

2

REGISTRATION
OPTIONS

FACE TO FACE
OR ONLINE

PROVIDING YOUR

10

CPD UNITS

11TH ANNUAL MELBOURNE FAMILY LAW CONFERENCE

Beyond the Reforms: Addressing Family Violence in Property Settlements

When the Court Says No: Navigating Scenarios Where Financial Orders Aren't Just and Equitable

Pending Final Determination: Managing Interim Applications in Complex Financial Matters

I've Got the Report – Now What? Navigating Valuations and Expert Evidence in Property Settlements

Proving De Facto Relationships: Shifting Thresholds & Complex Family Dynamics

Binding the Deal: Ensuring Enforceability of Financial Agreements

Is it Worth it? The Practicalities of Family Law Costs Applications

Harmful Proceedings Orders:

Understanding the New Landscape Under Section 102QAC

Child Support Proceedings in the FCFOA: The What, When, Why, and How

PROFESSIONAL SKILLS: Mastering Contravention Applications:

Advocacy and Strategy Under the New Act

PRACTICE MANAGEMENT: Refresher on Costs Agreements & Terms of Engagement – How to Manage Client Expectations, Get Paid and Avoid Complaints: Practice Management for Family Lawyers

ETHICS: High-Stakes Files, High-Stress Practice:

Managing Risk and Reputation in Family Law

A Two-day Conference

Thursday 26th and Friday 27th February 2026

Crown Melbourne or Online

Feedback from last year's conference:

- Very enjoyable and relaxed conference. Fantastic speakers and great venue.
- As a lawyer with twenty years experience I still learnt a lot, especially in light of the recent changes to the law.
- Excellent content, speakers, venue and the lunch - best I have ever had at a conference! Thank you for a fabulous couple of days.
- Very informative conference, lots of interesting topics and very engaging material.
- All the topics were useful and informative. The speakers were excellent, and the conference was very well organised.



Your Trusted CPD Partner for more than 50 Years

DAY 1: THURS 26 FEBRUARY 2026

**CHAIR DAY 1: MONICA BLIZZARD,
DIRECTOR & ACCREDITED FAMILY LAW
SPECIALIST (LIV), KHQ LAWYERS,
MELBOURNE, VIC**

MORNING THEME: PROPERTY SETTLEMENTS AND FINANCIAL MATTERS

9.00 - 9.10am

Introduction and welcome

9.10 - 9.55am

Session 1: Beyond the Reforms: Addressing Family Violence in Property Settlements

With the Family Law Amendment Bill reforms in effect since June 2025, family lawyers are now navigating a transformed legal landscape in property settlements involving family violence. While the reforms aimed to create clarity and fairness, their implementation has surfaced unexpected complexities and overlooked challenges. This session delves into the practical realities and emerging issues lawyers must address, including:

- Breaking down the new process for determining property settlements – what's new and what remains unchanged?
- How will courts quantify the financial toll of family violence? What evidence is required to support claims
- How are the courts prioritising stable housing for children in property divisions?
- Lessons learned from early judicial interpretations and case law trend

Speaker: Malcolm Gittoes-Caesar, Consultant - Family & Relationship Law, Lander & Rogers, Sydney, NSW

9.55 - 10.05am Panel Comments and Questions

10.05 - 10.50am

Session 2: When the Court Says No: Navigating Scenarios Where Financial Orders Aren't Just and Equitable

Family lawyers often focus on advocating for financial orders, but what happens when the Court determines that making any orders is not just and equitable? Since the pivotal Stanford case, this issue has taken on new significance, requiring practitioners to carefully assess the circumstances under which the Court may refuse to intervene. This session delves into:

- The key cases since Stanford where the Court has declined to make financial orders, identifying any emerging trends
- How the Court's approach in high-value property disputes post-Smith & Fields aligns—or doesn't—with established principles
- Factors the Court considers when deciding whether it is not just and equitable to make orders, including financial and non-financial contributions, relationship duration, and ongoing needs
- Risk management strategies for practitioners advising clients in cases where no financial orders might be made, including early case assessment and alternative dispute resolution options
- The practical impact of these rulings on client advice, exploring whether such cases are fact-specific outliers or signal a shift in judicial reasoning

Speaker: Justine Woods, Partner and Accredited Family Law Specialist, Cooper Grace Ward, Brisbane, Qld

10.50 - 11.00am Panel Comments and Questions

11.00 - 11.25am Networking Break and Morning Tea

DAY 1: THURS 26 FEBRUARY 2026

11.25am - 12.10pm

Session 3: Pending Final Determination: Managing Interim Applications in Complex Financial Matters

There is a lot to consider when acting for a client in a major complex financial matter. There is a myriad of strategic decisions to make which usually result in multiple interim applications being run to manage businesses, restrain or compel certain actions and/or preserve income or assets pending final determination of property settlement proceedings. Not only is there a lot to consider (and potentially get wrong) but the stakes are also high, and clients quick to sue, when things don't go to plan. To help family lawyers consider the complexities and strategy of interim considerations in major complex financial matters, this session shall:

- Discuss what to do prior to, and at, your initial consultations to identify interim issues requiring urgent attention
- Use deidentified examples from practice to unpick the various considerations that often arise in major complex financial matters, and the importance of being strategic with interim applications
- Outline the options available at an interim stage and what remedies or practical solutions may lie outside of family law
- Look at the interim orders being handed down in the property matters list - how are such matters currently being dealt with, when may the Court consider it not just and equitable to make an interim order?
- Case study examples focusing on orders restraining third parties and corporate entities

Speaker: Tim Gough, Partner and Accredited Family Law Specialist, Kennedy Partners Lawyers, Melbourne, Vic

12.10 - 12.20pm Panel Comments and Questions

12.20 - 1.05pm

Session 4: Child Support Proceedings in the FCFOA: The What, When, Why, and How

Australia's child support system was designed with the intention that child support matters be handled administratively, minimizing the need for court intervention. However, when child support matters do require court involvement, family law practitioners may find themselves revisiting key processes, legal frameworks, and strategies to effectively guide their clients. This session addresses the essential 'what, when, why, and how' of these matters, including:

- When you can take a child support matter to court and the relevant provisions of the Child Support (Assessment) Act 1989 and Child Support (Registration and Collection) Act 1988 that apply
- The circumstances in which the FCFOA has jurisdiction to consider child support proceedings compared to the circumstances in which it will exercise its discretion to make an order
- The procedural requirements for running child support proceedings (i.e. what is required pursuant to the Family Law Regulations, the FCFOA Rules 2021 and Central Practice Direction
- The practicalities of running child support proceedings - what should you include in your application, advice and how to be strategic with your matter

Speaker: Ashely Taylor, AccS(Fam), Special Counsel, Lander & Rogers, Melbourne, Vic

1.05 - 1.15pm Panel Comments and Questions

1.15 - 2.15pm Luncheon

DAY 1: THURS 26 FEBRUARY 2026

AFTERNOON THEME: RELATIONSHIPS AND INTERGENERATIONAL FAMILY WEALTH

2.15 - 3.00pm

Session 5: Proving De Facto Relationships: Shifting Thresholds and Complex Family Dynamics

The legal principles defining de facto relationships are well-established, yet recent judicial decisions reveal a more nuanced and sometimes unexpected approach. Are these trends a temporary shift or a sign of a changing threshold for proving a de facto relationship? As more people age and live separately for lifestyle, medical, or personal reasons, understanding when a relationship qualifies as de facto is essential to help clients avoid unintended family law consequences. This session examines the following:

- In depth look at the cases of note since *Fairbairn v Radecki* [2022] HCA 18 and the facts which have ultimately led the Court to find that a de facto relationship existed
- Compare and contrast the relevance of living arrangements in such decisions and how the court has viewed alternative living arrangements and the relevance of the reasons supporting such arrangements to the Court's determination
- What evidence was required to prove the relevant dates of a de facto relationship when there is no shared residence
- Legal implications for clients with complex family dynamics, including blended families and financial interdependencies
- Implications for older clients, particularly in cases involving aged care and later in life relationships

Speaker: John Spender, Principal, Kennedy Partners, Melbourne, Vic

3.00 - 3.10pm Panel Comments and Questions

3.10 - 3.55pm

Session 6: Binding the Deal: Ensuring Enforceability of Financial Agreements

Staying on top of recent legal developments is essential for practitioners preparing or advising on financial agreements. The enforceability of a financial agreement often hinges on interpretation, making it critical to understand the latest case law and best practices. This comprehensive session will provide key insights and guidance, covering:

- Analysis of important recent judgments, including *Suess & Suess* [2024] FedCFamC1F175, *Daily & Daily* (No.4) [2024] FedCFamC1A185, and *Dragomirov & Dragomirov* [2024] FedCFamC1A187, and their implications for financial agreement drafting and advice
- Identifying patterns in court decisions and recent trends in financial agreement disputes
- Practical steps to reduce the risk of agreements being set aside or declared unenforceable
- Common pitfalls in drafting and advising on financial agreements, and strategies to avoid them
- Key evidentiary considerations for practitioners and tips for comprehensive advice
- The Daily series of cases including *R Lawyers v Mr Daily* [2025] HCA 41

Speaker: Jacky Campbell, Partner and Accredited Family Law Specialist, Forte Family Lawyers, Melbourne, Vic

3.55 - 4.05pm Panel Comments and Questions

DAY 2: FRIDAY 27 FEBRUARY 2026

**CHAIR DAY 2: GERRY HOLMES,
BARRISTER, PAUL HOLMES
BARRISTERS CLERK PTY LTD,
MELBOURNE, VIC**

MORNING THEME: COURTROOM STRATEGIES

9.00 - 9.05am

Introduction and welcome

9.05 - 9.50am

Session 7: Is it Worth it? The Practicalities of Family Law Costs Applications

While the Court has discretion in family law proceedings to order one party to pay another's costs in certain circumstances, it can be difficult knowing when it is worth pursuing a cost application (and, if you do decide to file, how best to go about it!) This session examines the practical side of cost applications in family law proceedings and examines:

- How the court is currently approaching cost applications for both financial and non-financial matters, including lessons for practitioners arising from *Roydon & Roydon* [2024] FedCFamC1A 105
- Costs in parenting matters - in what circumstances are costs being granted in non-financial matters?
- How costs are considered and awarded when it comes to appeals, including appeal certificates and what happens when a retrial is ordered
- The level of work required to run a cost application - how much detail is needed to support the cost application
- Tips for maximising your chances of success while maintaining proportionality with the costs of the cost application

Speaker: Jeff Marhinin, Partner, Barkus Doolan Winning, Sydney, NSW

9.50 - 10.00am Panel Comments and Questions

10.00 - 10.45am

Session 8: Harmful Proceedings Orders: Understanding the New Landscape Under Section 102QAC

The 2024 amendments to the Family Law Act introduced section 102QAC and the concept of harmful proceedings orders. While initially viewed as an evolution of vexatious litigant orders, the courts have interpreted and applied these orders in notably different ways, leading to unexpected outcomes. It's clear that harmful proceedings orders are a distinct and complex mechanism requiring careful handling. With these orders being issued more frequently than anticipated, it's essential for family law practitioners to understand how they differ from vexatious litigant matters, particularly regarding the lower threshold and the broader range of scenarios in which the courts may impose them. This session will provide clarity by examining the following:

- Key cases which have applied section 102QAC since its introduction and identifying trends across jurisdictions and case types
- The proof and level of risk required for an order, including how courts have applied the lower threshold—even in the absence of prior orders
- Essential considerations for practitioners when applying for or responding to harmful proceedings orders.

Speaker: Stephen Page, AccS(Fam); 2023 Queensland Law Society President's Medal Recipient, Director, Page Provan, Brisbane

10.45 - 10.55am Panel Comments and Questions

10.55 - 11.15am Networking Break and Morning Tea

DAY 2: FRIDAY 27 FEBRUARY 2026

11.15 - 12.00pm

Session 9: I've Got the Report – Now What? Navigating Valuations and Expert Evidence in Property Settlements

When an expert valuation report lands in your inbox, it marks a critical turning point in the case. Whether for trial or mediation, how you assess, challenge, and leverage the valuation can significantly influence the outcome of a dispute. But many family lawyers struggle with understanding the report's strengths and limitations, how to effectively respond, and how to prepare for potential challenges from the other side. This session equips family lawyers with the practical tools needed to confidently navigate the post-valuation process, including:

- What you need to know about valuations, including the valuer's role, their methodology, common challenges, and the key factors they weigh in reaching their conclusions
- How to critically assess a valuation report, identify weaknesses, determine whether further clarification or additional expert evidence is needed, and develop a strategy for using or challenging the report in negotiations or court.
- When and how to challenge a valuation, tactics for questioning the expert's methodology, and how to anticipate and respond to attacks from the opposing side
- Common misconceptions lawyers and clients often hold about business valuations and how these can impact settlement negotiations or trial strategy
- Practical steps to integrate the valuation into your case, key questions to ask your expert, and how to structure your advice to clients

Speaker: Thomas Caldwell, Partner, Forensic Consulting, Grant Thornton Australia, Melbourne, Vic

12.00am - 12.10pm Panel Comments and Questions

12.10 - 1.00pm Lunch

AFTERNOON THEME: 3 COMPULSORY CPD TOPICS

1.00 – 1.10pm

Introduction and welcome

1.10 - 2.00pm

Session 10: Professional Skills

Mastering Contravention Applications: Advocacy and Strategy Under the New Act

Contravention proceedings demand sharp advocacy, precise drafting, and clear strategic judgment. Since the May 2024 amendments, inconsistent judicial approaches have made these skills even more critical for family lawyers seeking to advise clients with confidence and prepare effectively for the first return date. This session will equip practitioners with the professional skills needed to handle contravention applications, including:

- Clarifying the current legal framework and available remedies, and identifying when the old Act may still apply
- Assessing when to pursue a contravention application — and when to advise clients that it is not the best strategic option
- Adapting advocacy skills when acting for Applicants versus Respondents, including how and when to put evidence before the Court
- Drafting skills: properly particularising orders sought and affidavits in quasi-criminal proceedings
- Responding persuasively when faced with incomplete or poorly prepared contravention applications

Speaker: Paul Fildes, Principal and Accredited Family Law Specialist, Taussig Cherrie Fildes, Melbourne, Vic

2.00 - 2.10pm Panel Comments and Questions

DAY 2: FRIDAY 27 FEBRUARY 2026

2.10 - 3.00pm

Session 11: Practice Management & Business Skills Refresher on Costs Agreements & Terms of Engagement - How to Manage Client Expectations, Get Paid and Avoid Complaints: Practice Management for Family Lawyers

Running a family law practice isn't just about advocacy – it's also about sustainability, compliance, and keeping the practice financially healthy. With margins tightening, costs rising, and clients under financial pressure, practice management strategies are now critical to survival and growth. This session examines practical ways to ensure your Costs Agreement and Fee Estimates are up to date and compliant with Uniform Law; and that your Terms of Engagement are fit for purpose in the demanding area of family law service delivery.

This session has a focus on ensuring clients are fully informed of your service offering as well as the scope, terms and costs of same, whilst running a more efficient practice and avoiding the risk of complaints. The aim is to strengthen the business side of your practice while still delivering quality service, including:

- Compliance with Uniform Law and other professional obligations including compliance with Family Law Rules
- Strategies for fee estimate models that suit family law
- Delegation and efficiency: communicating with clients about use of juniors, paralegals, and technology to avoid senior lawyers doing low-value work
- Terms of Engagement which support client management and boundaries to keep emotionally charged clients from draining resources and time and running up unnecessary fees
- Risk management strategies and procedures to avoid compliance breaches, missed deadlines, and costs complaints

Speaker: Michele Brooks, Barrister and Advanced Mediator, Owen Dixon Chambers, Melbourne

3.00 – 3.10pm Panel Comments and Questions

3.10 – 3.30pm Networking Break and Afternoon Tea

3.30 – 4.20pm

Session 12: Ethics

High-Stakes Files, High-Stress Practice: Managing Risk and Reputation in Family Law

Few areas of practice generate as many complaints as family law, where emotions run high, outcomes are deeply personal, and lawyers are often caught in the crossfire. Ethical missteps, even unintentional ones, can quickly spiral into regulatory investigations or disciplinary action. This session examines how family lawyers can uphold their ethical duties while navigating complex, high-risk matters, including:

- The most common ethical complaint triggers in family law — and how to recognise them early
- Managing conflicts of interest when acting for multiple parties, or in small communities
- Maintaining professional independence in the face of client pressure, hostility, or manipulation
- Ensuring confidentiality and proper handling of sensitive client information in volatile disputes
- Ethical communication: setting clear boundaries with vulnerable or volatile clients without crossing professional lines

Speaker: Minal Vohra, Barrister, Senior Counsel, Isaacs Chambers, Melbourne

4.20 - 4.30pm Panel Comments and Questions

4.30pm Conference Close

GENERAL INFORMATION

Conference Registration Fee

The registration fee includes attendance at the conference and conference papers. Refreshment breaks and lunch on both conference days are included for delegates attending the face to face event.

Conference Papers

TEN will not provide printed copies of the conference papers or Powerpoints. Access to the papers & Powerpoints will be available online to all delegates in the lead-up to the conference (as they become available).

CPD

Lawyers: Lawyers: 10 CPD units/points
(7 x substantive law, 1 x ethics, 1 x professional skills and 1 x practice management & business skills).

CPD Certificate

All delegates attending the conference will receive a CPD Certificate confirming attendance.

The Conference Venue

Crown Towers Melbourne
8 Whiteman Street, Southbank

Discount Delegate Accommodation at Crown

Crown is offering 10% to 15% discount for conference delegates.

You can book directly using the Crown Direct website.

<https://www.crownhotels.com.au/crown-direct/login>

Travelling to the Conference Venue

Delegates are advised to make their own travel arrangements.

Conference Dress

Smart casual attire is suitable (note: the temperature in the conference rooms can vary depending on where you are sitting. Short sleeves/summer tops are generally OK, but it is advisable that you bring a jacket/long sleeved top just in case you need it).

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

1. In these terms,
 - a. "TEN" means Television Education Network Pty Ltd
 - b. "you" means the person who has registered to attend or the person or persons who attend[s] the conference (if different from the person registered)
 - c. "conference" means the live face to face or live or recorded online educational event or which you have registered (by whatever name called and includes conferences, masterclasses, webinars and webinar series).
 - d. "live conference" means a conference other than a recorded conference.
 - e. "recorded conference" means a recording of a presentation or a series of presentations which you can view at a time of your choosing
 - f. "online" in relation to a conference means a conference you attend by viewing the conference over the Internet
 - g. "face to face" in relation to a conference means a conference held in an external venue where you view the conference in the conference room

General – all conferences

2. TEN may change the program for a live conference as described in the brochure you have downloaded or in the TEN website without notice to you in any manner and at any time.
3. The information and opinions of presenters at the conference are not necessarily those of TEN and are in the nature of general information and not professional advice and you rely on these at their own risk. TEN is not responsible for the accuracy of the information or the correctness of the opinions offered by presenters at the conference.
4. TEN is not responsible for any financial or other losses incurred by you or for injury or damage to persons or property which occur at or in connection with the conference.

Copyright

5. The copyright in materials prepared by presenters at a conference and made available to you by TEN is and remains the property of each presenter.
6. You are entitled to use those materials for private study and research only.
7. The copyright in the live stream and in any recording of a conference offered online is the property of TEN.
8. You are entitled to watch a conference for private study and research only.

Conference cancellation by TEN – all conferences

12. TEN reserves the right to cancel a conference for any reason.
13. If TEN cancels the conference, you will be entitled either to a refund of the registration fee you have paid or to a credit equal to that fee which you can use to purchase another TEN product within 12 months of the first day of the cancelled conference.

Cancellation by You – all conferences

14. Refunds for registration cancellation by you other than under Clause 6(b):
 - a. If notice of cancellation is actually received by TEN more than 10 days before the first day on which the conference is to be held, 85% of the registration fee you have paid
 - b. Otherwise, no refund.

Governing Law – all conferences

15. The agreement between TEN and you is governed by the laws in force in the State of Victoria and the courts and tribunals of that State have sole jurisdiction to determine disputes arising in relation to it.

