

# **NORTHERN TERRITORY OF AUSTRALIA**

## **CRIMINAL RECORDS (SPENT CONVICTIONS) ACT**

As in force at 17 September 1996

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# NORTHERN TERRITORY OF AUSTRALIA

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## CRIMINAL RECORDS (SPENT CONVICTIONS) ACT

**An Act to facilitate the more effective rehabilitation of certain offenders by providing that, in certain circumstances, their criminal records relating to relatively minor offences may be spent and not form part of their criminal history, and for related purposes**

### Part 1 Preliminary

#### 1 Short title

This Act may be cited as the *Criminal Records (Spent Convictions) Act*.

#### 2 Commencement

This Act shall come into operation on a date to be fixed by the Administrator by notice in the *Gazette*.

#### 3 Interpretation

(1) In this Act, unless the contrary intention appears:

***conditional pardon*** means an extension of the prerogative of mercy referred to in section 432 of the Criminal Code upon a condition referred to in that section.

***court*** means:

- (a) the Local Court;
- (b) the Juvenile Court established by section 14 of the *Juvenile Justice Act*;
- (c) the court of summary jurisdiction; or
- (d) the Supreme Court,

and includes a court of the Commonwealth, a State or another Territory of the Commonwealth having similar jurisdiction.

**corresponding law** or **corresponding provision**, in relation to an Act or a provision of or under an Act of the Territory, means an Act or provision of or under an Act in force in a State or another Territory of the Commonwealth that corresponds as nearly as practicable to the Act or provision of or under the Act of the Territory.

**criminal record** means a record of:

- (a) a conviction;
- (b) a finding that an offence is proved (and any order in relation to the finding) without the court proceeding to conviction;
- (c) a conviction and the making of an order under section 5 of the *Criminal Law (Conditional Release of Offenders) Act*;
- (d) a finding or order made under section 53 of the *Juvenile Justice Act*;
- (e) a quashed conviction;
- (f) a pardon, including a conditional pardon;
- (g) a charge in respect of which a finding or order referred to in paragraphs (a) to (f), inclusive, is made by a court;
- (h) action taken in respect of a breach of prison discipline committed during a period of imprisonment; or
- (j) disciplinary action taken while a juvenile offender is in a detention centre,

and includes such a record of a conviction, finding, order, quashed conviction, pardon, charge or action in a State or another Territory of the Commonwealth.

**detention centre** means a juvenile detention centre approved under section 62 of the *Juvenile Justice Act* and includes a detention centre, however described, under a corresponding law.

**equivalent offence** means an offence against the relevant corresponding provision.

**imprisonment** includes a period during which a person is subject to a home detention order under Part IVA of the *Criminal Law (Conditional Release of Offenders) Act* or Part 3 of the *Sentencing Act* but does not include:

- (a) detention in a detention centre;

- (b) a sentence of periodic imprisonment referred to in section 53(5) of the *Juvenile Justice Act*; or
- (c) a sentence imposed because of the failure to pay a penalty.

***law enforcement agency*** means:

- (a) the Police Force of the Northern Territory, the Australian Federal Police, or the police force of a State or another Territory of the Commonwealth;
- (b) the National Crime Authority;
- (c) the Australian Bureau of Criminal Intelligence;
- (d) the National Exchange of Police Information;
- (e) the Attorney-General for the Territory, the Commonwealth or for a State or another Territory of the Commonwealth;
- (f) persons employed in the Northern Territory Attorney-General's Department, or a similar Department of the Commonwealth, a State or another Territory of the Commonwealth, or employed in a body administered by such a Department, being persons whose primary function is the institution or conduct of proceedings for offences;
- (g) the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions for the Commonwealth or the Territory, or a similar body established under a law of a State or another Territory of the Commonwealth;
- (h) the Director of Public Prosecutions for the Commonwealth or the Territory, or a person performing a similar function appointed under a law of a State or another Territory of the Commonwealth;
- (j) a Crown Prosecutor;
- (k) a person who, under a law of the Commonwealth, the Territory or a State or another Territory of the Commonwealth, is permitted to practice as a legal practitioner, however described, to the extent to which he or she is engaged by or on behalf of the Crown to prosecute an offence;
- (m) a person performing functions and exercising powers on behalf of an agency, authority, department or statutory body referred to in this definition; or
- (n) a prescribed person or body.

**non-traffic offence** means an offence other than a traffic offence.

**offence** means an offence against a law in force in the Territory, the Commonwealth or a State or another Territory of the Commonwealth.

**pardon** means an extension of the prerogative of mercy referred to in section 431 of the Criminal Code, not being a conditional pardon.

**public authority** means a public or local authority constituted by or under an Act of the Territory, the Commonwealth or a State or another Territory of the Commonwealth, a government department or a statutory body or agency representing the Crown in any of its capacities, and includes a law enforcement agency and a person performing functions and exercising powers on behalf of the authority, department, statutory body or agency.

**quashed conviction** means

- (a) a conviction;
- (b) a finding that an offence has been proved, without proceeding to conviction; or
- (c) an order,

that, in accordance with subsection (2), shall be taken to have been quashed.

**sexual offence** means:

- (a) an offence against Division 2 of Part V of the Criminal Code;
- (b) an offence against sections 188(1)(k), 192 or 201 of the Criminal Code;
- (c) an offence prescribed as a sexual offence for the purposes of this section; or
- (d) an offence of:
  - (i) counselling or procuring;
  - (ii) aiding or abetting the commission of;
  - (iii) conspiring to commit;
  - (iv) attempting to commit; or
  - (v) being an accessory after the fact to,

an offence referred to in this definition or an equivalent offence.

**spent conviction** means a criminal record which is spent in accordance with Part 2.

**spent record** means:

- (a) a spent conviction;
- (b) a criminal record in respect of:
  - (i) a quashed conviction; or
  - (ii) an offence in respect of which an unconditional pardon has been given;
- (c) a charge not proceeded with; or
- (d) a charge that has been withdrawn.

**traffic offence** means an offence against the *Traffic Act* or the *Traffic Regulations*, or an offence prescribed for the purposes of this definition.

**violent offence** means an offence involving the use or threat of violence against another person.

(2) For the purposes of this Act:

- (a) a conviction shall be taken to be quashed if it is quashed or set aside;
- (b) a finding that an offence has been proved, without proceeding to a conviction, shall be taken to be quashed if it is quashed or set aside (except where it is set aside in order to impose a penalty);
- (c) a finding that an offence has been proved, (and any order in relation to the finding) without the court proceeding to a conviction, shall be taken to be quashed if the finding is quashed or set aside;
- (d) a conviction and the making of an order under section 5 of the *Criminal Law (Conditional Release of Offenders) Act* shall be taken to be quashed if the conviction is set aside; and
- (e) an order under section 53 of the *Juvenile Justice Act* shall be taken to be quashed if it is quashed or set aside.

- (3) In this Act, unless the contrary intention appears, a reference to an Act or a provision of or under an Act of the Territory includes a reference to a corresponding law or corresponding provision, as the case may be.

#### **4                      Application**

- (1) This Act binds the Crown not only in right of the Territory but also, so far as the legislative power of the Legislative Assembly permits, the Crown in all its other capacities.
- (2) This Act applies to and in relation to offences committed in the Territory, or in a State or another Territory of the Commonwealth, before or after the commencement of this Act.
- (3) This Act does not affect the operation of:
- (a) sections 14 and 15 of the *Evidence Act*; or
  - (b) section 90 of the *Juvenile Justice Act*.

### **Part 2                      Spent convictions**

#### **5                      Interpretation**

In this Part ***criminal record*** does not include a criminal record of:

- (a) a sexual offence;
- (b) an offence by a body corporate; or
- (c) a prescribed offence.

#### **6                      Convictions may be spent**

- (1) In subsection (2) ***criminal record*** does not include a record of a conviction of an offence in respect of which a sentence of imprisonment for more than 6 months was imposed, whether or not the sentence was suspended.
- (2) Subject to this Part, a criminal record is a spent conviction on the expiration of a period, immediately after the date of conviction of the offence, of:
- (a) where the offender was convicted in the Juvenile Court within the meaning of the *Juvenile Justice Act* – 5 years; and
  - (b) in any other case – 10 years,



during which period the offender has not:

- (c) been convicted of an offence punishable by imprisonment; or
  - (d) served all or any part of a sentence of imprisonment.
- (3) A conviction for a subsequent traffic offence and any period of imprisonment served in respect of the offence shall be taken into account in calculating a period referred to in subsection (2) only in respect of a conviction relating to a traffic offence.
- (4) A conviction for a subsequent non-traffic offence and any period of imprisonment served in respect of the offence shall be taken into account in calculating a period referred to in subsection (2) only in respect of a conviction relating to a non-traffic offence.

## **7 Where court does not record or proceed to conviction**

- (1) Where a person has been convicted of an offence but a court, without recording the conviction, discharges the person absolutely, the criminal record (if any) of the conviction is a spent conviction immediately the person is discharged.
- (2) Subject to subsections (3) and (4), a criminal record in respect of a finding that an offence is proved without the court proceeding to conviction is a spent conviction immediately the finding or order is made.
- (3) A criminal record of a finding or order made under section 53 of the *Juvenile Justice Act*, not being an order made under subsection (1)(a) of that section, without the court proceeding to conviction, is a spent conviction immediately the period specified in the order expires if the person subject to it has by that time complied with all of its requirements or where, before that time, he or she has complied with all of its requirements and there is no continuing obligation to be met, on the completion of those requirements.
- (4) Where a court finds an offence proved and, without proceeding to conviction, makes an order under section 4 of the *Criminal Law (Conditional Release of Offenders) Act* or section 10 or 11 of the *Sentencing Act*, the criminal record of that offence is a spent conviction immediately the period specified in the order expires if the person subject to it has by that time complied with all its requirements or where, before that time, he or she has complied with all of its requirements and there is no continuing obligation to be met, on the completion of those requirements.

**8                      Repealed provisions**

A criminal record in respect of an offence against a provision of an Act is a spent conviction immediately the provision is repealed, except where:

- (a) a provision in an Act enacted in the jurisdiction before or in substitution for the first-mentioned provision, substantially of the same effect, is in force; or
- (b) the provision in respect of the offence, or a record of the offence, is prescribed for the purposes of this section.

**9                      Conditional pardons**

A criminal record of a conditional pardon is a spent conviction immediately the conditions to which it is subject are complied with.

**10                    Revival of convictions which are spent convictions**

- (1) The criminal record of a conviction of a person in respect of a non-traffic offence ceases to be a spent conviction on the conviction of the person of a non-traffic offence punishable by imprisonment, and this Act then applies as if the criminal record had never been a spent conviction.
- (2) The criminal record of a conviction of a person in respect of a traffic offence ceases to be a spent conviction on the conviction of the person of a traffic offence punishable by imprisonment, and this Act then applies as if the criminal record had never been a spent conviction.

**Part 3                      Effect of spent records**

**Division 1                Disclosure of records**

**11                    Person not required to disclose spent record**

Subject to this Part, where a record is a spent record:

- (a) the person to whom it relates is not required to disclose to another person that spent record;
- (b) a question concerning a person's convictions, criminal history or criminal record or a record of a similar kind shall be taken to refer only to a record which is not a spent record; and

- (c) in the application to a person of a provision of an Act or instrument of a legislative or administrative character:
  - (i) a reference to a conviction, criminal history or criminal record or record of a similar kind shall be taken to be a reference only to a record which is not a spent record; and
  - (ii) a reference to a person's character or fitness shall not be taken as permitting or requiring a spent record to be taken into account.

## **12            Unlawful disclosure of spent record**

- (1) A person with access to records kept by or on behalf of a public authority which include spent records who, other than in accordance with this Part, discloses a spent record or information relating to a spent record to a person without the consent of the person to whom the record relates, is guilty of an offence.

Penalty:        \$5,000 or imprisonment for 6 months.

- (2) A person who knows, or should reasonably be expected to know, that a record is a spent record and who, other than in accordance with this Part, discloses the spent record or information relating to the spent record without the consent of the person to whom that spent record relates, is guilty of an offence.

Penalty:        \$5,000.

- (3) The Commissioner of Police may disclose a spent conviction to a law enforcement agency, to the holder of a prescribed office or to a prescribed person for the purpose of the prosecution of an offence or the making of submissions on sentencing in respect of an offence.
- (4) A law enforcement agency may disclose a spent conviction to another law enforcement agency for the purpose of a criminal investigation, the prosecution of an offence or the making of submissions on sentencing in respect of an offence.
- (5) A law enforcement agency, where required to do so by, or in the course of a proceeding before, a court, may disclose a spent conviction to the court, but a court shall not require such a disclosure or permit publication of any information so disclosed unless it is of the opinion that the interests of justice in the particular circumstances require the disclosure and/or publication.

- (6) A person employed by or working for an archive or a library may make available to a member of the public, or to an officer of another archive or library, in accordance with the normal procedures of the first-mentioned archive or library, material that is normally available for public scrutiny which contains information relating to a spent record.

**13            Spent records not to be taken into account for unauthorised purpose**

A person who takes into account a spent record for a purpose not authorised by or under this Act is guilty of an offence.

Penalty:       \$5,000.

**14            Unlawfully obtaining information**

A person who fraudulently or dishonestly obtains or attempts to obtain information in respect of a spent record kept by or on behalf of a public authority is guilty of an offence.

Penalty:       \$5,000 or imprisonment for 6 months.

**Division 2            Exclusions**

**15            Exclusions in relation to spent convictions**

Sections 11 and 13 do not apply in respect of a spent conviction:

- (a) in relation to an application for appointment to or employment as a Judge, magistrate, justice of the peace, member of the Police Force, prison officer, parole officer, probation officer, juvenile justice officer, juvenile detention centre worker, home detention surveillance officer or community service order supervising officer;
- (b) relating to a violent offence, an offence under section 202 of the Criminal Code or an offence under section 13, 14, 15 or 16 of the *Prostitution Regulation Act*, in relation to an application for appointment to or employment as a teacher, a teacher's aide or a provider of child care services
- (c) for arson or attempted arson in relation to an application by the person to whom the spent conviction relates to be appointed to or employed in or otherwise engaged in fire fighting or fire prevention;
- (d) relating to a violent offence, to a request by a public authority for information about the conviction where the information is sought for the purpose of determining whether to grant,

reissue or revoke a licence, permit or registration under the *Firearms Act*;

- (e) in relation to the consideration of the suitability of a person to be a juror;
- (f) to or in relation to proceedings before a court (or investigations for the purpose of such proceedings or determining whether proceedings should be commenced), including the giving of evidence or the conduct of the case before, or the making of a decision (including a decision concerning sentencing) by, the court, but where a disclosure of a spent conviction is made to the court the court shall not permit the publication of any information so disclosed unless it is of the opinion that the interests of justice in the particular circumstances require its publication; or
- (g) relating to a disqualifying offence within the meaning of section 24(3) of the *Prostitution Regulation Act* or an attempt to commit such an offence, in respect of an application for an operator's licence or a manager's licence under that Act.

## **Part 4                      Miscellaneous**

### **16                      Act does not authorise contravention of other laws**

Nothing in this Act authorises a person to disclose a charge, finding, order or conviction, or to take a charge, finding, order or conviction into account, if to do so would contravene any other law in force in the Territory.

### **17                      Act does not affect certain other lawful acts**

Nothing in this Act affects anything lawfully done before a matter to which this Act applies becomes, or becomes the subject of, a spent record.

### **18                      Destruction of records**

This Act does not authorise the destruction by or on behalf of a public authority of a spent record.

### **19                      Regulations**

- (1) The Administrator may make regulations, not inconsistent with this Act, prescribing all matters:
  - (a) required or permitted by this Act to be prescribed; or

- (b) necessary or convenient to be prescribed for carrying out or giving effect to this Act.
- (2) The Regulations may provide that this Act or a provision of this Act does not affect another Act or a provision of another Act, whether enacted before or after the commencement of this Act and, on a regulation being so made, this Act shall be construed accordingly.
- (3) The Regulations may provide that a provision of this Act does not apply to or in relation to:
  - (a) a specific record or part of a record or information relating to that record;
  - (b) a specified person or class of persons; and/or
  - (c) specified circumstances,and on a regulation being so made this Act shall be construed accordingly.
- (4) Without limiting the Administrator's power under this section, the Minister shall, in the fifth year after regulations referred to in subsection (3) are made and in each succeeding fifth year thereafter while any such regulations remain in force, review the regulations for the purpose of deciding whether the Administrator should be advised to repeal or amend the regulations.

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## ENDNOTES

**1****KEY**

Key to abbreviations

amd = amended  
 app = appendix  
 bl = by-law  
 ch = Chapter  
 cl = clause  
 div = Division  
 exp = expires/expired  
 f = forms  
 Gaz = Gazette  
 hdg = heading  
 ins = inserted  
 lt = long title  
 nc = not commenced

od = order  
 om = omitted  
 pt = Part  
 r = regulation/rule  
 rem = remainder  
 renum = renumbered  
 rep = repealed  
 s = section  
 sch = Schedule  
 sdiv = Subdivision  
 SL = Subordinate Legislation  
 sub = substituted

**2****LIST OF LEGISLATION*****Criminal Records (Spent Convictions) Act 1992 (Act No. 76, 1992)***

Assent date	14 December 1992
Commenced	29 March 1993 ( <i>Gaz</i> G12, 24 March 1993, p 3)

***Criminal Records (Spent Convictions) Amendment Act 1993 (Act No. 35, 1993)***

Assent date	14 September 1993
Commenced	14 September 1993

***Sentencing (Consequential Amendments) Act 1996 (Act No. 17, 1996)***

Assent date	19 April 1996
Commenced	1 July 1996 (s 2, s 2 <i>Sentencing Act 1995</i> (Act No. 39, 1995) and <i>Gaz</i> S15, 13 June 1996)

***Statute Law Revision Act 1996 (Act No. 42, 1996)***

Assent date	17 September 1996
Commenced	17 September 1996

**3****LIST OF AMENDMENTS**

s 3	amd No. 17, 1996, s 6; No. 42, 1996, s 6
s 7	amd No. 17, 1996, s 6
s 12	amd No. 35, 1993, s 2