

JOINT FAMILY SERVICES SECTOR

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Access to counselling and mediation services for families is in distress

The three industry representative bodies for family relationships services in this country - Catholic Welfare Australia, Family Services Australia and Relationships Australia need an injection of \$16M in Federal Funding if they are going to be able to meet current demand and increasing service delivery costs.

Rather than provide a much needed injection of funds into family services, the Federal Government has told agencies to cut the number of mums, dads and children they see.

"We are extremely disappointed that the Government does not see these services - those that help families when they are most in need - as worthy of funding," said the Chair of Catholic Welfare Australia, Fr Joe Caddy. "With divorce and separation rates as high as they are in this country we should be doing absolutely everything we can to help children, their mums & their dads, when they are struggling and under pressure."

"Catholic Welfare Australia welcomed parts of the Government's initial response to the Inquiry into Child Custody Arrangements - particularly the emphasis on the need for mediation services to preclude any legal processes," said Fr Caddy. "However, we fear that the Government's failure to commit funds to existing programs in fact makes a mockery of their commitment to pursue non-legal options for couples and families facing breakdown."

"At a time when families are at the forefront of the Government's mind it seems incredible that we are helping fewer families. The Government has the recommendations of their own Custody Inquiry telling them we have effective programs **and** waiting lists. Now we also have the effect of the *Australians Say no to Violence* campaign and even more families seeking help. You can't raise public awareness, tell people that help is available, and not fund the family services to meet the demand," said Ms Jo Cavanagh, President Family Services Australia.

"There is repeated evidence that the programs delivered by our agencies provide good outcomes for Australian families," said National Director of Relationships Australia, Ms Sue Holmes. "In fact there are a number of very successful programs such as Children's Contact Centres and the Contact Orders Program that keep Australian children safe which cannot be extended beyond current availability due to the lack of funding."

"We are not seeking a huge injection of funds - \$16M is not a lot of money within the context of the Federal Budget," said Fr Caddy. "What this funding will do is translate into services for the growing number of mums and dads needing assistance at difficult times in their lives - surely that is an expense worth investing in."



Catholic Welfare Australia



Family Services Australia

working together with families

*Relationships
Australia*

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