



# Family Matters

THE NEWSLETTER OF BERRY FAMILY LAW: SUMMER 2017



## Welcome to Andrew Johnston

*"I want to empower my clients with the information they need to achieve the outcome that is right for them."*

Andrew joined us in December 2016 in our Williamstown office and has fitted beautifully into our team of lawyers.

Andrew has been working as a family lawyer since his admission to practice in 2008. He has extensive experience in a range of family law matters, including property settlements, parenting matters, the preparation of pre-relationship agreements and intervention orders. He is particularly passionate about representing clients in parenting matters and aims to achieve outcomes that are tailored to the interests of the children, are clear and lasting, and preserve ongoing parental relationships.

Andrew received Accreditation as a Family Law Specialist in 2015. He has previously worked as an Independent Children's Lawyer before the Federal Circuit Court, appointed to independently represent the child's interests in complex parenting disputes.

Andrew strives to provide clients with advice in a straight-forward manner. He takes pride in being approachable and available to his clients as they navigate the legal uncertainty of ending or entering into marriages, de facto or same-sex relationships.

### **Andrew's reflections**

I believe a large part of my role as a family lawyer is to lessen the burden my clients face while navigating the most complex and emotional time of their lives.

I want to empower my clients with the information they need to achieve the outcome that is right for them. Each case is different, and I support my clients to take charge of their future by representing them through to a negotiated or litigated resolution of their matter.



Berry Family Law

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## Support for Separated Families

Separation is a time of many changes and it is important to seek support if you need it. However, navigating the maze of services available to separated families can be difficult.

For general information, **Family Relationships Online** is an Australian Government service designed to provide all families with easy online access to information about family relationship issues.

**Family Relationship Centres** have been set up across Australia by the Government and offer family dispute resolution (mediation) services to help families determine future care arrangements for children. Mediators will help you to focus on your children's needs and decide what to do next. They can also assist you to develop a parenting plan.

Parenting plans are not binding or enforceable. However, talk to one of our lawyers about preparing Consent Orders to formalise your agreement.

For more information, or to find your nearest centre, visit [www.familyrelationships.gov.au](http://www.familyrelationships.gov.au) or contact the Family Relationships Advice Line on 1800 050 321.

**Family Counselling** can assist you and your family to deal with the breakdown of relationships, transitioning to new living arrangements and issues relating to the care of your children and financial adjustments.

**Drummond Street Services** offers a range of services including counselling for individuals, children and families, parenting support programs and a range of groups and seminars. We have received great feedback about their 'Parenting Kids Who Worry' program. This is a 4 session parenting course that helps with strategies to calm anxiety and manage separation and other life transitions for kids.

For those co-parenting ups and downs the MyMob APP available free at [www.ds.org.au](http://www.ds.org.au) can be helpful. This simple tool will assist with keeping everyone up to date and in helping parents recall everything from the children's shoe size to doctor's appointments and school events. There is also a respectful language filter to ensure that there is no swearing or name calling in communications.

For more information contact Drummond Street Services on 9663 6733.

Other support services that may assist you and your family:

- Relationships Australia on 1300 364 277
- Stepfamilies Australia on 9663 6733
- Life Works on 1300 543 396
- Dads in Distress on 1300 853 437
- WIRE (Women's Information and Referral Exchange) on 1300 134 130
- National Council for Single Mothers and their Children on 1800 758 150

If you need after hours or crisis support the following services provide telephone counselling:

- Lifeline Australia on 13 11 14
- Kids Helpline on 1800 55 1800
- 1800 RESPECT on 1800 737 732
- Mensline on 1300 78 99 78
- Beyond Blue on 1300 22 4636

If you are feeling unsafe, or have any concerns about the safety of your children, talk to one of our lawyers about the other options available to you.

There are many services available to help you and your family through the difficulties of separation. We would be pleased to discuss these with you and refer you to the most appropriate services.

## 10 things to do if you have just separated

- 1 Contact your bank or financial institution by facsimile or email to stop joint funds from being removed or liabilities increased.
- 2 Check your Will to see if it is still appropriate. If you do not have a Will consider having one drafted.
- 3 Ensure any Powers of Attorney are revoked and have appropriate ones drafted.
- 4 Consider whether your nominated death beneficiary for your superannuation entitlements is appropriate.
- 5 Photocopy all of your and your ex's financial documents and put them in a secure location (this should not be in your home or motor vehicle).
- 6 Contact the Child Support Agency and find out how much is to be paid or is payable.
- 7 Do title searches on your properties. If your home is in your ex's name or it is held as tenants in common ensure that you place caveats over the properties. If your property is held jointly consider severing the joint tenancy.
- 8 If there has been family violence in the relationship seek an Intervention Order.
- 9 Start a diary which keeps track of time with the children and any adverse behaviour of your ex.
- 10 Most importantly, seek advice from an experienced Family Lawyer.

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