



## ***Report on the Courts and Tribunals Legislation Amendment Bill tabled in Parliament today***

The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs conducted an inquiry into the Courts and Tribunals Legislation Amendment (Administration) Bill 2012 (the Bill) and tabled its report in Parliament today.

The Bill proposes reforms to the administrative structures and processes of the National Native Title Tribunal, the Federal Court of Australia, the Family Court of Australia and the Federal Magistrates Court of Australia. These reforms have been presented as a means to improve the operations of the affected bodies and achieve savings.

On 1 November 2012 the Selection Committee of the House of Representatives referred the Bill for inquiry and report on:

- the means by which proposed efficiencies will be achieved
- effects on the administration of the courts, and
- whether the proposed amendments will improve access to justice.

The Committee held a public hearing on 30 November 2012 and over the course of the inquiry received three submissions. The Committee also reviewed submissions received by the Senate Committee's concurrent inquiry into the provisions of this Bill.

After consulting with stakeholders through the public hearing and submissions, the Committee was satisfied with the objectives and implementation of the reforms. This Bill is predominantly finalising and providing the legislative authority for a number of arrangements already in place or well-advanced. The courts, tribunal and Attorney-General's Department have been working together over quite some time to implement the reforms.

While commending the bodies on their work to date, the Committee would like to see an external review of the affected courts and tribunal undertaken by the Australian National Audit Office at an appropriate point in time. This would provide reassurance that the anticipated benefits of efficiency and effectiveness have been achieved.

In terms of ongoing reporting, the Committee recommended additional safeguards for the National Native Title Tribunal by asking the Attorney-General to direct the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner to report on the adequacy of tribunal resourcing to effectively fulfil its functions, and any effect on the exercise of the human rights of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The Committee has recommended that the Bill be passed by the House of Representatives.

The report is available at [www.aph.gov.au/spla](http://www.aph.gov.au/spla). Printed copies will not be available.

For further information please visit the Committee website [www.aph.gov.au/spla](http://www.aph.gov.au/spla)

**For media comment**, please contact the Committee Chair, Mr Graham Perrett MP, on (07) 3344 2622 or 0423 280 131.

**For background information**, please contact the **Secretariat of the Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs**:

PO Box 6021  
PARLIAMENT HOUSE  
CANBERRA  
ACT 2600

Telephone: 02 6277 4969  
Facsimile: 02 6277 4427  
E-mail: [spla.reps@aph.gov.au](mailto:spla.reps@aph.gov.au)  
Website: [www.aph.gov.au/spla](http://www.aph.gov.au/spla)