



Family Law Report released

Significant changes to the Family Law system have been endorsed by the House of Representative's Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee.

Tabling the report on the Family Law Amendment (Shared Parental Responsibility) Bill 2005 in the House of Representatives today (18 August), the Chairman of the Committee, Peter Slipper MP, said "The Committee has reviewed the draft Bill and has concluded that it largely implements the key reforms in the family law area announced by the Government in June 2005."

"However, the Committee has made a number of recommendations to ensure that there is an opportunity for both parents to continue their involvement as parents following separation," Mr Slipper said.

Key recommendations include:

- Use of the term 'equal shared' parental responsibility rather than the term 'joint parental responsibility' to describe the presumption of the sharing of major decisions about a child by both parents;
- An obligation to consider whether it is in the best interests of the child and reasonably practical for a child to spend 'equal time', not just 'substantial' time with both parents;
- Provision for family law courts to directly access reports about investigations into violence and abuse conducted by State and Territory agencies;
- A specific cost provision where the court is satisfied that there are reasonable grounds to believe a person has knowingly made a false allegation; and
- The development of accreditation standards for Family Relationship Centres, family dispute practitioners, and contact centres as a matter of urgency.

The Chairman will be holding a press conference at **11.45 am in Committee room 2R1** to discuss the report.

For interview:

Please contact the Committee Chairman, Peter Slipper MP on (02) 6277 4975 or his media adviser, Richard Bruinsma on 0417 486 673.

For background information, including a copy of the report, please contact the committee secretariat on (02) 6277 2358 or visit the inquiry website at:

<http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/laca/familylaw/index.htm>