

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS
ATTORNEY-GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT

Output 1.1

Question No. 13

Senator Stott-Despoja tabled the following question at the hearing on 24 May 2007:

Both the Family Law Council and the *Every Picture Tells a Story* Report recommended the establishment of a federally based service to investigate child protection allegations in family law matters. What steps is the government taking to give effect to these recommendations or otherwise to ensure child protection issues raised in family law matters are properly investigated?

The answer to the honourable senator's question is as follows:

The former Government rejected Recommendation 16 of the *Every picture tells a story* Report in its response of June 2005. The response stated:

As the Families Tribunal is not part of this response, the option of an investigative arm of such a tribunal is not available. The government considers that, to avoid duplication, better coordination of the family law system and State and Territory child protection systems is a preferable mechanism rather than establishing additional investigative bodies...

... the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General agreed on 8 August 2003 to establish a working group to look at ways of better coordinating the Commonwealth's family law system with child protection systems at State and Territory levels. Innovative initiatives, including the Magellan project of the Family Court of Australia and the Columbus project in the Family Court of Western Australia, provide useful examples of how to promote strong inter-agency coordination.

Measures to address child protection issues raised in family law matters are set out in the response to question 14.

The Attorney is currently meeting with a range of stakeholders and will be considering whether any changes should be proposed to the family law system.