

Child Inclusive Family Dispute Resolution (CIFDR)

Child Inclusive Family Dispute Resolution/Mediation (CIFDR) can support your child/ren to have a voice throughout the mediation process and can enable both of you, as parents, to hear the experiences and perspectives of your child/ren. It can assist you and the other parent to build a better co-parenting relationship and to work towards parenting arrangements that are in the best interests of your child/ren. Careful consideration needs to be given before involving child/ren in this process. For CIFDR to be an effective process and of benefit to your child/ren, both parents need to be *genuinely* open and willing to hear and give serious consideration and reflect on the feedback from your child/ren's sessions with the Child Consultant as well as any recommendations made by the Child Consultant.

CIFDR aims to support you as a parent to sensitively respond to your child's needs and experiences. It invites you to consider your children's developmental needs and to work together to refocus on your child/ren's needs.

Prior to the Joint Family Dispute Resolution Session:

An independent Child Consultant meets with your child/ren individually and, where applicable, meets with your child/ren together as a sibling group. The Child Consultant also meets individually with each parent prior to the Joint Mediation Session. Following the individual sessions a three hour Joint Mediation Session is held during which the Child Consultant is present with both parents and the Family Dispute Resolution Practitioner/Mediator.

During the Joint Family Dispute Resolution Session:

The role of the Child Consultant is:

- to provide feedback from your child/ren (with their permission) regarding their current and previous experiences surrounding your 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 and to make decisions together for your child/ren which are in their best interests.

The role of the Family Dispute Resolution Practitioner/Mediator is:

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

Under no circumstances will the child/ren be present at the Joint Session.

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

- The Family Dispute Resolution Practitioner makes the final decision about whether CIFDR would be appropriate in each case.
- The Child Consultant is an employee of the Family Relationship Centre Toowoomba.
- Child Inclusive Family Dispute Resolution is a specialised service that requires considerable time spent by a number of practitioners, and therefore, a fee is charged for service.
- The child/ren must verbally consent to speaking with the Child Consultant, and at any time sessions may be terminated if the Child Consultant assesses that it is not in the best interests of the child/ren to continue.
- The child/ren will meet individually and, where applicable, as a sibling group with the Child Consultant.
- Certain information from the Child Consultant's session/s with your child/ren may not be shared within the Joint Mediation Session if the Child Consultant assesses that it is not in the best interests of the child/ren to do so, or if any child requests that the Child Consultant not disclose what he/she has discussed with the Consultant.
- 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.

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/afrc/pubs/issues/issues1.html
- www.aifs.gov.au/cfca/sites/default/files/publication-documents/resource1.pdf (2 page summary of the full report at the above link)
- Children Beyond Dispute: <http://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.
- <http://childrenbeyonddispute.com/resources-for-parents/>