

Catholic Welfare Australia

Media Release



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Community groups will be major players in putting Family Law into action

Catholic Welfare Australia today welcomed the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee Report into Family Law but Executive Director, Mr Frank Quinlan, cautioned that “the law only takes us so far - community organisations will do the work on the ground and must formally be engaged in its planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.”

“The Committee has rightly identified the need to ‘introduce a system of accreditation and evaluation for all Family Relationship Centres and all family dispute resolution practitioners as a matter of urgency’”, said Mr Quinlan. “We wholeheartedly agree and believe the best results will be achieved by establishing a consultative committee drawn from relevant industry bodies and providers. This should include not only organisations such as Catholic Welfare Australia, but representatives with Family Law expertise, expertise in child welfare and psychology, community legal centres and other relevant bodies.”

“Family Relationship Centres will affect all these programs dramatically, so it makes sense to include them in the development of service models and accreditation standards,” Mr Quinlan said.

“This is not about the interests of providers, in the end the interests of children will be better protected if all services consider these issues together,” said Mr Quinlan.

“Catholic Welfare Australia has continually argued that the best interests of the child must be paramount in any reform of Family Law in this country. Adoption of the Committee’s recommendations will strengthen the legislation on this issue, but the practical application of the legislation should be evaluated and closely monitored to ensure that the aims are met,” he said.

“I hope that the Committee’s recommendations regarding better communication and sharing of information between the Family Court and the States and Territories (Recommendations 11, 12 & 13) will be implemented,” said Mr Quinlan. “We cannot allow the best interests of the children to get lost between the Commonwealth and State/Territory systems. We need to find ways to make the processes work.”

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