



JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON AUSTRALIA'S FAMILY LAW SYSTEM

SECOND INTERIM REPORT TABLED

The Parliamentary Joint Select Committee on Australia's Family Law System tabled its second interim report in the House of Representatives today.

The report is broad ranging and builds upon the evidence contained in the committee's first interim report which was presented to the Parliament on 7 October 2020.

"The report contains 29 recommendations and highlights the committee's views on the most pressing issues in Australia's family law system today," Committee Chair, the Hon Kevin Andrews MP said today.

"Throughout the course of this inquiry, four issues have been raised continually in submissions and hearings: extensive delays, excessive legal costs, the difficulty of enforcing court orders and timely and fair resolution of family violence allegations," Mr Andrews said.

The report highlights the committee's views on delays, costs and other systemic issues; family violence; changes required to the *Family Law Act 1975*, with specific reference to parenting and property matters; alternative dispute resolution and support services.

The report covers issues such as additional training, accreditation and monitoring of family law professionals and services; whether the courts should be less adversarial; how family violence can be better recognised in property matters; increasing compliance with financial disclosure duties; and ensuring appropriate services are available to individuals in the family law system.

"The majority of the issues before the committee are not new and the committee acknowledges that there are significant initiatives being piloted by the family courts and the Australian Government to address some of the more significant concerns," he said.

There has also been a shift due to the COVID-19 pandemic in the way in which courts and support services have operated, creating some positive initiatives that should continue post-COVID.

The committee received a significant body of evidence covering a wide range of issues. A total of 1716 submissions were received and the committee heard from 64 organisations and professionals during 12 public hearings. As well as receiving approximately 42 hours of evidence from 85 witnesses in 13 *in camera* hearings.

“The committee would like to thank everyone who contributed to this report by making submissions, expressing views through correspondence or providing testimony at hearings.”

In particular, the committee thanks those who shared their personal experiences. The recounting by these individuals provided great insight and helped inform the work of the committee on the family law system and how it could be improved.

Due to insufficient time to consider several issues relating to child support, the committee will conduct a further short inquiry utilising the evidence already provided to it before tabling a third and final report by 30 June 2021.

The second interim report can be accessed through the committee's website at https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Joint/Family_Law_System/FamilyLaw/Second_Interim_Report

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- **Kids Help Line on 1800 551 800**
- **Relationships Australia on 1300 364 277**
- **Family Relationships Online on 1800 050 321**
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For background information:

The parliamentary inquiry into a better family law system to support and protect those affected by family violence can be contacted on 02 6277 3439 or 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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