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ATTORNEY-GENERAL

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MEDIA RELEASE

**PROTECTING FAMILY VIOLENCE VICTIMS FROM BEING
CROSS-EXAMINED BY ALLEGED PERPETRATORS**

Today, I release draft legislative amendments to the *Family Law Act 1975* to ensure victims of family violence are protected from being personally cross-examined by their alleged perpetrators.

The proposed legislative changes are part of the Government's ongoing commitment to implementing protections against family violence for Australian families, and form part of the Government's package of measures to further support the family law system.

The draft amendments see a legislative ban on self-represented parties conducting direct cross-examination where one party is convicted or charged of an offence involving violence against another party. The court will also have discretion to disallow direct cross-examination in other matters where there are allegations of family violence.

To maintain procedural fairness, the court will be able to appoint a person to act as an intermediary to ask questions in cross examination on behalf of a party.

The draft amendments respond to concerns that family violence victims may experience further trauma from being directly cross-examined by their alleged perpetrators. This issue has been the subject of consultation with stakeholders and was identified as a key area of reform by the federal, state and territory governments at the 2016 COAG National Summit on reducing violence against women and their children.

The draft legislation, consultation paper and information on how to make a submission are available at: ag.gov.au/Consultations/Pages/Family-violence-cross-examination-amendments.aspx. Submissions can be lodged until 25 August 2017.

17 July 2017