

Screening for risk in parenting matters - a new court initiative

The Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia is the main court dealing with family law matters in Australia.

A key focus for the court is family violence, and how to protect vulnerable people and children in the court process. One initiative introduced by the court, aimed at shining a light on family violence and other risks, is the Lighthouse Project.

Following a successful pilot program, the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia last year expanded Lighthouse to family law registries across Australia.

Lighthouse is aimed at screening risk and identifying the appropriate triage steps and case management pathway for parenting cases based on the risk. It is also used to identify services that may be able to support a family through the Court process and create a safety plan where needed.

Parties in parenting matters at participating court registries are invited to complete a questionnaire – the Family DOORS Triage questionnaire. The questionnaire helps to identify a range of safety

risks that can arise in family law matters, including family violence, drug use and mental health issues.

The questionnaire is confidential. You cannot be asked to disclose if you have completed the risk screening. Any responses to the questionnaire or information provided in the screening progress cannot be used as evidence in the matter.

If a case is identified as “high risk”, it will be placed on the Evatt List – a specialist case management list with more intensive case management and a focus on early information gathering. The court aims to have cases in the Evatt List proceed to trial within 12 months of the case starting. You cannot ask that a matter be included in the Evatt List – it needs to occur through the screening process.

The risk screening process for Lighthouse is voluntary, however can assist the Court to determine the best case management pathway and help identify and triage risk for parenting cases.

This project highlights the need for families dealing with

family violence to be heard and supported and adds to the initiatives in place to address family violence. Parents can still apply for Intervention Orders in the Magistrates Court for

immediate protection.

If you require assistance in navigating separation and family violence issues, you are invited to contact the Wightons Family Law Team for an initial free

30-minute appointment.

This article is general information only and is not legal advice or a substitution for such advice.



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Wightons Lawyers

Family Law

Our dedicated Family Law team understand the impact of separation on families and that each matter is unique.

We provide advice and representation for all aspects of your family law matter, including:

- Divorce and Separation
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- Financial Agreements
- “Prenuptial” Agreements
- Spousal Maintenance
- Parenting Arrangements
- Dispute Resolution Process
- Child Support
- Relocation Applications
- Recovery Orders
- Family Violence and Intervention Orders

Call us on (03) 5221 8777 to arrange an appointment with our Family Law Team. Appointments are available at our Geelong, Corio and Ocean Grove offices, as well as by telephone and online.

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