conditions of the order or revoking the order. Express authority is conferred to impose a condition of home detention, a requirement to submit to the use of an electronic monitoring device and other ancillary related conditions.

The power of the Parole Authority to revoke a parole order is extended to include circumstances where it is satisfied that the offender poses a serious and immediate risk to the safety of the community, or that there is a serious and immediate risk that the offender will leave New South Wales in contravention of the order, and the risk cannot be sufficiently mitigated by directions by a community corrections officer or changing the conditions of parole. A parole order may also be revoked if there has been a failure to comply with a re-integration home detention order.

**Schedule 1 [21]** enables the Minister to request the Parole Authority to revoke a parole order on the ground that it was obtained on the basis of false, misleading or irrelevant information.

**Schedule 1 [23]** makes it clear that the Parole Authority may consider the behaviour of the offender, including any offences alleged to have been committed by the offender during parole or after revocation of parole, when reviewing the decision to revoke parole.

**Information for victims**

**Schedule 1 [38]** confers on members of staff of the government agency that keeps the Victims Register the function of assisting the Parole Authority to give notice to victims of matters that are required to be notified under proposed sections 256A and 256B (inserted by **Schedule 1 [40]**).

**Schedule 1 [39]** enables the Serious Offenders Review Council or the Parole Authority to delegate to members of staff of the government agency that keeps the Victims Register any of the functions relating to the provision of information or documents that those staff members are authorised to assist the Serious Offenders Review Council or the Parole Authority with. Functions may only be delegated in relation to adult offenders.

**Schedule 1 [40]** requires the Parole Authority to give notice to any registered victim of an offender when the offender is due for consideration for release under a re-integration home detention order or if the offender is eligible for or has applied for release on parole. The victim is to be notified that the victim may make a submission to the Parole Authority about the matter and
any submission made by the victim within the period specified for making a submission is to be considered by the Parole Authority.

The amendment also enables the Commissioner, at the request of a registered victim of an adult offender, to provide information relating to the offender, including changes to possible release dates, the correctional centre in which the offender is serving a sentence, the offender’s security classification and the death or escape of the offender. The amendment also requires the Parole Authority to notify the victim of an adult offender if a re-integration home detention order or parole order is granted or revoked or if additional conditions are imposed on the order or conditions of the order are changed.

Miscellaneous

Schedule 1 [1] substitutes the definition of parole order and inserts definitions of parole revocation order, re-integration home detention order and statutory parole order.

Schedule 1 [17] amends a Part heading as a consequence of the amendments made by the proposed Act.

Schedule 1 [18] omits an introductory note.

Schedule 1 [41] enables the Commissioner to issue a certificate, that may be used as evidence in proceedings, certifying that a person was or was not subject to a re-integration home detention order, that the order did or did not contain specified terms and that the person failed to comply with the person’s obligations under the order.

Schedule 1 [42] inserts provisions of a savings or transitional nature consequent on the enactment of the proposed Act.

Schedule 2 Amendment of Children (Detention Centres) Act 1987 No 57

Schedule 2 [2] amends the Children (Detention Centres) Act 1987 (the Detention Centres Act) to repeal the provision that applies the parole provisions of the Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act 1999 to juvenile offenders.


Division 1 Preliminary

The proposed Division sets out the principles to be applied by persons exercising parole functions, including that the purpose of parole is to promote community safety, recognising the relevance for that purpose of the rehabilitation and re-integration of children into the community. The parole provisions will apply to offenders who were under 18 years when they committed the offence and when they first become eligible for parole and cease to apply once offenders reach 18 years (unless that age is reached during the last 12 weeks of the parole period). There will be an exception for an offender, or a class of offenders, if the Secretary of the Department of Justice (the Secretary) considers it appropriate for those offenders to continue to be dealt with under the juvenile offender provisions. The Children’s Court (constituted by the President of the Court or a Children’s Magistrate) will have jurisdiction to determine parole matters for juvenile offenders. The proposed Division also re-enacts adult parole provisions relating to eligibility for parole.

Division 2 Making of parole orders

The proposed Division deems a juvenile offender to be subject to a statutory parole order directing the release of a juvenile offender at the end of the offender’s non-parole period, if the offender is subject to a detention order for a period of 3 years or less. In the case of a juvenile offender sentenced to a detention order for a period of more than 3 years, the Children’s Court is to consider whether to grant parole and must not make an order unless it is satisfied that it is in the interests of the safety of the community, while recognising that the rehabilitation and re-integration of the offender into the community may be highly relevant to promoting community safety. The
principal matters to be considered by the Court when making a decision about granting parole are the risk to the safety of members of the community of release, whether release on parole is likely to address the risk of re-offending and the risk to community safety of releasing the offender without a period of supervised parole or for a shorter supervised period. Other factors that are currently required to be considered, such as the offender’s criminal history and post-sentence assistance by the offender, have been re-enacted as factors for consideration. The Children’s Court will not be required to consider parole under the provisions if it determines that parole cannot be granted on terrorism grounds under other provisions relating to terrorism offenders. The proposed Division also re-enacts an adult parole provision that enables the making of a parole order by the Court if an offender is dying or there are exceptional extenuating circumstances.

**Division 3 Release under parole orders**

The proposed Division re-enacts for juvenile offenders machinery provisions relating to the release of offenders on parole, including considerations for the release date, release near public holidays and weekends and the continuance of a detention order while an offender is released on parole.

**Division 4 Conditions and obligations of parole orders**

The proposed Division provides for the conditions of parole orders, and re-enacts the adult parole condition provisions permitting non-association and place restriction conditions to be imposed. When determining whether to impose a condition or to vary or revoke a condition of a parole order, the Children’s Court is to have regard to whether the change will assist in the management of a risk to community safety arising from the juvenile offender’s release on parole, the likely effect on any victim of the offender and whether the change will assist in the management of the risk of breaches of parole and supporting the offender’s participation in rehabilitation programs and re-integration into the community. It will be a condition of parole that a juvenile offender is subject to supervision. The Children’s Court may grant exemptions from supervision conditions in exceptional circumstances. A juvenile justice officer may suspend the operation of a supervision condition for a period or periods or indefinitely. A juvenile justice officer may also suspend the operation of a non-association or place restriction condition for a period or periods. Regulations may be made limiting the periods of exemption from or suspension of conditions and for other purposes. The power to suspend a condition will not apply to a juvenile offender released on the ground that the offender is dying or there are exceptional extenuating circumstances.

**Division 5 Parole orders for terrorism related offenders**

The proposed Division re-enacts adult parole provisions that restrict release on parole for terrorism related offenders.

**Division 6 Revocation of parole orders and other sanctions**

The proposed Division enables the Children’s Court to revoke any parole order before the juvenile offender is released if satisfied that the offender would pose a serious identifiable risk to the community or the offender’s safety and that the risk cannot be mitigated sufficiently by directions by a juvenile justice officer or changing the conditions of parole. A parole order may also be revoked on the offender’s request or if there has been a substantial change in a matter considered by the Court when making a parole order. The proposed Division also provides for a hierarchy of actions that can be taken in the event of a failure by an offender to comply with a parole order. The Secretary, in the case of non-compliance with a parole order, may record the non-compliance without further action, give an informal warning to the offender or, in a more serious case, refer the matter to the Court with a recommendation as to the action that may be taken. The Court may deal with non-compliance with a parole order by recording the non-compliance without further action, giving a formal warning to the offender, changing the conditions of the parole order or revoking the parole order. The Court may also revoke a parole order after the offender’s release if satisfied that the offender poses a serious and immediate risk to the community, or that there is a serious and immediate risk that the offender will leave New South Wales, and that the risk cannot be mitigated sufficiently by directions by a juvenile justice officer or changing the conditions of parole. Other circumstances for revocation by the Court include where the grounds for granting
parole in exceptional circumstances no longer exist, if the offender fails to appear before the Court when required to do so or the offender applies for the revocation. A hearing may be held by the Court at any time into whether an offender has failed to comply with the offender’s obligations under a parole order. An order revoking a parole order because of non-compliance is to take effect no earlier than the date of the last occasion on which there was a non-compliance on which the revocation was based. Power is conferred on the Attorney General, the Minister or the Director of Public Prosecutions to request the Court to exercise the power to revoke a parole order for an offender serving a sentence for a serious children’s indictable offence on the ground that the order was made on the basis of false, misleading or irrelevant information. The proposed Division also re-enacts the adult parole provision that permits an offender to seek to have the Supreme Court give a direction that information on which a revocation of a parole order was based was false, misleading or irrelevant.

**Division 7 Reconsideration of parole**

The proposed Division contains provisions relating to the reconsideration of parole. If the Children’s Court refuses to make a parole order, the Court must specify a new eligibility date for parole, a new date for a parole hearing or a date after which the juvenile offender may apply for parole. If the Court revokes a parole order, the Court must specify a new eligibility date for parole, a new date for a parole hearing, a date after which the juvenile offender may apply for parole or defer determining any of those matters for up to 3 months. A juvenile offender may apply to the Court for reconsideration of a decision about parole or conditions of parole, or to revoke parole, on or after the specified date (if any) or before the date specified for making an application on the ground that new information has become available or the situation of the offender in relation to granting parole has materially changed since the decision to be reconsidered. If an application for reconsideration is made, the Court may defer making a decision about release on parole for up to 3 months and may defer a decision on 1 or more occasions. On reconsideration of a parole decision, the Court may confirm the original decision, impose new conditions or vary or revoke conditions (other than statutory conditions). The proposed Division also re-enacts the adult parole provision about the release date after an application to grant parole is successful.

**Division 8 Procedure at hearings**

The proposed Division sets out procedural provisions relating to the exercise of the Children’s Court’s jurisdiction under the Part. Hearings of the Court must be held with the same persons present as for other children’s criminal proceeding, unless the Court otherwise orders. The Court has power to require a juvenile offender on parole to attend the Court at a specified time and place and to require other persons to attend as witnesses and to produce relevant documents. A juvenile offender may make submissions at a hearing as to release on parole and may be represented by an Australian legal practitioner, call witnesses and give evidence on oath. The Court may postpone or adjourn a hearing. A Children’s Magistrate may issue a warrant of arrest if a juvenile offender fails to appear in answer to a requirement to attend or of the opinion that the offender will not attend. A Children’s Magistrate may issue a warrant of commitment for a juvenile offender if the offender’s parole is revoked. Witnesses at hearings of the Court are entitled to be paid any allowances and expenses that may be determined by the Minister.

**Division 9 Prerogative of mercy**

The proposed Division enables the Governor, when exercising the prerogative of mercy, to make a parole order in respect of a juvenile offender, whether or not the offender is eligible for release on parole. Provisions that are generally applicable to parole, including provisions relating to conditions and revocation, apply to parole orders made by the Governor. The Children’s Court is to exercise functions in relation to the parole orders as if they had been made by the Court, subject to any direction by the Governor.

**Division 10 Miscellaneous**

The proposed Division contains miscellaneous provisions providing for the following:
(a) enabling the State to make submissions about the granting of parole to a juvenile offender,
(b) enabling the Secretary to make submissions to the Court before it makes a final decision about the release of a juvenile offender on parole,
(c) empowering the Children’s Court to exercise functions under the proposed Part even if a parole order has expired,
(d) requiring the Court to notify juvenile offenders of parole decisions,
(e) making it clear that a failure by the Court to comply with a procedural requirement does not invalidate a parole order and that a decision by the Court under the proposed Part is final,
(f) setting out the limits on requirements to provide copies of reports or other documents, or information contained in them, if compliance may affect certain security or safety matters,
(g) empowering the Secretary to delegate functions under the proposed Part to juvenile justice officers, correctional officers or other persons prescribed by the regulations,
(h) service of notices under the proposed Part,
(i) requiring the Court to keep records of parole decisions,
(j) enabling regulations to be made with respect to parole orders and other matters related to the proposed Part.


Schedule 3 Amendment of other Acts consequential on amendments made to Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act 1999

Schedule 3.2 [1] repeals the provision that directs a court imposing a sentence of imprisonment for a term of 3 years or less that has a non-parole period to impose a parole order directing the release of the offender at the end of the non-parole period. Parole orders for those sentences will instead be imposed by operation of proposed Division 3 of Part 6 of the Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act 1999 (inserted by Schedule 1 [13]).

Schedule 3.2 [2]–[4] repeal provisions as a consequence of the repeal made by Schedule 3.2 [1]. Schedules 3.1 and 3.3 update references as a consequence of the amendments made by Schedule 3.2 and the proposed provisions relating to statutory parole orders.

Schedule 4 Amendment of other Acts consequential on amendments made to Children (Detention Centres) Act 1987

Schedule 4.1 amends the Children (Criminal Proceedings) Act 1987 to make it clear that restrictions on publication of criminal proceedings involving children also apply to parole-related hearings.

Schedule 4.2 amends the Children’s Court Act 1987 to enable rules to be made for the Children’s Court in respect of its juvenile offender parole functions.