



(Media Release 2 of 3 for this report)

Report recommends grandparents be better recognised in family law

The House of Representatives Family and Community Affairs Committee has made several recommendations regarding the role of grandparents in a report released today.

The **unanimous** report, which follows an intensive six-month inquiry into child custody arrangements in the event of family separation, devotes a chapter to issues surrounding a child's contact with those other than its parents in the event of parental separation (chapter five, pages 109 – 122).

The 10-member committee of Coalition and Labor MPs accepts that grandparents can and do play a significant, and often critical, role in many grandchildren's lives.

Recognition of this role is already explicitly set out in several sections of the Family Law Act, and implied in others, and can be considered by judges in making decisions on the best interests of a child.

However, this is not well known.

The Committee believes that this lack of information about the Act should be rectified, and that information on grandparents' status should be included in a wider public education campaign on the Family Law Act.

The Committee also believes that the law can be improved upon.

The Committee recommends that grandparents be referred to explicitly in subsections 68F(2)(b) and 68F(2)(c) of the Family Law Act. These sections refer to contact and residence orders which can be made by the courts regarding children.

The Committee also recommends that the Commonwealth Government move to recognise the role of grandparents by:

- taking steps to ensure that contact with grandparents and extended family members is considered by parents when developing their post-separation parenting plan (see separate media release for more on the role of parenting plans); and
- developing strategies to ensure that grandparents and extended family members are included in mediation and family counselling activities when it is in the best interests of the child.

Elsewhere, the report makes recommendations for a major reshaping of family law processes, and changes to the child support scheme. These are outlined in separate media releases.

To arrange media comment from the Chair, please contact:

Mrs Kay Hull, MP (Chair), tel: 0428 214 600

For further detail, including copies of the report and background documentation:

contact the Committee Secretariat on (02) 6277 4566 or visit the inquiry website at

www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/fca

Associated documents:

- 2 page media release on changes to the Child Support Scheme & Agency
- 3 page media release on 'Radical reshaping of family law system recommended'