

THE FAMILY

Family Well-Being

Family First believes the family is the most important social unit in society.

Indeed families are the foundation stone of society. We will work towards the ideal that all Australian families have the opportunity to participate fully in society. We will therefore promote the rights and responsibilities of families, as well as the rights and responsibilities of government towards families.

While the focus of Family First is to strengthen families as a fundamental building block of society, it will work to ensure not only that the rights of children and parents are always protected, but also advanced, where necessary, to ensure the best interests of children in particular. Family First will champion the cause of the Australian family with the aim of ensuring that public policy encourages the development of strong effective families.

What is a Family?

“Family” for Family First means the relationships that bind grandparents, parents and their children, mums and dads and siblings and form the basis of a living community. A broader experience of extended family relationships enriches family life. Family grows out of heterosexual relationships between men and women. Family life flourishes when couples strive for stable commitment to sexual fidelity to each other. Family is about striving for a shared life journey together founded on a lived experience of relationship. There can be no doubt that flourishing family life creates the best environment for children.

Specifically

Family First believes that government must address the decline in social, economic and legal conditions that have placed increasing pressure on family

life. This will be achieved by auditing legislation to identify factors inhibiting healthy family, formation, function and stability. Family First will also seek to ensure that all proposed legislation is considered in the light of its impact on the family.

This will be achieved by developing national benchmarks to audit the state of the Australian Family by establishing:

- A Family Impact Statement to ensure that all legislation is considered in the light of the family
- A Family Well Being Index to provide a framework by which the well being of the family would be measured

Family Relationships

Family First emphasises that, in our modern society, many struggle to achieve strong and stable family environments and that relationships can fail despite the best efforts. As such Family First will seek to ensure recognition for the serious responsibility of government and communities in assisting families who are struggling with separation, divorce and, sole parenting. Family First will seek to support analysis and investigation of the best measures of support for all those shouldering the heavy burdens of sole parenting in our communities. We are committed to supporting strategies that will contribute to positive family environments and outcomes for all families.

To this end Family First will pursue a range of strategies to reduce the incidence of and negative outcomes of family and relationship breakdown by:

- Providing relationship and marriage education as well as ongoing opportunities for building and developing skills so that families have optimal chances for success

- Providing relationship and family rescue and preservation programs for the provision of support and counselling for relationships and marriages under pressure
- Providing divorce recovery and separation programs that offer strategies and support to every family member
- Explaining the extra benefits marriage bring to family life and increasing opportunities to help people, especially young Australians to select marriage as the best environment in which to raise a family
- Affirming and defending the institution of marriage as being a union of a man and a woman to the exclusion of all others, voluntarily entered into for life

Mums and Dads

Family First recognises the unique and irreplaceable role undertaken by mothers and fathers. Family First will recognise and protect the rights and responsibilities of parents by supporting and introducing legislation that will assist and empower parents to fulfil their role as parents and recognise governmental and societal responsibilities to support parents in this critical role.

Family First recognises that parents have the primary responsibility for the nurture, raising and education of their children. Government should respect and support the conscientious exercise of parental responsibilities and Family First will seek to implement measures that ensure that parental views are formally sought and addressed in all matters impacting on the welfare and education of their children.

Sole parents

Family First acknowledges the tremendous contribution made by sole parents in our society and also recognises the immense struggles many sole parents have in raising a family alone. Family First is committed to assisting sole parents by:

- Providing programs that connect sole parents to family support and mentoring networks to offer assistance across key areas of family concern
- Ensuring appropriate levels of assistance are available for sole parents.

Changes to Family Law

Family First will seek to promote and support reform to Family Law that gives greater assistance to families under pressure and provides the framework for meaningful parent child relationships as far as is practicable after the breakdown of the parents' marriage or defacto relationship by substantial review of the legislation governing the care of children under the Family Law Act and other child Custody laws and the introduction of changes to achieve:

- Greater legislative support for more balanced parenting outcomes taking into account the unique and vital roles both mother and the father have in parenting their child.

- Streamlining the administration of the law to ensure less frustration for the parties and better protection for children and their rights to have an ongoing relationship with both parents.
- Supporting the introduction of a rebuttable presumption of joint residency for children after relationship breakdown such that the meaningful involvement by both parents in the life of their children is maximised in terms of time and the exercise of parental responsibilities.
- The improved provision throughout regional and metropolitan areas of professionally supervised exchange facilities to facilitate comfortable and harmonious handover of children under custody agreements or Family Court orders.

Youth

Family First values the contributions of young people and will seek to promote the full participation of young people in family and community life. We believe that when a young person reaches his or her full potential, reciprocal benefits flow through to the family and the community. Family First will support young people by:

- Advancing the position that the education, training and assistance in first full time employment of youth are primary responsibilities of Government to family. To this end Family First supports initiatives such as traineeships in both the private and public sector to encourage youth employment
- Encouraging initiatives which redress the high rate of youth suicide
- Supporting initiatives, which reduce and eliminate substance abuse
- Family First will support ongoing research into the long term psychological effect of the media on children, families and society

Older Australians

Family First believes older Australians have a wealth of knowledge and experience, which deserves to be valued and respected. The Party will work to foster the full participation of seniors in Australian families, communities and society by.

- Supporting initiatives that reward the mentoring of younger Australians in the areas of life skills, family and work skills
- Ensuring Legislation supports seniors in all areas of their lives including maintaining access to affordable medication and health care treatments.

Indigenous Families

Family First recognises the diversity of lifestyles and languages among Australia's Indigenous people. The party will:

- Work in consultation with community leaders to further dispel discrimination and to support programs to foster healthy and stable family life and stronger communities
- Encourage reconciliation and forgiveness

