



Hon. Robert McClelland MP
Attorney-General

MEDIA RELEASE

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GOVERNMENT TO LEGISLATE TO COMBAT FAMILY VIOLENCE

The Gillard Government will today introduce landmark legislation that will provide greater protections for children within the family law system and combat family violence.

Attorney-General Robert McClelland said the Family Law Legislation Amendment (Family Violence and Other Measures) Bill 2011 will create a safer and fairer family law system and prioritise the safety of children.

“This legislation will significantly improve the protections in place to ensure the safety of children in the family law system,” Mr McClelland said.

“It will help people within the system to understand and recognise family violence and child abuse, and encourage them to act.

“The Government will not tolerate family violence or child abuse, and nor should any member of the Australian community.”

The amendments will prioritise the safety of children, encourage people to bring forward evidence of family violence and child abuse, and help families, family law professionals and the courts to better identify harmful behaviour through new definitions of ‘family violence’ and ‘child abuse’.

Mr McClelland said the Family Violence Bill has strong community support.

“More than 400 submissions were received from the community during the public consultation process on the draft Family Violence Bill,” he said.

“A total of 73 per cent of respondents expressed support for the measures and a further 10 per cent made no specific comment on the Bill but offered information about personal experiences.

“The level of interest and support from the community around these changes indicate two things – that the Government is responding to a clear need to improve and strengthen aspects of Family Law, and that the overwhelming majority of the community supports the Bill.

“The Family Violence Bill responds to three reports received by the Government into the family law system and the way the family law system responds to family violence from the Australian Institute of Family Studies, Professor Richard Chisholm AM and the Family Law Council.

“These reports provide a very strong evidence base for the reforms we are proposing and this is backed up by strong community support for the Bill.

"The Family Violence Bill retains the substance of the shared parenting laws introduced in 2006 and continues to promote a child's right to a meaningful relationship with both parents, but emphasises that the best interests of the child must come first."

"The Government continues to support shared care but only where this is safe for the child."

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