

partment of Correctional Services. In 1995 Ms Vardon was awarded the Inaugural Telstra Business Woman of the Year award.

The Agency also has a Board of Directors which provide direction to the CEO and an accountability link between the Minister and the Agency. The Agency was officially launched under the name Centrelink by the Prime Minister in September 1997.

### **Enforcement of Human Rights Determinations**

On 15 September 1997, the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, the Hon Daryl Williams AM QC MP issued the following News Release in response to concerns about enforceability of determinations made by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission.

#### Changes to Human Rights Commission Will Allow Enforcement of Determinations

Legislation now before the Senate – the Human Rights Legislation Amendment Bill – will address problems involving the enforcement of determinations by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission.

The legislation addresses problems that currently exist where compensation awarded by the Commission cannot be enforced, as highlighted in *The Australian* today (p. 1).

The legislation was introduced in December last year. It seeks to simplify dispute resolution procedures in human rights matters, making them more accessible and userfriendly.

Under the current process the Commission hears disputes. However, the High Court in *Brandy* held that determinations by the Commission are not binding.

Under the scheme proposed by the Government, complaints will continue to be lodged with, and conciliated by the Commission. However, matters which cannot be successfully conciliated may proceed directly to the Federal Court for a binding determination.

In removing the potential requirement to litigate disputes in the commission and then in the court, the proposed scheme will save time and limit the cost, duplication, uncertainty and tension inherent in the current processes.

Elements of the Human Rights Legislation Amendment Bill have their origins in a review of the commission conducted by the previous Government. During the passage of the Bill through the Senate, I trust the opposition will not seek to obstruct or play politics with the rights of Australians and their access to redress.

The legislative package is an indication of the Government's commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights.

### **Establishment of the Human Rights and Responsibilities Commission**

On 23 September 1997, the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, the Hon Daryl Williams AM QC MP, announced the Government's intention to replace the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission with a new body to be called the Human Rights and Responsibilities Commission. The text of the Attorney's News Release follows.

#### Human Rights and Responsibilities Commission

The Government's commitment to effective and equitable protection and promotion of human rights will be underlined through the establishment of a new Human Rights and Responsibilities Commission with a streamlined structure and more focused principal functions following a reorganisation of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission.

The protection afforded to all Australians under Commonwealth anti-discrimination laws will be fully maintained under the reorganised commission.

The structure of the new Human Rights and Responsibilities Commission will consist of a president and three deputy presidents.