



Hundreds of NSW families encouraged to resolve lengthy family law disputes during the Family Court of Australia and Federal Circuit Court of Australia's *Summer Campaign*

To address the backlog of family law cases, the Family Court of Australia and the Federal Circuit Court of Australia (the Courts) have launched a *Summer Campaign* which will provide families with an opportunity to resolve their long-term family law dispute.

Up to 2000 cases nationally have been identified as having been in the court system for over 18 months, with some four years-old. These cases will be listed and dealt with as part of a series of callovers in the Courts over the next three months in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide, Parramatta and Newcastle.

Between 20 and 25 cases involving parenting and/or property disputes will be listed before a judge each day. Six senior judges, including the Chief Justice and the Deputy Chief Justice, have been allocated to deal with those matters. The number of cases and days allocated to the Summer Campaign will vary in each location.

In Sydney, the callovers will take place in the Family Court on 2 to 6 March and 9 to 11 March. The Federal Circuit Court will conduct callovers in Sydney from 16 to 20 March and in Parramatta 6 to 9 April. Approximately 730 cases will be listed over this period in Sydney.

The campaign will provide an opportunity for families to resolve their dispute and they will be encouraged to reach an agreement through various forms of alternative dispute resolutions (ADR). For appropriate cases, court-employed Registrars and family consultants will conduct (free-of-charge) family dispute resolution conferences. It is acknowledged that some cases, such as those involving issues of serious family violence or other complex issues, may not be suitable for ADR and will be promptly listed for trial.

The Chief Justice of the Family Court of Australia, the Hon Will Alstergren said that the Summer Campaign is one of many initiatives that the Courts have implemented in a serious effort to minimise the delays that families have experienced in the past several years.

"The summer campaign commenced in Melbourne on 12 February and the feedback from litigants and practitioners has been extremely positive. While we do not yet have figures around the number of cases that have been resolved, I am confident that many of the cases have either settled or are on the path to resolving by engaging with a suitable form of dispute resolution – both within the court and through external ADR services. This includes people who are legally represented and unrepresented.

"My focus is on the people who come to our courts seeking a resolution to their dispute. The Courts have acknowledged that lengthy delays are unacceptable and we are taking action, and are working extremely hard to address this.

"To help achieve this, we are looking forward to the cooperation of the parties and family law practitioners who will be involved in the callovers in NSW.

"Maintaining an ongoing positive relationship and working collaboratively with the state-based legal aid bodies, law societies and Bar associations is imperative as we look to help families in need," Chief Justice Alstergren added.