



**SENATOR THE HON GEORGE BRANDIS QC**  
**ATTORNEY-GENERAL**  
**LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN THE SENATE**

**MEDIA RELEASE**

**IMPROVING FAMILY VIOLENCE SUPPORT IN FAMILY LAW COURTS**

Today I officially launched Family Advocacy and Support Services in Parramatta – a unique Turnbull Government initiative to assist families experiencing domestic violence as they move through the family law system.

Those experiencing family violence often need much more than just legal support. They need someone who can listen and assess their situation to identify what else they need beyond legal help.

This new service integrates duty lawyers with specialist family violence workers to help families navigate between the federal and state court systems and connect people with trauma-informed help such as risk assessments and safety planning.

23 Family Advocacy and Support Services are being established by legal aid commissions across Australia – 14 of which are already operating. Legal Aid New South Wales operates this service in Parramatta and others in Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong, and partners with Women’s Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Services and Relationships Australia to ensure clients also receive necessary social support.

The Turnbull Government has provided \$18.5 million to establish Family Advocacy and Support Services under the \$100 million Third Action Plan of the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children. Services will prioritise clients who face additional barriers to accessing assistance, such as Indigenous Australians, those from culturally and linguistically diverse communities and clients with a disability.

The Family Law Council and key legal assistance bodies, including National Legal Aid and Women’s Legal Services Australia, have identified integrating services and assisting families to transition across federal and state systems as a priority.

Family Advocacy and Support Services are an important component of the Turnbull Government’s broader plan to improve the family law system’s response to family violence. The initiative is part of the Commonwealth’s record investment of over \$1.7 billion in the legal assistance sector over five years to 2020. In Budget 2017, I also announced amendments to the Family Law Act to ensure victims of family violence are not cross-examined by alleged perpetrators; additional domestic violence units; and the first comprehensive review into the family law system.

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