



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

MEDIA RELEASE

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**FAMILY DISPUTE RESOLUTION
KEEPS FAMILIES OUT OF COURT**

Attorney-General, Robert McClelland, today released the *'Family Dispute Resolution Services in Legal Aid Commissions'* evaluation report which highlights the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of family dispute resolution (FDR) services.

The report found that FDR is an important part of the family law system and that for every \$1 invested by the Australian Government in FDR, approximately \$1.48 is saved in court time and related costs.

"FDR services provide families who would not otherwise be able to afford legal assistance with access to a timely, less adversarial and low cost option for resolving their legal disputes," Mr McClelland said.

"Most importantly, it allows parents to focus on the best interests of their children."

FDR is underpinned by the assumption that separating couples, with the help of a neutral third party experienced in mediation or conciliation, can voluntarily reach an agreement that is fair to both parties.

The evaluation found that FDR services provided by Legal Aid Commissions:

- focus on the best outcomes for children;
- cost less than litigation;
- identify cases involving family violence or child protection issues;
- narrow the number of issues in dispute; and
- assist parties to reach agreement outside of court.

The findings clearly support the Rudd Government's objective of promoting alternative dispute resolution services as an efficient and cost-effective option for resolving family law matters.

The evaluation report has been prepared by KPMG in conjunction with the Attorney-General's Department and is available at: www.ag.gov.au.

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