



## The Family Court of Australia and Federal Circuit Court of Australia on track to introduce new and improved risk screening through the Lighthouse Project

The Family Court of Australia and the Federal Circuit Court of Australia (the Courts) are delighted that the Family Law Amendment (Risk Screening Protections) Bill 2020 was passed by the Australian Parliament on Monday 9 November 2020.

This legislation provides an important framework and enables the Courts to progress the very important new family-violence and risk screening initiative, the Lighthouse Project.

The [Lighthouse Project](#) is ground-breaking and innovative. It will allow the Courts to screen for risk and focus on public health and improved outcomes for families involved in the family law system.

The Lighthouse Project will operate as a pilot program in Adelaide, Brisbane and Parramatta and will involve the:

- Early risk screening through a secure online platform.
- Early identification and management of safety concerns.
- Assessment and triage of cases by a specialised team, who will provide resources and safe and suitable case management.

Importantly, all cases identified as being high-risk will be referred to a dedicated court list, known as the Evatt List (named after the Family Court's first Chief Justice, Elizabeth Evatt AC). The Evatt List focuses on early information gathering and intervention, through a judge-led support team. The team has specialised training and is experienced in working with families where high risk safety issues have been identified.

The Court can now prepare to officially commence this new screening process in the selected registries before the end of the year.

The Chief Justice of the Family Court of Australia and Chief Judge of the Federal Circuit Court of Australia, the Hon Will Alstergren said that this is a significant milestone in the progression of this critical project.

“The safety of children and families is the highest priority for our Courts. Our operations are centred on two key elements - risk and responsiveness. We are ensuring that family violence considerations are imbedded in all of our practice and procedure and the passing of this legislation now allows the Courts to implement a major project that is focussed on the safety of children and families.

“It is a pioneering project internationally, and has already been recognized by the QLD Government for its family violence initiatives.



FAMILY COURT OF AUSTRALIA  
FEDERAL CIRCUIT COURT OF AUSTRALIA

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“In addition, for the first time in 20 years, the Courts have successfully developed and introduced one harmonised form to be used across both Courts which provides people involved in a parenting case with a simplified way to provide information relating to risk—at the very beginning of the process. Issues may include (but is not limited to); child abuse, family violence, substance abuse and mental health, abduction and threats of harm, safety and wellbeing, and safety at court,” Chief Justice Alstergren added.

The [Notice of Child Abuse, Family Violence or Risk](#) commenced operation on 31 October 2020.

The Lighthouse Project team continues to undertake an extensive program of consultation and training with key stakeholders. For enquiries please email the Courts at: [LighthouseProject@familycourt.gov.au](mailto:LighthouseProject@familycourt.gov.au)

Further details of the Lighthouse Project are available from the websites of the [Family Court of Australia](#) and the [Federal Circuit Court of Australia](#).

Details of the Bill are available from the website of [Parliament House](#).

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