



**ATTORNEY-GENERAL  
THE HON ROBERT McCLELLAND MP**

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**NEWS RELEASE**

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**IMPROVING AUSTRALIA'S FEDERAL COURT SYSTEM**

Attorney-General Robert McClelland today released a report and discussion paper on improvements to the delivery of family law services by Australia's federal courts for public consultation.

The report, *Future Governance Options for Federal Family Law Courts in Australia*, was prepared by the Attorney-General's Department in conjunction with Mr Des Semple.

"The recommendations seek to ensure that our federal courts are focussed on helping people to resolve their differences as quickly and cost-effectively as possible," Mr McClelland said.

The report finds that current arrangements are financially unsustainable and have led to confusion among litigants, conflict over resources and inefficiencies in administration. This is impeding the delivery of family law services to Australians.

Among the report's key recommendations are the creation of a single federal family law court by combining the Family Court and the Federal Magistrates Court, and the use of savings identified through streamlined administration to enhance family law services.

The discussion paper seeks public comment on the report's recommendations, and emphasises that any changes must preserve and build on the existing service culture of the Federal Magistrates Court. The report and discussion paper also propose recognising the constitutional status of Federal Magistrates as Chapter III judges under any changes.

The discussion paper seeks input on a range of proposed initiatives including simpler and more limited rules of evidence and procedure in the new combined family law court.

"Court resources should be deployed at an early stage to enable parties to resolve their dispute as quickly as possible," Mr McClelland said.

"I would like to thank my Department and Mr Semple for the extensive consultation that has been undertaken with the courts, legal professional bodies and key stakeholders in the development of the proposals."

The report and discussion paper can be accessed at: [www.ag.gov.au](http://www.ag.gov.au). Submissions and comments are invited by 6 February 2009.

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