JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON AUSTRALIA'S FAMILY LAW SYSTEM

MEDIA RELEASE

On 7 October 2020, the interim report of the Parliamentary Joint Select Committee on Australia's Family Law System was tabled in the House of Representatives and can be accessed through the committee's website. The interim report contains a comprehensive review of the evidence the committee has heard to date

The committee has received a significant body of evidence covering a wide range of issues. A total of 1692 submissions have been received to date, and the committee has heard from 64 organisations and professionals and 85 individuals in 11 public and 13 in camera hearings.

Like many in the community, the work of the committee has been delayed by travel and other restrictions imposed throughout the pandemic. The impact of COVID-19 restrictions on the ability of the committee to travel for hearings meant that hearings set down between late March and May had to be rescheduled and conducted by telephone or video conference.

These delays, and the significantly large body of submissions that have been made to the committee, have meant that the committee requires additional time to comprehensively consider the multitude of issues raised with it. As such, on 31 August 2020, both Houses of Parliament agreed to extend the reporting date for this inquiry to the last sitting day in February 2021.

The committee felt that it would be timely to table an interim report providing the Parliament and the community with an update on the committee's work. The report summarises the wide range of views and issues raised during the public consultation. The committee has not arrived at any conclusions regarding the evidence outlined in the interim report, however agreed it was important to report on the wide range of issues that have been raised with the committee. The final report will contain the committee's detailed consideration of the matters relevant to the terms of reference and its recommendations.

The interim report is comprehensive, running to 12 chapters and over 300 pages. This is reflective of the breadth of issues that have been raised with the committee. Some of the key issues explored in the report include perceptions of bias within the system; the role of family consultants and expert witnesses; legal fees and other costs of the family law system; delays in the family court; and issues in relation to family violence and the family law system.

The report also considers issues arising in parenting and property disputes, considers the use of alternative dispute resolution mechanisms and support services available in the family law system, as well as the interaction between the child support and family law systems.

The committee looks forward to presenting its final report in February next year.

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- **1800RESPECT on 1800 737 732**
- **Lifeline on 13 11 14**
- **Men's Referral Service on 1300 766 491**
- **MensLine Australia on 1300 789 978**
- **Kids Help Line on 1800 551 800**
- **Relationships Australia on 1300 364 277**
- **Family Relationships Online on 1800 050 321**
- **Financial Counselling Australia on 1800 007 007**
- **Emergency services on 000 (triple zero) if you are in immediate danger**

Media enquiries:

Office of the Hon Mr Kevin Andrews MP, Committee Chair on (03) 9848 9900.

For background information:

Parliamentary inquiry into a better family law system to support and protect those affected by family violence 02 6277 3439 familylaw.sen@aph.gov.au.

Interested members of the public may wish to track the committee via the website at https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Joint/Family_Law_System. Click on the blue 'Track Committee' button in the bottom right hand corner and use the forms to login to My Parliament or to register for a My Parliament account.

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