



**Hon. Robert McClelland MP**  
Attorney-General

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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Monday, 1 August 2011

### **REFORMS TO AUSTRALIA'S FEDERAL LEGAL SYSTEM START TODAY**

Attorney-General Robert McClelland said changes to Australia's legal system which commence today will result in more people resolving disputes before going to court, saving money, time and stress.

Mr McClelland said the reforms commencing today as part of the *Civil Dispute Resolution Act 2011* will fundamentally change the way people resolve issues in the federal courts.

"Australia's legal system is changing - we are moving away from an adversarial culture of litigation to a resolution-based approach to disputes," Mr McClelland said.

"This means greater opportunities for resolution, rather than a system that prioritises 'winners and losers'.

"Under the new requirements from today, litigants to matters in the Federal Court of Australia and the Federal Magistrates Court must file a statement setting out the genuine steps they took to resolve their dispute and, if they took none, to explain why.

"The reality is that the cost of court proceedings puts litigation out of the reach of many people.

"These changes will increase access to justice for the community by encouraging realistic – and less costly - alternatives to litigation.

"These reforms are intended to have a significant impact on the way the law is administered in Australia.

"The changes will assist in more efficient administration of justice and reinforce the idea that litigation in the courts should be a last resort.

"The courts will always play a central role in our justice system, but it's clear that launching into litigation is not always the best approach to resolving disputes.

"Parties can benefit from exchanging information, narrowing the issues in dispute and exploring options for resolution leading to more matters being settled by agreement earlier on, before significant costs have been incurred and legal positions become entrenched.

"Even if matters progress to court, experience shows costs will be saved as the issues in dispute will be better understood and narrowed.

"The *Civil Dispute Resolution Act 2011* is a significant reform that will modernise Australia's legal system. It will benefit both those who use the system, and those who work within it.

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