



Early Childhood Australia
A voice for young children

**OUR
VISION:
EVERY
YOUNG
CHILD IS
THRIVING
AND
LEARNING**

MEDIA RELEASE

Thursday 19 September, 2019

Prime Minister must put the safety of children first in review of the family law system

The national early childhood peak body Early Childhood Australia (ECA) today urged Prime Minister Scott Morrison to ensure that the safety and wellbeing of children is at the heart of the Australian Parliament's inquiry into the family law system.

ECA has read the proposed Terms of Reference for the inquiry and noted that the Joint Select Committee will be asked to consider 'the impacts of family law proceedings on *the health, safety and wellbeing of children and families* involved in those proceedings'.

ECA CEO, Samantha Page, said the sole mention of the wellbeing of children is almost overwhelmed by the Terms of Reference's focus on interrogating proof, truthfulness and evidence related to family and domestic violence and family law proceedings.

'We are very concerned about the impetus behind the new inquiry, which was enunciated by Senator Hanson yesterday (ABC Radio National) that women are inventing claims of domestic violence in order to deny their former partners custody rights over their children, and that legal processes therefore require change,' she said.

'Any changes to domestic and family violence law that would—in intent or effect—diminish the safety and wellbeing of Australian children would be an exceptionally grave breach of Australia's human rights obligations, and would simply be unacceptable to the vast majority of Australians.'

ECA has written to the Prime Minister to ensure that the work carried out by the Australian Law Reform Commission on the family law system forms the starting point for the new Joint Select Committee inquiry.

ECA will also seek to discuss these matters with members of the committee to reinforce the importance of children's safety and wellbeing being at the heart of family law and responses to domestic and family violence.

ENDS

For interviews with CEO Samantha Page, contact: Paige Pollard 0475 554 999

Early Childhood Australia is the peak advocacy body for children from birth to eight years, their families and early childhood professionals.