



FAMILY COURT
OF AUSTRALIA



16:17

ANNUAL REPORT



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ISSN: 1035-9060 (print version)

ISSN: 2203-1863 (online version)

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The online version contains links to the 2016-17 Attorney-General's Portfolio Budget Statements and the Court's Corporate Plan.

Acknowledgments

This report reflects the efforts of many people. Special thanks go to the Court staff involved in contributing and coordinating material, as well as the following specialist contractors:

Design and typesetting: Papercut Graphic Design

Printing: New Millennium Print

This annual report is printed on 130gsm Monza satin recycled and 300gsm Monza satin recycled.

Monza Recycled contains 99% recycled fibre and is FSC® Mix Certified, which ensures that all virgin pulp is derived from well-managed forests and controlled sources. Monza Recycled is manufactured by an ISO 14001 certified mill.



LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL



FAMILY COURT OF AUSTRALIA
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14 September 2017

Senator the Honourable George Brandis QC
Attorney-General
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Attorney

I am pleased to present the Annual Report on the operations of the Family Court of Australia for the financial year ending 30 June 2017, in accordance with Section 38S of the *Family Law Act 1975*.

This report has been prepared in accordance with the Department of Finance's *Resource Management Guide No. 135: annual reports for non-Corporate Commonwealth Entities*, but adjusted to reflect the changes in structure brought about by the commencement of the *Courts Administration Legislation Amendment Act 2016*.

A report on the provision of corporate services and the financial statements are included as part of the Federal Court of Australia's 2016–17 annual report. This is due to the *Courts Administration Legislation Amendment Act 2016* which amended a number of Acts in order to adjust the courts' governance structures to support shared corporate services and bring the courts into a single administrative entity under the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* and a single statutory agency under the *Public Service Act 1999*.

This is the Family Court's 27th annual report.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Diana Bryant'.

Diana Bryant AO
Chief Justice



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READER'S GUIDE

The purpose of this report is to inform the Attorney-General, the Parliament, court clients and the general public about the performance of the Family Court of Australia in the 2016–17 reporting year.

Prepared according to parliamentary reporting requirements, this report outlines the goals stated in the Court's Portfolio Budget Statements and Corporate Plan relates them to the results achieved during the year.

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PART 1: The year in review—the Chief Justice's overview highlighting significant issues and initiatives the Court has undertaken during the reporting year.

PART 2: Overview of the Court—information about the Court, including its role, functions, powers, governance, organisational structure, initiatives, planning and international cooperation.

PART 3: Report on performance—how the Court performed during the period against the outcome and related program. The performance reports are based on the outcome and program framework and performance information in the 2016–17 Portfolio Budget Statements and the Court's Corporate Plan.

PART 4: Appeals—information about the Appeal Division, trends in appeals and appeals to the High Court.

PART 5: Significant and noteworthy judgments—summaries of some of the important decisions made during 2016–17.

PART 6: Management and accountability—provides information on corporate governance and judicial and collaborative committees.

PART 7: Appendices—outcome and program statement, staffing profile, committees, external involvement, judicial activities and contact details.

PART 8: Index

The following should assist readers to locate information in the annual report and to understand court-specific language:

- > Acronyms, abbreviations and a glossary of court-specific terminology—pages ix
- > Alphabetical index—page 135

An electronic version of this annual report is available from the Family Court of Australia's website at this link: <http://www.familycourt.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/fcoaweb/reports-and-publications/annual-reports/>

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AAT	Administrative Appeals Tribunal
AGD	Australian Government Attorney-General's Department
AHS	After Hours Service
ALS	Aboriginal Legal Service
AM	Member of the Order of Australia
ANAO	Australian National Audit Office
AO	Officer of the Order of Australia
APS	Australian Public Service
ASL	Average Staffing Level
AUSTLII	Australasian Legal Information Institute
AWA	Australian Workplace Agreement
BAU	Business as Usual
BSDO	Business Systems Development Officer
CaLD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
CCJ	Council of Chief Justices
CCP	Commonwealth Courts Portal
CDS	Child Dispute Services
CEI	Chief Executive Instruction
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CJ	Chief Justice
CLC	Commonwealth Law Courts
CN	Court Network
COMP	Court Ordered Mediation Program
CPC	Chief Justice's Court Policy Committee

CPSU	Commonwealth and Public Sector Union
CSA	Client Service Advice
CSO	Client Service Officer
CSSMG	Client Services Senior Managers Group
Cth	Commonwealth
DCJ	Deputy Chief Justice
DHS	Department of Human Services
ECONET	Ethics Contact Officer Network
EIU	Early Intervention Unit
EL	Executive Level of the Australian Public Service
EMS	environmental management system
ESD	ecologically sustainable development
FC	Family Consultant
FCA	Federal Court of Australia
FCAC	Federal Costs Advisory Committee
FCC	Federal Circuit Court of Australia
FLCAG	Family Law Courts Advisory Group
FLIS	Family Law Information Service
FLPN	Family Law Pathways Network
FLSS	Family Law Settlement Service
FOI	freedom of information
FRAL	Family Relationship Advice Line
FRC	Family Relationship Centre
GST	goods and services tax
HR	Human Resources
HSMAs	(Work) Health and safety management arrangements
IACA	International Association for Court Administration
ICT	information and communications technology
IP	Internet Protocol
IPS	information publication scheme

ISDN	Integrated Services for Digital Network
IT	information technology
IVR	interactive voice recognition
J	judge
JCCD	Judicial Council on Cultural Diversity
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
MA	The Supreme Court of Indonesia (Mahkamah Agung)
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NEC	National Enquiry Centre
NSO	National Support Office
PAC	Chief Justice's Policy Advisory Committee
PBS	Portfolio Budget Statements
PGPA	<i>Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013</i>
PMDS	Performance Management and Development System
PSM	Public Service Medal
RMS	Rehabilitation Management System
RSR	Registry Service Quarterly Return
SDC	Staff Development Committee
SES	Senior Executive Service of the Australian Public Service
VOC	volatile organic compounds
WAN	Wide Area Network
WCAG	Web Content Accessibility Guidelines
WHS	work health and safety
WHSC	Work Health and Safety Committee

GLOSSARY OF COURT-SPECIFIC TERMS

XII

Casetrack—Casetrack is the case management system used by the Family Court, including the Appeal Division, and the Federal Circuit Court of Australia.

Child dispute services—the family consultant services of the courts. Family consultants are court experts who specialise in child and family issues after separation and divorce. They provide the courts and families with expert advice regarding children’s best interests; help parties resolve their dispute where possible; write and produce family reports; and advise the courts and families about the services provided to families and children by government, community and other agencies.

The Court—means the Family Court of Australia.

The courts—means the Family Court of Australia and the Federal Circuit Court of Australia.

Family consultant—a psychologist and/or social worker who specialises in child and family issues that may occur after separation and divorce.

Family law registry—a public area at a family law court where people can obtain information about the courts and their processes and where parties file documents in relation to their case.

Interim proceedings—proceedings for orders pending a final determination of the issues in dispute.

Interlocutory proceedings—proceedings taken during the course of, and incidental to, a trial.

Magellan—cases that come to the Family Court that involve allegations of sexual abuse and/or serious physical abuse of a child go into the Court’s Magellan program.

Registrar—a court lawyer who has been delegated power to perform certain tasks; for example, grant divorces, sign consent orders and decide the next step in a case.

Registry—how the courts’ offices are known. For example, the Melbourne registry is in the Commonwealth Law Courts building on William Street.

Reserved judgments delivery time—the time between the hearing and the delivery of the judgment concerned.

Rules—a set of directions that outlines court procedures and guidelines. The rules of the Family Court of Australia are the *Family Law Rules 2004* and the rules of the Federal Circuit Court of Australia are the *Federal Circuit Court Rules 2001*.

