
MEDIA RELEASE

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FAMILIES TO BENEFIT FROM COMMITMENT TO SERVICES

FRSA welcomes the announcement by the Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Jenny Macklin and the Attorney-General Robert McClelland that services to help build strong and positive relationships will receive more than \$277 million in Australian Government funding over the next three years, through the extension of grants to family relationship services.

Strong, healthy families build a protective barrier around individuals. When family relationships breakdown both adults and children are left vulnerable. Family relationship dysfunction is the largest contributing factor to homelessness in Australia¹. It is also a significant factor in poverty and unemployment.

“As so many Australians know, the trauma of separation or divorce can lead to emotional distress, social isolation, disconnection from the workforce, mental health issues, severe financial stress and significant disruption in the lives of adults, children and young people”, said Tony O’Hare, Chairperson.

Effective relationship services can help to build family resilience and strengthen relationships, preventing family breakdown but also reducing the harm that can occur when relationships come to an end. For example, timely support during separation can substantially reduce conflict and increase parental cooperation focused on the needs of children – a range of services can be provided to assist each family member through the transition.

Investing in family relationship services makes social and economic sense. Family counselling, dispute resolution and post-separation parenting supports are substantially more cost effective than adversarial legal processes and deliver significantly better outcomes for children. Investment in early intervention services including relationship education and targeted programs yields long-term benefits – increasing the capacity of parents to care for children and reducing the incidence of problems, such as family violence and youth homelessness.

“Family relationship services have been providing quality support to Australian families since the 1960’s with substantial expansion in service delivery over the past two years. The greatest challenge now is to ensure that these services are sustainable over the long term”, said Samantha Page, Executive Director.

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For further information about Family Relationship Services Australia visit www.frsa.org.au or contact FRSA on 02 6162 1811 or email communications@frsa.org.au.

¹ AIHW (2007) pg 263; SAAP IV Evaluation Report (2004) pg 45: overviews gender and age groups of individuals and reasons for seeking support from SAAP services: 11% of individuals across all clients groups reported relationships or family breakdown; 23% of women reported family or domestic violence; 22% of women under 25 reported relationship or family breakdown and 17% of men under 25 reported relationship or family breakdown.