

Secret men's business

Group met Coalition before bill vote

EXCLUSIVE

Clare Armstrong

A controversial men's rights group that argues the public has been manipulated by "propaganda" to predominantly see women as domestic violence victims claims it had a "successful" meeting with the Coalition days before the opposition refused to back Labor's family law changes.

A raft of family law amendments proposed by the federal government, including the removal of a presumption of equal parenting responsibility, are in limbo after the opposition voted against the bill in the lower house and referred it to a three-month Senate inquiry, despite not raising concerns at earlier stages.

Coalition attorney-general spokeswoman Senator Michaelia Cash has accused Labor of trying to "rush" changes that went beyond Australian Law Reform Commission recommendations without "adequate scrutiny".

The public split between Labor and the Coalition came after the Men's Rights Agency

claimed to have had a "successful" meeting with Ms Cash about a week before the vote on the bill in the lower house.

In an online post, MRA director Sue Price said the May 6 meeting "was facilitated by the leader of the Liberal Party, Peter Dutton" and had been positive for the group.

Ms Price revealed she had also emailed Ms Cash telling her there would be many people "favourably disposed" to-

ward the Liberal Party if it could make a "clear state-

ment" about the need to prevent further fracturing of the relationship between a child and their father.

In the MRA's submission to Labor's law proposals, the group argued domestic violence figures were skewed by "false claims".

"They argued fearmongering had encouraged women to reach out to domestic violence services for help when they were merely experiencing a "disagreement" with their partner, deemed part of

"healthy relationships". It is not suggested the Coalition's opposition to Labor's reforms were based on the advice or views of the MRA.

Ms Cash said the Coalition's "most significant concern" was the repeal of equal shared parental responsibility that applied when courts made parenting orders.

Attorney-General Mark Dreyfus said he had met with "countless" legal, family and child welfare experts who had all called for the reforms, which would make the system "safer and simpler" for Australian families.