



# PARLIAMENT of AUSTRALIA

## MEDIA RELEASE

**Parliamentary inquiry into a better family law system to support and protect those affected by family violence**

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## **Parliamentary inquiry to consider family violence in the family law system**

**THURSDAY, 23 MARCH 2017**

A Committee of the Australian Parliament has commenced an [inquiry into how the federal family law system can more effectively respond to the needs of those affected by family violence](#).

The Chair of the Committee, Ms Sarah Henderson MP, said the inquiry would consider the effectiveness of the federal family law system in supporting and protecting those affected by family violence, especially those who are most at risk.

“Each of us has a role in speaking out against family violence and preventing violence before it occurs,” Ms Henderson said. “At the same time, we must ensure that the family law system provides adequate support and protection in cases where family violence has occurred. In carrying out the inquiry, the Committee will consider what has been done so far—and what more can be done—to meet the needs of vulnerable people in family law proceedings.”

“Family violence is an issue which requires a response from all sections of the community, and across all levels of government,” Ms Henderson said. “Due to the nature of family violence, and the close connection between family violence and family breakdown, the federal family law system has an important role in resolving cases which involve the victims of family violence and their children.”

Particular areas of focus for the inquiry will include how the federal family law system can:

- respond as quickly as possible to family violence;
- provide adequate protection through consent orders;
- appropriately accommodate self-represented parties to family law proceedings; and
- consider the financial needs of people affected by family violence.

The inquiry will also consider the capacity of family law professionals to respond to cases involving family violence, and the potential for a national approach to the enforcement of intervention or apprehended violence orders.

The Chair noted that a range of measures have been announced by the Government to address family violence in the context of family law proceedings. “As part of the inquiry, the Committee will consider what further reforms might be required to ensure the family law system is meeting the needs of everyone involved—particularly victims of family violence, including children,” Ms Henderson said.



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The Committee is accepting written submissions addressing one or more of the terms of reference, and invites organisations, practitioners, service providers, and other stakeholders with experience in the federal family law system to contribute. The closing date for submissions is Wednesday, 3 May 2017.

The Committee is also determined to ensure that its findings are informed by those with personal experience at the intersection of family violence and the family law system. However, the Committee is aware that for individuals affected by family violence, revisiting this experience can cause distress. As such, there are two additional ways for individuals to share their experience with the Committee, both safely and confidentially.

Firstly, the Committee is launching an anonymous, online questionnaire. The Committee encourages anyone wishing to make a personal contribution to the inquiry to take the time to complete the questionnaire. Organisations are encouraged to share the questionnaire with their clients and members, where appropriate.

Secondly, the Committee is seeking expressions of interest from members of the community who wish to make a short statement to the Committee about their experience.

To obtain more information about the inquiry, including the terms of reference, and to find out how to participate, please visit the inquiry website: [www.aph.gov.au/FVLawReform](http://www.aph.gov.au/FVLawReform).

Please be aware that the Committee is unable to intervene or provide advice in relation to individual circumstances. If you are in immediate danger, please contact 000. If you are experiencing distress or would like to speak with someone about your situation, the following support services are available:

- 1800RESPECT national sexual assault, domestic and family violence counselling service: 1800 737 732
- Men's Referral Service: 1300 766 491
- Lifeline: 131 114
- Relationships Australia: 1300 364 277
- Kids Helpline: 1800 55 1800

### **Media enquiries:**

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### **For background:**

Parliamentary inquiry into a better family law system to support and protect those affected by family violence, (02) 6277 4230, [FVLawReform@aph.gov.au](mailto:FVLawReform@aph.gov.au), [www.aph.gov.au/FVLawReform](http://www.aph.gov.au/FVLawReform)

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