



A guide to Child Impact Reports and Family Reports

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If you and your former partner are involved in [parenting proceedings](#) in the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia, you are likely to have heard the terms 'Child Impact Report' and 'Family Report.' What are these reports, and how are they used in family law proceedings?

This article will explore:

1. What is a child impact report?
2. What is a family report?
3. The assessment process
4. How you can prepare

What is a Child Impact Report and who prepares it?

A Child Impact Report is generally ordered in the early stages of court proceedings in family law matters. The report is prepared by a Court Child Expert (a psychologist or social worker who has expertise in child and family law issues following a separation or divorce).

When preparing the report, the Child Court Expert will consider issues such as:

- your child's development;
- any views expressed by your child;

- your child's relationships with both parents and other family members (such as step-parents, siblings, [grandparents](#) etc.); and
- the presence of any risk factors (such as [family violence](#), substance misuse, mental health etc.)

What is the purpose of a Child Impact Report?

A Child Impact Report is used to provide the Court with information about the children's experiences and needs in the context of your family law matter. The report will help you and your former partner to understand your child's experiences and needs and consider what future care arrangements are in the best interests of the child.

If you and your former partner are unable to reach an agreement in relation to future care arrangements, the report will provide valuable insight and recommendations to the Court and will assist the Court to make decisions about interim care arrangements and how your case should progress.

A Child Impact Report is ordered and provided by the Court. No costs are incurred by you or your former partner.

Click here for more information on [Child Impact Reports](#) and [Court Child Experts](#).

What is a Family Report, and who prepares it?

A Family Report is generally ordered where a family law case is progressing to a final hearing. The report is prepared by a Family Consultant. The Family Consultant may be a Court Child Expert (acting in a Family Consultant role) or a private practitioner (often referred to as a Regulation 7 Family Consultant).

When preparing the report, the Family Consultant will consider the factors that the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia must take into account when determining what is in a child's "*best interests*." These can be found at [section 60CC of the Family Law Act 1975](#).

What is the purpose of a Family Report?

A Family Report is more in-depth than a Child Impact Report. The purpose of this report is to assist you and your former partner to reach an agreement in relation to final parenting arrangements and to bring parenting proceedings to an end.

If you and your former partner are unable to reach an agreement in relation to final care arrangements, the report will be evidence that the judge will consider when determining final care arrangements on your behalf.

If the Court appoints a Court Child Expert to prepare the Family Report, no costs are incurred by you or your former partner. However, if a private practitioner is appointed, the cost of a report varies and can be up to \$10,000. These costs are usually paid equally by you and your former partner.

Click here for more information on [Family Reports](#) and [Family Consultants](#).

Can we have a Family Report outside of the Court process?

Family Reports can also be useful in some cases to assist in settling parenting disputes outside of the Court process.

This is particularly the case if there are specific issues and/or points of contention that you and your former partner have been unable to overcome. Some examples include how many nights a young child should spend away from their primary carer or where a child should go to school.

The assessment process for Child Impact Reports and Family Reports

The Court Child Expert and the Family Consultant ("the report writer") will have access to or will be provided with the court documents filed by you and your former partner in the parenting proceedings.

The structure and location of the assessments will vary depending on who is conducting the assessment, however, they are generally conducted in two parts:

Part 1 - parent meeting

The report writer will meet with both parents separately to find out more information in relation to the children, to discuss parenting arrangements and to identify any risk issues. The report writer will explain their role and what the parties can expect to happen during Part 2.

This parent meeting is often conducted by telephone or electronically (Microsoft Teams or Zoom).

Part 2 - child meeting

The report writer will observe each parent with the child/children and may interview the children separately. The children are given an opportunity to talk about their feelings and experiences and express their views and wishes if they want to. If there is more than one child, the report writer may meet with them together or separately.

This meeting is generally conducted in person.

How to prepare for a Child Impact Report or Family Report?

There is no set way to prepare for a Child Impact Report or Family Report assessment.

However, the following are useful tips/things to keep in mind:

- Explain to your child/children that they are going to meet with someone who will be talking to them about how things are going at home. You should assure your child/children that they can share their feelings and views and will not be made to talk about anything that they do not want to talk about. You know your child best and are best placed to decide on the timing of this discussion. Does your child cope well with new situations when they have time to process things? Or will too much processing time cause them to worry more?
- Re-read all court documents filed by you and your former partner prior to the assessment. Have a clear understanding of the childcare arrangements you are seeking (both interim and long-term) and why you think that these arrangements are in the best interests of your child/children.
- Try to relax during the assessment and speak openly and honestly without being unfairly critical of your former partner. This is an opportunity to be heard and to express your view about the child/children's needs and how those needs can best be met.

It is important to remember that anything you discuss with the report writer is not confidential. All information gathered by the report writer is admissible and can be used as evidence in your case.

Get advice from a family lawyer

Do you have questions about Child Impact Reports or Family Reports and/or need assistance with parenting proceedings? If so, get in touch with Emera Family Law for a free initial consultation.

Further reading that may be helpful

- [6 steps when negotiating parenting arrangements with your ex](#)
- [Parenting Plan or Parenting Consent Order](#)
- [Independent Children's Lawyers in family law proceedings](#)

This blog is of a general nature and should not be relied upon as legal advice. If you require further information, advice or assistance for your specific circumstances, please contact us.