



Australian Government
Attorney-General's Department

Welcome Address – Ian Govey, Deputy Secretary
Inaugural Family Law System Conference
Parliament House, Canberra
Thursday 19 February 2009, 9:00am

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

[Acknowledgements]

- **First, may I acknowledge the traditional owners of the land we meet on – and pay my respects to their elders, both past and present.**

[Other Acknowledgements]

- **The Honourable Robert McClelland,
Attorney-General**
- **The Honourable Diana Bryant, Chief Justice of
the Family Court of Australia**
- **Chief Judge Stephen Thackray, Family Court of
Western Australia**

- **Chief Federal Magistrate John Pascoe AO**
- **Distinguished guests**
- **Ladies and gentlemen**

[Introduction]

- 1. Good morning. It is my pleasure to welcome you all today to the opening of the inaugural Family Law System conference.**
- 2. This is a significant event - to have all key stakeholders in the family law system gathered together in one room.**
- 3. It gives us an excellent opportunity to think about how we help Australian families resolve family law disputes and what we can do better.**

[Diversity of the family law system]

4. The diversity of the family law system is reflected in the range of people gathered here today. I am pleased to welcome representatives from:

- **the Family Court of Australia, the Federal Magistrates Court, the Family Court of Western Australia,**
- **Commonwealth funded family relationship service providers**
- **private legal practitioners**
- **Legal Aid Commissions**
- **Community Legal Centres**
- **Family Violence Prevention Legal Services**
- **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services, and**
- **other Government agencies such as the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous**

Affairs, the Child Support Agency, and state child protection authorities.

- 5. Each of you have an important role in improving the wellbeing of Australian families.**
- 6. You have all been involved in successfully implementing a range of reforms since 2006.**
- 7. This conference has been convened to provide a forum that not only highlights what is currently working well but also to focus on what can be done to further improve the family law system.**
- 8. During the next two days you will be discussing a number of important issues.**
- 9. These discussions will help to identify ways to simplify and streamline the system, reduce “red tape” and work better together.**

[Role of the Department]

- 10. The department is keen to hear your views on how this can be done because it has an important role in providing policy advice to Government.**

- 11. The Government has indicated that it wants the department to take a long term view when providing this advice.**
- 12. Based on current trends we can anticipate that Australian families will become more diverse and include a higher proportion of de facto relationships, same sex families, step-families and culturally diverse families.**
- 13. In the future, the family law system will need to provide families with early access to services to enable them to reach successful agreements before conflict escalates.**
- 14. It is important that we manage family relationship issues in a “whole-of-government” way. We need to ensure that families get the help they need and are supported through the system, without duplicating bureaucratic requirements across jurisdictions.**
- 15. We should always be looking to achieve outcomes that are in the best interests of the children.**

[Conclusion]

16. Your work during the next two days will help us to develop a more efficient, flexible and responsive family law system.

17. It is now my pleasure to introduce the Honourable Robert McClelland, Australian Attorney-General, to officially open the conference.