

The South Australian Family Law Pathways Network  
presents the 2015 Annual Forum:

# *Conflict, Trauma and Everything in Between*



Australian Government



Family Law  
PATHWAYS  
NETWORK

SOUTH  
AUSTRALIA

# The Program

8.45am - 9.00 am

Registrations

9.00am - 9.15am

Welcome to Country

Uncle Lewis

9.15am - 9.30am

Introduction to Forum and Update on SA Family Law Pathways Network

Graham Russell, Manager, Family Law Section (Legal Services Commission South Australia) and Chair of SA Family Law Pathways Network Steering Committee

## Morning session

9.30am - 10.00am

'Impact of Conflict upon Separating Families from a Judicial Perspective'

Judge Peter Cole, Federal Circuit Court of Australia (Adelaide Registry)

10.00am - 11.00am

'The High Conflict Post - Divorce Shared-time Family: Opportunities and Challenges for Practitioners'

Associate Professor Bruce Smyth, Australian National University

11.00am - 11.30am

Morning Tea

11.30am - 12.30 pm

'A Foundation of Becoming Trauma Informed in Practice'

Dr Cathy Kezelman, Adults Surviving Child Abuse

12.30pm - 1.00pm

'Mental Health Screening in Family Law - Who, Why, What and Now What?'

Dr Jamie Lee, Relationships Australia South Australia

## Afternoon session.

2.00pm - 3.00pm

'Impacts of the Child Support Reforms (2006 - 2008): A Summary'

Associate Professor Bruce Smyth, Australian National University

3.00pm - 3.30pm

Afternoon Tea

3.30pm - 4.30pm

'Q&A Panel discussion - Conflict, Trauma and Everything in Between: Helping clients navigate the family law system with these challenges'

Pre-arranged questions to be asked by members of audience

**Facilitator:** Ric Trevaskis, Regional Coordinator, Child Dispute Services, SA/NT Family Law Courts

**Panel:** Justice David Berman - Family Court of Australia (Adelaide Registry).

Dr Jacqui Beall - Flinders Child Protection Unit.

Dr Sherrie Ryan - Manager/Senior FDR Practitioner/Child Consultant, Family Relationships Centre, Port Augusta.

Rodney Welch - Aboriginal Liaison Officer, Relationships Australia South Australia.

Kelly Kirstein - Case Manager/Outreach Worker, Central Domestic Violence Service.

4.30pm - 4.45pm

Forum Closing Statement and Thank you

4.45pm - 5.15pm

Post Conference Drinks and Networking

## The Keynote Speakers

### Bruce Smyth

Bruce Smyth is an Associate Professor at the Australian Demographic and Social Research Institute, Australian National University (ANU), and an Australian Research Council Future Fellow. Prior to moving to the ANU, Bruce worked at the Australian Institute of Family Studies, and was a member of the Ministerial Taskforce on Child Support. He has just finished a large study with Professor Bryan Rodgers evaluating the impacts of the child support reforms, as well as a book chapter (with Professor Jennifer McIntosh, Bob Emery and Shelby Howarth) reviewing the latest international studies of shared-time parenting for the 2nd edition of *Parenting Plan Evaluations* (forthcoming, Eds: Drozd & Saini). Bruce has published widely in the area of post-separation parenting, and is on the editorial boards of *Family Court Review* (USA), *Journal of Family Studies*, and *Australian Journal of Family Law*.

#### **Presentations:**

##### *'The High Conflict Post - Divorce Shared-time Family'*

Most shared-time arrangements tend to be made by separated parents who respect each other as parents, who cooperate, who can avoid or contain conflict when they communicate, who can compromise, and who have arrangements that are child-focused and flexible. But in some families, shared-time parenting occurs in the context of – or indeed may be the product of – entrenched parental conflict. While much is now known about high functioning cooperative shared-time families, far less is known about the high conflict shared-time family – particularly children's and parents' wellbeing in these families, and how separated parents stuck in high conflict make shared-time arrangements 'work'. In this session, Bruce will present new data on high conflict shared-time families in Australia, and encourage delegates to consider the implications of these findings for legal practice and family relationship support services.

##### *'Impacts of the Child Support Reforms (2006 - 2008): A Summary'*

The Child Support Scheme aims to ensure that children continue to be supported financially should their parents separate or never live together. Rapid social change in recent decades and ongoing public concern prompted a radical overhaul of the Scheme between 2006 and 2008 – featuring a dramatically different system for the calculation of child support. Bruce Smyth, Bryan Rodgers and the research team recently completed an Australian Research Council Linkage Project Grant to examine the impacts of the changes. In this session, a summary of key findings will be presented along with ideas for reducing conflict around money.

### Dr Cathy Kezelman

Dr Kezelman is the President of Adults Surviving Child Abuse, the leading national organisation working to improve the lives of Australian adults who have experienced childhood trauma and abuse. Dr Kezelman is one of the most prominent voices on the subject of childhood trauma and abuse in Australia. She is co-author of ASCA's Practice Guidelines for Treatment of Complex trauma and Trauma Informed Care and Service Delivery – a global first in setting the standards for clinical and organisational practice. She is also the author of a memoir chronicling her own journey of recovery from child sexual abuse, 'Innocence Revisited' – a tale in parts. As ASCA President, Dr Kezelman has been instrumental in supporting the work of the Australian Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and being an influential voice in many of the roundtables. In 2015, Dr Kezelman, was awarded the prestigious Member of the Order (AM) of Australia for her work with survivors of childhood trauma and abuse.

#### **Presentation:**

##### *'A Foundation for Becoming Trauma Informed in Practice'*

This session will introduce judicial officers, lawyers, family dispute resolution practitioners and other professionals who work within the family law system to current best practice for working with adults with lived experience of trauma. Survivors who have experienced complex trauma from childhood and prior trauma within systems are particularly sensitive to re-traumatisation. Legal processes, including within the family law system are often challenging and potentially re-traumatising. A trauma information approach can help minimise this risk and ameliorate the process for the survivor.



The session will explore the need for 'trauma informed' practice and the integration of its core principles of safety, trustworthiness, choice, collaboration and empowerment into existing ways of operating. It highlights the benefits of a trauma informed approach for both clients and the legal professionals who engage with them.

Content covered includes: The biology and brain processes of traumatic stress response, the long term consequences of complex trauma; principles for effective practice with survivors and managing the risks of vicarious traumatisation.

Material presented in this session is comprehensive and draws on the latest research presented in the ASCA Practice Guidelines for Treatment of Complex Trauma and Trauma Informed Care and Service Delivery.

The ASCA Practice Guidelines have been derived from the latest research regarding the long-term effects of childhood trauma on development, behaviour and mental health.

### **Dr Jamie Lee**

Jamie Lee works as a Counselling Psychologist at Relationships Australia South Australia. He has worked with family relationships since 2006, focusing exclusively on children, young people and families affected by parental separation since 2009. He is also Principal Researcher at Relationships Australia South Australia and has responsibility for coordinating research and evaluation projects across the agency.

#### **Presentation:**

#### ***'Mental Health Screening in Family Law - Who, Why, What and Now What?'***

Stress, distress and big emotions are to be expected when parents separate and children move between homes. However these problems multiply when families are affected by mental health issues and clients feel like everything is much much harder than it should be. This presentation reviews simple steps that family law professionals can take in everyday practice to promote the mental health of clients and their families.

### **About The South Australian Family Law Pathways Network**

The South Australian Family Law Pathways Network (SAFLPN) is a coordinated network of organisations and professionals operating in the broader family law system in South Australia. The goal of the SAFLPN is to foster dialogue and collaboration between service providers to assist separating and separated families to access services in metropolitan Adelaide, as well in larger regional centres in South Australia.

The SAFLPN is managed and coordinated by a Project Officer who is responsible for delivering information to the network through regular communication and events. The SAFLPN also provides cross sectoral training on a regular basis and host events, forums, workshops and seminars to assist in information sharing and networking opportunities for the legal and non-legal sectors.

The SAFLPN aims to connect organisations, professionals and stakeholders working within the system and provide them with up to date information about family law services, including family counselling, family dispute resolution, parenting courses and other services.

The SAFLPN consists of a three tiered structure: the Steering Committee, the membership, and a broader network of family law service providers who receive and participate in regular communication.