$62 million package to support families through the Family Court

Minister of Justice Andrew Little has today released a [statement](#) to start the reform of the Family Court. The passing of the Family Court (Supporting Families in Court) Legislation Bill forms part of the $62 million packaged designed to:

- restore the right to legal representation at the start of a case in the Family Court;
- allow parties to those proceedings, where eligible, to access legal aid;
- establish Family Justice Liaison Officers and produce better information resources to help parents and whānau navigate the system; and
- increase remuneration for lawyers for children to incentivise the recruitment and retention of skilled practitioners.

It is expected that a second bill focused on strengthening the Family Court will follow later this year, which will:

- enhance children's participation in proceedings that affect them;
- ensure that children feel supported and informed as they move through the Family Court process; and
- Expand lawyers' duties in care of children proceedings.

Executive committee

The executive committee met today. At that meeting the following members were appointed:

Chair – Caroline Hickman (Napier)
Deputy – Susie Houghton (Auckland)
Treasurer – Lauren Pegg (Dunedin)

The executive also confirmed the two-year co-option of Stephanie Northey (Rotorua) as the nominated representative of Te Hunga Rōia Māori o Aotearoa (Māori Law Society).

The executive paid a special tribute to Kirsty Swadling for her leadership in her role as chair over the past three years (the longest service of any chair). Throughout this period, the FLS has advocated strongly to the independent panel on the 2014 changes to the Family Court, the Law Commission's proposals for changes to the Property (Relationships) Act, and for an increase in rates of court-appointed counsel. Our submissions have resulted in the government accepting the majority of our recommendations.

Caroline Hickman
FLS Chair