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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **FAMILY RELATIONSHIP SERVICES WELCOME REPORTS**

Family Relationship Services Australia welcomes today's release of The Australian Institute of Family Studies Evaluation of the 2006 family law reforms and the Family Courts Violence Review: A report by Professor Richard Chisholm.

"FRSA supports the recommendations of both reports, and it is helpful to have this data to be able to address some of the unintended consequences of the 2006 reforms" said Anne Hollonds, FRSA Chairperson.

"We are pleased to note the AIFS report found that since the reforms, more screening for safety concerns including family violence is taking place around the country. We look forward to future measures which ensure that all sections of the Family Law System are consistent in their responses to violent cases and vigilant about the need to protect vulnerable family members, especially when negotiating parenting arrangements after separation".

FRSA supports recommended changes to the legislation that will enable a stronger focus on the developmental needs of children and their interests, rather than any particular parenting arrangements as a "starting point".

"These reports support other research which has found that shared parenting is not always in the child's best interests, especially where there are high levels of conflict between parents", said Samantha Page, FRSA Executive Director.

"We believe that if these recommendations are adopted, this will allow the Family Law System to more skilfully assist families when going through separation, and arrangements where parents are sharing responsibilities for children will be negotiated in more appropriate situations with a consistent focus on the child's best interests".

"The members of FRSA provide the services which are now the first port of call for families going through separation, and our key focus is on the safety of family members and the developmental needs of children."

"We look forward to examining these reports in more detail and working with our colleagues across the family law system to support positive changes".

Samantha Page, FRSA Executive Director (0448 883 687) and Anne Hollonds, FRSA Chairperson (0411 382 692) are available for comment.