# Poccum's Law: The Blueprint for Bail Reform

Veronica Marie Nelson was a strong Gunditjmara, Dja Dja Wurrung, Wiradjuri and Yorta Yorta woman.

Victoria's unfair and discriminatory bail laws put Veronica in prison for minor shop-lifting related charges. Veronica passed away in that prison, alone and isolated from culture and support.

Veronica's loved ones have called for urgent changes to the bail laws and have asked that these reforms are referred to as Poccum's Law.

**My Poccum should not have been locked up**. She should not have begged for her life. She should be here with me today. If we do not change bail laws today, it will be someone else's daughter tomorrow. – Aunty Donna, Veronica's mother

**The bail laws have got to be changed, they just have to**. Veronica shouldn't have been in jail, she should have got bail. No one should be in prison for shoplifting. – Uncle Percy, Veronica's partner

**We stand with Aunty Donna and Uncle Percy in their fight for #PoccumsLaw.**

Victoria's bail laws are decimating families and communities and putting people's lives at risk. They have led to a soaring prison population, even though Victoria's crime rates have flat-lined. There are now more women in prison for offences they have not been found guilty of, than those who have.

The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody recommended that imprisonment must only be used as a last resort.

Thirty years later, the Coronial Inquest into Veronica's passing labelled the bail laws a complete and unmitigated disaster. The Coroner found that the bail laws discriminate against Aboriginal people, are incompatible with Victoria's Human Rights Charter, and should be changed urgently.

The Victorian Government has since committed to bail reform. They must implement wholesale reform of the bail system.

**We call on the Victorian Government to urgently implement Poccum's Law so that bail hearings are fair, remand is only used as a last resort, and what happened to Veronica never happens again.**

### Reform to Victoria's bail laws must:

1. **Remove the presumption against bail.**

2. **Grant access to bail unless the prosecution shows that there is a specific and immediate risk to the safety of another person; a serious risk of interfering with a witness; or a demonstrable risk that the person will flee the jurisdiction.**

3. **Explicitly require that a person must not be remanded for an offence that is unlikely to result in a sentence of imprisonment.**

4. **Remove all bail offences (committing an indictable offence while on bail, breaching bail conditions and failure to answer bail).**

Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service

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Human Rights Law Centre.

AEC Aboriginal Executive Council

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Djirra — Sharing stories, finding solutions

THE DHADJOWA FOUNDATION

NATSILS — National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services

KOORIE YOUTH COUNCIL

Aboriginal Justice Caucus

ABORIGINAL HOUSING VICTORIA

VICTORIAN ABORIGINAL CORPORATION FOR LANGUAGES

Indigenous Law and Justice Hub

UTS Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education and Research

LAW INSTITUTE VICTORIA

FEDERATION OF COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRES VIC

Smart Justice for young people

SMART JUSTICE FOR WOMEN

LIBERTY VICTORIA

Fitzroy Legal Service

LACW LAW & ADVOCACY CENTRE FOR WOMEN

vaada Victorian Alcohol & Drug Association

FLAT OUT

youthlaw Young People's Legal Rights Centre Inc

VCOSS Victorian Council of Social Service

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

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Women's Health VICTORIA

Refugee Legal:
Defending the rights of refugees.

Artwork by Dixon Patten, a proud Gunnai, Yorta Yorta, Gunditjmara, Dhudhuroa man.