

Family Law overhaul - Government announces intention to fundamentally reform the Family Law system

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In a media release issued on 9 May 2017, the Government has announced a review of the family law system with a view toward “long term fundamental reform.”

The Government have announced that the reform to the *Family Law Act 1975* (established over 40 years ago) represents the first comprehensive review of the Act to modernise the Family Law system and to better address family violence and child abuse.

The Australian Law Reform Commission will be directed to conduct this review which has been touted for completion by the end of 2018. The announcement is light on in terms of particulars surrounding the review, however further details will be made available in due course.

In addition, the Government also announced that \$80 million has been earmarked for the Family Law system in the 2016/2017 Budget. This includes:

- \$12.7 million for the establishment of “Parenting Management Hearings”, a new initiative being trialed and aimed at providing an alternative forum for self-represented litigants to resolve simpler Family Law disputes;
- \$10.7 million for additional family consultants to be utilised by the courts in an effort to give the court “earlier access to independent assessments of family issues, including the best interests of children”;
- \$3.4 million towards additional legal and social support for women experiencing or at risk of domestic or family violence; and
- \$55.7 million towards Community Legal Centres and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services.

While this additional funding to the Family Law System is welcomed, some (including the Family Law Section of the Law Council of Australia) have proclaimed their disappointment that the funding measures do not go far enough and do not address the substantial issues being experienced by those embroiled in the Family Law Court system, including delays and access to legal aid funding.

For more information or discussion, please contact HopgoodGanim Lawyers' [Family Law](#) team.

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