

Human Resources

As at 30 June 2009, the Family Court had a total workforce of 638 employees excluding judicial officers, the Chief Executive Officer and casual employees.

Table 1 Staff, by location

Level	ACT	CJ	NSO	NSW	NT	Qld	SA	Tas.	Vic.	Total
APS 1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
APS 2	1	-	1	29	-	15	10	2	22	80
APS 3	4	1	7	57	4	30	16	6	27	152
APS 4	3	-	20	32	-	20	11	3	19	108
APS 5	2	1	18	23	1	13	4	3	10	75
APS 6	-	3	25	5	-	1	3	-	1	38
EL 1	6	1	33	22	-	13	6	3	17	101
EL 2	2	1	15	23	-	11	8	2	13	75
SES 1	-	-	3	1	-	1	-	-	1	6
SES 2	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Total	18	7	124	193	5	104	58	19	110	638

APS = Australian Public Service; EL = Executive Level; SES = Senior Executive Service; CJ = Office of Chief Justice, Melbourne; NSO = National Support Office, Canberra.

Note: Judicial officers and the Chief Executive Officer, who are holders of public office, are not included in this table. Actual occupancy at 30 June 2009 includes full-time and part-time staff, with the exception of casual employees. All figures in the table are based on actual headcount.

Annual Report Summary

2008–2009



The full report and more information on the Family Court of Australia can be accessed from the Court's website at:
www.familycourt.gov.au or email
communications.office@familycourt.gov.au for a hard copy.

The Family Court of Australia, through its specialist judges and staff, assists Australians to resolve their most complex legal family disputes.

This summary document highlights the key outcomes in the Family Court's 2008–09 annual report.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES AND DEVELOPMENTS

- The Attorney-General proposed to merge the Federal Magistrates Court with the Family Court and the Federal Court.
- Decisions of the Court became more transparent with most judgments published online.
- The Family Court and Federal Magistrates Court merged corporate (administration) services.
- The number of judicial retirements without replacement creates pressure on the Court.
- De facto legislation brought financial disputes arising out of the breakdown of de facto relationships (of same or opposite sex) under the Family Law Act and therefore the Family Court and Federal Magistrates Court.

Initiatives

- eFiling of supplementary documents commenced through the Commonwealth Courts Portal.
- Less adversarial trial education package developed to provide an insight into the way the principles of conducting child-related proceedings are put into practice.
- Family violence *Best Practice Principles* developed to assist judicial officers hearing matters with alleged family violence.
- In light of new shared parenting legislation, the Court released statistics on the amount of time orders were being made for the parties coming to court and matters that come to court but in which the parties reach their own agreement without a decision by a judge.
- The Court adopted a creative approach to engaging the young employees of the organisation by asking employees aged 25 and under to apply their unique perspective and new ideas to the implementation of best practice through the Young Employees Advisory Group.

Judicial services

At the end of June 2009 there were 35 judges of the Court including the Chief Justice and the Deputy Chief Justice.

Judicial services include:

- determining cases that are complex in law, facts and parties
- covering specialised areas in family law
- providing national coverage as the appellate court in family law matters.

In 2008–09 the Court achieved a clearance rate over 100 per cent for each of its major applications, with a total clearance rate of 106 per cent. This has effectively reduced the number of pending applications by almost 13 per cent (or approximately 800 cases) since 2007–08 and indicates that the Court maintained a relatively stable output and workload commensurate with its resources and the demand on its services.

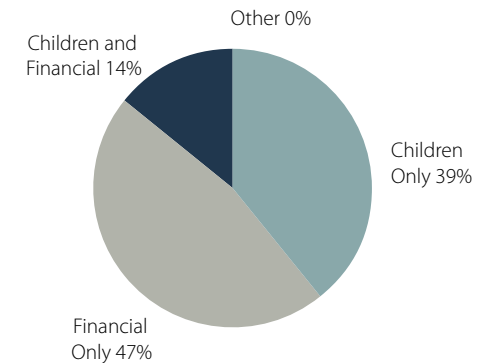
In the three other 2008–09 metrics where the Court did not achieve its targets (two backlog indicators and percentage of cases finalised), it needs to make only small improvements to reach the targets in 2009–10. In particular, the Court is striving, where it is able to and as appropriate, to reduce the number of pending 'older' cases by actively managing those cases to disposal. If the Court is able to achieve this, it should lead to improved timeliness for future case disposal.

Work of the Court

The Court continues to deal with the most complex and difficult family law cases. While child-related and parenting cases are very difficult, the Court also deals with very complex cases involving financial and property issues. Such cases often deal with the splitting of superannuation, corporate businesses and expensive and complex finance and property portfolios.

There has been a significant shift in the past few years, and the Court now deals with a greater proportion of its cases involving complex financial issues (see Figure 1).

Figure 1 Issues sought on Final Order cases, 2008–09



Registry services

- provision of effective support to the Family Law Courts
- family law telephone and referral services
- family law document processing.

The family law registries achieved all of the service targets relating to counter enquiries and the registries exceeded the service target in processing applications.

The National Enquiry Centre achieved all but one of its service targets this financial year. The exception was a slightly high response rate in answering calls against the service target. This was due to the additional responsibilities transferred to the National Enquiry Centre from other business units that contributed to higher than expected work volumes, in particular email enquiries. However, while the target was not met, there was a significant improvement on the previous financial year.

Financial Management

The Court's 2008–09 budget, as published in the Portfolio Additional Estimates, was \$138.6m. The Court reported a surplus of \$0.47m for the 2008–09 financial year compared to a breakeven forecast in the Portfolio Additional Estimates. This surplus represents only 0.3% of the Family Court's 2008–09 budget.

