

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS  
FAMILY COURT OF AUSTRALIA/FEDERAL CIRCUIT COURT

**Question No. AE16/018**

**Senator Collins asked the following question at the hearing on 9 February 2016:**

Senator JACINTA COLLINS: Thank you, Chair. In fact, on that point I also had another question about the family violence standards. Sorry, were they family assessment standards or family violence standards?

Ms Filippello: Is that in relation to the family consultants?

Senator JACINTA COLLINS: No, the standards you were just referring Senator McKim to.

Ms Filippello: Yes, they are for family consultants.

Senator JACINTA COLLINS: They are not specifically for family violence?

Ms Filippello: They include family violence.

Senator JACINTA COLLINS: And who developed them?

Ms Filippello: The Family Court, in consultation with other experts.

Senator JACINTA COLLINS: Can you take on notice who those experts were.

Ms Filippello: Yes, certainly.

Senator JACINTA COLLINS: It may be available online, but I was interested in that point as well.

**The answer to the honourable senator's question is as follows:**

There are a number of guidelines available to support the practice of family consultants as follows.

For those Family Consultants engaged by the Courts (either as employees or by appointment pursuant to Regulation 7, *Family Law Act 1975* (Cth)) there are internal professional directions which include directions related to family violence.

These directions are developed and maintained by the Principal of Child Dispute Services (who is employed by the Courts administration). The professional directions will be reviewed and updated from time to time by the Principal on the basis of any new evidence arising from established research, and/or advice from his/her senior family consultants. These practice directions are not available to and do not apply to family report writers engaged privately or by Legal Aid in any state or territory.

The published standards document contained within the link below, titled *Australian Standards of Practice for Family Assessments and Reporting*, is a publication developed by the Family Court of Australia, the Federal Circuit Court of Australia and the Family Court of Western Australia. In particular, it was developed by the Office of the Principal of Child Dispute Services.

The aim of the publication was to promote good practices in conducting and reporting on family assessments in family law matters and to identify the essential standards in helping to determine the 'best interests of the child'.

This publication provides information to the decision-makers, agencies and legal professionals involved in family law cases, as to what constitutes good practice in family assessments and reporting. This publication attempts to outline a minimum standard of practice when conducting

family assessments and preparing reports. This standards document is available to *anyone* concerned with family law cases including all family report writers.

<http://www.familycourt.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/fcoaweb/about/policies-and-procedures/asp-family-assessments-reporting>