FAMILY LAWYER PUTS LIGHT ON THE LIGHTHOUSE PROJECT

Date : July 28, 2023

The Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia (the Court) are evaluating how to help vulnerable families that need protection in family law proceedings. The Court are initiating a new model for families who are faced with domestic violence or family violence. Family lawyer advises that lighthouse project will play an important role in Court's way of assessing which cases may involve risk relating to mental health, family violence, child abuse/neglect, drug, and alcohol misuse. The project will take into consideration the funding required and urgency in such cases.

What is the light house project?

It is a new model tested by the Court to monitor and manage risk, largely focusing on improving the result for vulnerable families in the family law system. The Lighthouse project is initially piloted in Adelaide, Brisbane and Parramatta family law registries and will expand to other registries.

How does it work?

1. **Risk screening:** When parties file an Initiating Application or Response only in parenting matters in the Court, parties will be asked to file a questionnaire through a confidential platform known as the "Family DOORS Triage". The responses are confidential, and it ensures risk is identified through secure platform. The invitation to complete the screening questionnaire is sent via email, directly from the Court to the party.
2. **Triage:** The responses are assessed by specialised team of Judicial Registrars, Counsellors and support staff who then evaluate the risk. The team will identify the matters that require support and safety measures. The lighthouse project aims to develop a process that streamlines cases based on severity of risk in parenting matters. It may include online referrals and/or interviews with parties at most risk.
3. **Case management:** Matters with the highest level of risk will be placed in the Evatt List. It is a special Court list developed to assist vulnerable families identified as high risk of family violence and other safety concerns. The Evatt list focuses on early information gathering and intervention through a team of Judges, Senior Judicial Registrars, Judicial Registrars. They have specialised training and experience in working with families where high risk safety issues. Lower risk cases will be adjudged through different case management pathway for example dispute resolution.

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Disclaimer

Family law situations can be complex and sometimes they can involve serious issues. Information outlined

is proposed to provide general guidance only. Due to the seriousness of legal matters as well as the uniqueness of your individual situation, professional advice should be sought. For advice, please contact one of our Family Lawyers