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KEEPING YOU IN TOUCH WITH NEWS & OPPORTUNITIES IN WA FAMILY LAW

MARCH 2020

Important Announcement from the Chair

by Rod West



Hello from WAFLPN! I hope that everyone is in good health and adjusting as best as they can in these unprecedented, challenging times.

With deep regret, I have to announce the **cancellation of the WAFLPN Annual Conference and Workshop Day originally scheduled for 12 and 13 May 2020**. All registered delegates will receive a full refund and our conference managers will be in touch shortly to make the necessary arrangements. Unfortunately, due to the uncertainty about continued funding for the FLPNs after 30 June 2020, we are unable to postpone the conference to a later date.

Furthermore, **all in-person WAFLPN events are suspended until further notice**. This includes the Walk in Their Shoes Tours of both the Magistrates Court and the Family Court of Western Australia.

This decision is in line with instructions received from the Federal and State Government and health authorities, including the recent ban on non-essential indoor gathering of 100 or more people and the introduction of social distancing measures. The Steering Committee has also considered the risk posed by the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and our responsibility to the broader Australian community.

However, we are exploring alternative platforms for delivering safe, high quality training during this time. As part of this commitment, we are working with other FLPNs across Australia organise a webinar with Megan Hunter. More details can be found on the next page.

Additionally, we are continuing our work on the family law service directory. We will be releasing more information about this exciting project soon, so watch this space!

If you would like to contact WAFLPN during this time, it is preferred that you [email us](#) or submit the 'contact us' form on [our website](#) as our office phone may be unattended due to staff working from home.

WAFLPN would like to encourage the various organisations in our sector to share resources about how they are dealing with this crisis. If you would like to use the WAFLPN eBulletin as a platform to share advice or reflections on challenges about safe and efficient service delivery during the pandemic, or any other useful information or resources, please do not hesitate to [email our Network Development Officer](#).

For more information on the virus and the steps that can be taken to minimise its impact, visit the [Australian Government Department of Health website](#).

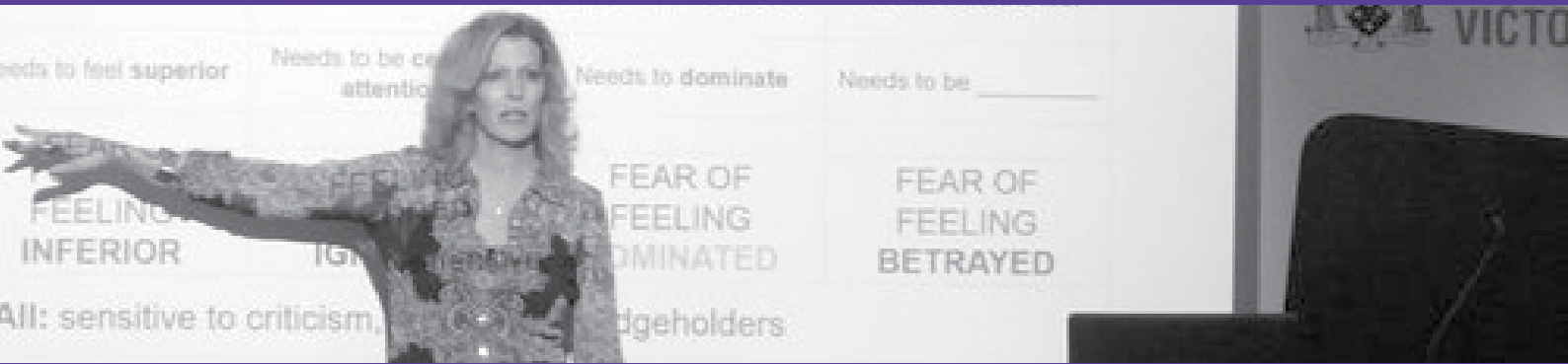


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FLIPPING THE SCRIPT ON THE MOST DIFFICULT PEOPLE DURING DIFFICULT TIMES

People with high conflict behaviour patterns are the most difficult people to work with, work for, and to serve as customers, clients, students, parishioners, neighbours, and to deal with in our families—especially in difficult times. Their behaviours get under our skin, make our hearts race, enrage and sometimes scare us. Their blaming and sometimes hostile communications disrupt our day and cause us a lot of stress consciously and subconsciously. Bottom line, they cause high levels of stress for those around them resulting from 4 core high-conflict issues:

1. *unmanaged emotions*
2. *all-or-nothing thinking*
3. *extreme behaviours*
4. *preoccupation with blaming everyone else.*

They are not born bad . . . they are just people with behaviours shaped by past trauma, temperament at birth, and genetics in some cases . . . and they do not know their behaviours are working against them. There is a way to improve interactions with people who display high conflict patterns of behaviour but it's opposite of what we know to do and are used to doing, or what we feel like doing.

LIVE WEBINAR - SAVE THE DATE!

When: Tuesday, 7 April 2020

11:00AM-12.30PM Perth time (1:00PM-2:30PM AEST)

Where: Online webinar delivered via Zoom

Tickets: Free, spaces limited, registrations essential.
Stay tuned for registration details.

Family Law Pathways Networks across Australia invite you to join a free webinar presentation with American author and high conflict expert, Megan Hunter, MBA. Delivered online via Zoom, Megan Hunter will present an hour-long keynote, followed by a 30 minute Q&A session. This presentation will also be made available online for a limited time for those who are unable to join the live webinar.

This entertaining and educational webinar unveils the driving force (the complicated operating system) behind difficult behaviours and how to take opposite actions, which are not obvious or natural, with those who exhibit these behaviours. The training starts with a cursory understanding of the neuroscience of the high conflict personality—the fear-based operating system that drives their behaviours. This understanding increases our empathy and thus our ability to manage interactions more successfully by focusing on helping them feel safe. Next, a focus on planning for structure and setting limits is provided before shifting into the practical skills necessary to communicate in writing using the BIFF Response® method and Calm2Think™ method with EAR Statements™ (Empathy, Attention, Respect).

SPOTLIGHT

Spotlight on Astrid Gerrits, WAFLPN Regional Representative for the North West

In this new feature, we shine the spotlight on the amazing people who volunteer their time and skills to WAFLPN. These include members of our Steering Committee, our valued Regional Representatives, and other professionals and organisations who generously donate their services to our Network.

Astrid Gerrits works as the coordinator of the Kimberley Family Relationships Centre (FRC) under Anglicare WA in Broome, which covers service delivery from Karratha to Kununurra. The Kimberley Family Relationships Centre provides Child Inclusive post-separation Family Dispute Resolution (FDR), education, and support services for couples, families and children delivered individually and/or in groups.

Astrid has worked at the Kimberley FRC for eight years. She describes her role as “all-encompassing”: she delivers a small amount of FDR, counselling (for individuals, families, couples and children), Child Inclusive Practice, and completes her supervision and coordination responsibilities in just 24 hours per week. “Still having that on-the-ground experience gives me a steady voice when meeting with other FRC managers to discuss shared service issues. It keeps me grounded and I am never bored, but yes it is busy!”

Though it can be stressful at times, Astrid still highly enjoys her work. “Aboriginal culture in the Kimberley is very strong; I feel privileged to work in this space and to grow my understanding as well as learning how to deliver service adapting to various needs.” At the Kimberley FRC, Astrid says that the focus is on empowerment and integrating services better within the cultural realm as well as the ever-changing society with all its challenges. “Listening to our local people and accepting guidance how to best enable them to repair and recover from multiple traumas is important for us to try and get it right.”

Originally from Amsterdam, Astrid has a range of past work experience in areas including mental health, correction services, medical psychology and social work. After migrating from the Netherlands in 2008 and prior to commencing with Anglicare WA, Astrid worked with the Kimberley Land Council, which gave her a solid foundation of knowledge about the Kimberley region, its people and needs.

Astrid currently volunteers as WAFLPN’s Regional Representative for the North West, a role which she has held since 2016. She coordinates meetings about 3-4 times a year, often aiming for them to coincide with a Magistrate’s visit or a workshop opportunity. Astrid has been incredibly innovative and proactive, having

established a Family Practitioners Network in Broome and initiated the first-ever FRC Training Day in Western Australia in November last year. Most recently, she has organised a highly successful “Addressing Violence Against Aboriginal Women” workshop with Professors Harry Blagg and Vickie Hovane in Broome on 5 March 2020.



Astrid (centre, in blue dress) at the Broome Legal Network meeting she organised on 6 November 2018.

Outside of work, Astrid regularly volunteers to care for horses involved with an Aboriginal Equine Therapy group, which she absolutely loves. She also runs a market stall in Broome selling Dutch Poffertjes (Dutch mini pancakes), which was her teenage daughter’s initiative. Astrid is also extremely passionate about all forms of sustainable living and enjoys keeping chickens and tending her food garden.

RESEARCH & PRACTICE

The latest contributions to evidence-based practice in family law

If you are undertaking research in the field of family law that you think may be of interest to WAFLPN members, please contact us to have it included in our eBulletin.

WA.FamilyPathwayNetwork@relationships.wa.org.au

Strengthening the Domestic and Family Violence Workforce: Key Questions

The significant impact of domestic and family violence in Australia calls for a workforce that is both highly skilled and capable of meeting the demands of complex and challenging jobs. Yet despite the increasingly national visibility of domestic violence, the workers—and work itself—have largely remained invisible. This article argues for a shift in conversation, highlighting the need for a workforce approach that is not only strategic but that also applies a theorised lens to domestic and family violence work inclusive of both gender and Indigeneity.

[Read abstract or purchase article.](#)

Wendt, S., Natalier, K., Seymour, K., King, D. & Macaitis, K. (2020). Strengthening the Domestic and Family Violence Workforce: Key Questions. *Australian Social Work*, 73(2), 236-244.

Psychotherapy for child welfare cases: Clinicians' and parents' perspectives

Parents involved with child protective services (CPS) often face various challenges, including sociostructural marginalization, mental illness and difficulties in family relationships. Although their need for mental health services is generally acknowledged, the extant child welfare literature lacks studies on how CPS-involved parents may benefit from such services. In an attempt to address this gap, this study seeks to explore clinicians' and parents' perspectives regarding the role of psychotherapy services for child welfare cases. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with clinicians working with CPS-involved families and parents accused of child maltreatment. Thematic analysis of the interview data generated three themes: (1) psychotherapy as a place for safety and empathy, (2) psychotherapy as a place for challenge and (3) psychotherapy as a place for problem resolution. The findings suggest that psychotherapy services may benefit CPS-involved parents not only by offering much needed emotional support and resources within sessions but also by facilitating parents' collaboration with CPS through their partnership with caseworkers outside of sessions. For child welfare practice, it is recommended that psychotherapy services be included from the outset of parents' CPS involvement to promote their psychological and relational wellbeing as well as their successful completion of CPS requirements.

[Read abstract or purchase article.](#)

Yoo, H., Racorean, S. & Barrows, V. (2020). Psychotherapy for child welfare cases: Clinicians' and parents' perspectives. *Child & Family Social Work*. 1– 10. DOI:10.1111/cfs.12754

Client violence towards workers in the child, family and community welfare sector

This paper explores the prevalence and presentation of client violence towards workers, considering any violent or aggressive behaviour from clients, direct associates of clients, and friends or family members of clients. It compares current research on client violence towards workers to official data reports, and considers why there might be a discrepancy between the two sets of data. It details the effects that client violence has on workers personally and the implications for their practice. Finally, it outlines strategies for improving responses to client violence towards workers, including practical responses that can be implemented at an organisational, educational and policy level.

[Read full article.](#)

Broadley, K. & Paterson, N. (2020). Client violence towards workers in the child, family and community welfare sector. CFCA Paper No. 54.

NOTICE BOARD

What's happening around town

If you or your organisation has something to announce, pin it on the board! Submit an article for the notice board by emailing:

WA.FamilyPathwayNetwork@relationships.wa.gov.au

Family Court of Western Australia COVID-19 Response

Measures implemented by the Family Court of Western Australia in response to the COVID-19 pandemic include:

- Any person who has flu-like symptoms and/or has travelled overseas in the last 14 days must not enter the Court precincts.
- It is recommended that only legal practitioners, parties, their support person (if applicable) and witnesses should attend court hearings.
- All hearings and conferences will continue to be listed as normal, however parties may seek to attend by telephone.
- Wherever possible, parties should lodge documents electronically.
- All front counter services are temporary suspended as of 23 March 2020.
- Judicial officers and court staff will no longer travel to regional areas to conduct circuits. Effective immediately, all circuits will be conducted from a court room in the Perth registry. Refer to the latest public notice regarding attendance at upcoming and future circuits.

Please read the latest public notice published on the [Family Court website](#) for more detailed, up-to-date information.

Free FASS Family Violence Services at the Family Court of Western Australia continue during COVID-19 Crisis

Free Family Advocacy and Support Services (FASS) Family Violence duty lawyer and social support services are continuing at both the Perth Family Court of Western Australia (FCWA), and very likely most FCWA Regional Circuits.

FASS, which is funded by the Commonwealth government, is free, not means-tested and available to any party or their family members in a FCWA court case involving family violence. The social support includes warm referrals for counselling, housing, safety planning, family violence program, and support if distressed at court.

During the COVID-19 crisis, services will be provided remotely by phone, but are still available. ICLs, lawyers and other workers are encouraged to refer people needing support.

FCWA or the local courts will be able to provide people with the contact details for FASS services in their region. FASS can also be contacted directly via email at FASS@legalaid.wa.gov.au.

**Resource: Managing Parenting in a Pandemic**

Separated parents experience both the joys and stressors of parenting. But additional pressures and stresses such as those associated with the Covid19 Pandemic can be hard to accommodate and provoke anxiety in parent and child alike. Inspired by a publication from the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts in the US, the Family Law Section of the Law Council Australia has compiled a Top Ten Guide for managing parenting in a pandemic.

[Download the Top Ten Guide for managing parenting in a pandemic.](#)

FEEDBACK

If you have any suggestions on how we could improve this bulletin please email them to sofia.kouznetsova@relationships.wa.gov.au

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