

Justice Committee

Commission on Women Offenders

Letter from the Scottish Government to the Convener

As you are aware, the Commission on Women Offenders published its [report](#) on 17 April 2012. During the Parliamentary debate held on 26 April to welcome the report, I indicated that the Scottish Government would provide a detailed response before the summer recess.

I am now pleased to advise you that the Scottish Government's response to the Commission's recommendations will be published on 25 June. The full text of the response can be obtained at the Scottish Government website pages on the Commission at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/About/commissiononwomenoffenders>, and via SPICe.

I established the commission in June 2011 to consider the evidence on how to improve outcomes for women in the criminal justice system, and to make recommendations for practical measures in this Parliament to reduce their reoffending and reverse the recent increase in the female prisoner population.

The Commission's remit was challenging, but the time was right to find more effective ways of dealing with Scotland's female offenders, not just for their benefit but also for society as a whole. I am convinced that the Commission has more than met the challenge.

The Commission has provided practical recommendations suggesting a programme of change which is both ambitious and pragmatic, and that could make Scotland a fairer and more just place. I am delighted to say that the Scottish Government are accepting 33 of the 37 recommendations, and time will be taken to consider or formally consult on the remaining four. Indeed, we are already taking action with other stakeholders which will contribute to the implementation of some of these recommendations.

I trust that the information set out in the Government's response will be helpful to the Committee. I have also sent letters advising the Parliament's Equal Opportunities Committee and each parties' Justice spokesperson, as well as to other MSPs who participated in the Parliamentary debate.

As I make clear in my foreword to this document, the Commission's recommendations are not matters that the Government alone can address. All of those involved in the planning, delivery and oversight of criminal justice across Scotland have a role to play if these ambitions are to be realised. This Government will continue to give a lead on this issue, and will work hard to engage with stakeholders to establish a shared response to these challenges.

I look forward to working with your Committee, to take this important agenda forward.

Kenny MacAskill MSP
Cabinet Secretary for Justice
21 June 2012