

Child Inclusive Family Dispute Resolution (CIFDR)

Child Inclusive Family Dispute Resolution (CIFDR) is a form of mediation that can support children to have a voice in the process and can assist separated parents to hear the experiences and perspectives of their children.

CIFDR aims to support parents to sensitively respond to their children's needs and experiences. It invites parents to consider their children's developmental needs and to work together in making decisions for their children that are consistent with each child's unique needs.

CIFDR can assist parents to build a better co-parenting relationship and work towards shared-parenting arrangements that are in the best interests of their children. For CIFDR to be an effective process, both parents need to be genuinely open to hearing from their children and willing to make decisions together that reflect their children's individual needs.

Is CIFDR Appropriate for My Family?

CIFDR is not appropriate for all families. We are committed to promoting positive outcomes for children and as such, the decision to proceed with CIFDR is one that requires careful consideration by our Family Dispute Resolution Practitioners (FDRP) and Child Consultants.

Before the CIFDR process can commence, both parents will participate in individual assessments and attend an initial Joint FDR Session (mediation) with each other. If, after this Joint FDR Session, both parents wish to proceed with CIFDR and the FDRP considers it may be a suitable option, then the case is referred to one of our Child Consultants for further assessment before any children are invited to participate.

Meetings with the Child Consultant

An independent Child Consultant will meet with each parent individually, then (if considered appropriate) the Child Consultant will meet with the children - individually and possibly also as a sibling group.

Once the Child Consultant has met with the parents and the children, a three hour CIFDR Joint Session will be held with the parents, the Child Consultant and the FDRP present.

The CIFDR Joint Session

THE ROLE OF THE CHILD CONSULTANT IS:

- » to provide feedback from your child/ren (with their permission) about their current and historical experiences related to the separation,
- » to provide feedback from your child/ren (with their permission) regarding their perspectives and wishes going forward (if it is age appropriate to do so),
- » to make recommendations regarding parental arrangements that would be developmentally supportive and in the child/ren's best interests (where the Child Consultant believes it would be appropriate to do so).

THE ROLE OF EACH PARENT IS:

- » to carefully consider any feedback provided and recommendations made by the Child Consultant
- » to make decisions for their children (together with the other parent), which are sensitive to their children's feedback, their developmental needs and the recommendations of the Child Consultant.

THE ROLE OF THE FDRP/MEDIATOR IS:

- » to facilitate the CIFDR Joint Session and to make ongoing decisions about appropriateness for CIFDR/Mediation.

*Please note: Under **no circumstances** will children be present at the Joint FDR Sessions.*



“Enabling **children's voices** to be **heard** through the separation **process**.”

For CIFDR to proceed, it is important that both parents acknowledge and understand the following information:

- » FDRP makes the final decision about whether CIFDR would be appropriate in each case.
- » The Child Consultant is an employee of the Toowoomba Family Relationships Centre.
- » CIFDR is a specialised service that requires considerable practitioner time and therefore, rescheduling and changing appointments are limited.
- » Children must verbally consent to speaking with the Child Consultant and the Child Consultant may discontinue the service at any time if he/she assesses that it is not in the child's best interests to continue.
- » Children will meet individually and, where applicable, as a sibling group with the Child Consultant.
- » Some information obtained from your children by the Child Consultant may not be shared in the CIFDR Joint Session. The Child Consultant will not share any information without your child's permission &/or may assess that information obtained from a child is not in the child's best interest to share.
- » Information and experiences your children share with the Child Consultant are considered in the context of your child's age and stage of development.
- » It is the responsibility of the parents to make decisions for their child/ren that are in their best interests.
- » For CIFDR to proceed, consent of both parents is required prior to the process commencing.

PLEASE NOTE: CatholicCare, The Toowoomba Family Relationship Centre has waved all additional CIFDR fees during the time we are engaging in the research project with Deakin University ("The Child's Experience in Child Inclusive Mediation Using Play & Expressive Activities").

CatholicCare Fee Schedule for Child Inclusive Family Dispute Resolution:

- » Fees may apply in accordance with **CatholicCare's Fee Policy**.
- » Payable by **each parent** for the entire CIFDR process.
- » Payment is required **prior to children interviews whether a JS proceeds or not**.

Fee Scale (based on income level)	
Gross Income	Fee
\$0 to \$50,000	\$200
\$50,000 to \$100,000	\$300
Greater than \$100,000	\$400

For additional information about Child Inclusive practices please see the resources below:

The Australian Institute of Family Studies:

- » www.aifs.gov.au/cfca/
- » **Resource Sheet:** Child inclusion as a principle and as evidence-based practice: Applications to family law services and related sectors. www.aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/child-inclusion-principle-and-evidence-based-practic/resource-sheet

Children Beyond Dispute:

- » www.childrenbeyonddispute.com/toms-game/
A short video clip - Tom's Game is a true story, told by a seven year old boy. Tom takes us through the breakdown of his parent's marriage. With humour and charm, Tom tells us all about court, through the eyes of a child.
- » www.childrenbeyonddispute.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Because-its-for-the-kids-for-CBD.pdf
Resource Sheet: Because it's for the kids