

Family Changeover and Visiting Centre at Centacare

At the last meeting of the Family Law Group, Janene Sherman of Centacare NT addressed the group on the functions of the Family Changeover and Visiting Centre.

Within the program there are two distinct services - Facilitated Changeover and Supervised Visiting. Facilitated Changeover, operating through Centacare, provides a last resort service to families who have separated and are experiencing conflict or other difficulties with changeover or visiting arrangements.

The Family Changeover service operates out of Centacare's Geranium St premises and ensures that parents of children involved do not meet during contact or changeover. Use of this service does not have to be arranged through the legal system. Currently 5 families use the Changeover service regularly with additional families on the books who may need to use the service when the access parent visits Darwin.

Supervised visiting, however, is often arranged via the legal system and is carried out in another building at Centacare premises. It aims to create a homely environment where supervised visits may take place.

The service provided at the Visiting Centre is not intended as a long term solution (except where serious drug or alcohol abuse or child abuse investigations are factors) and aims to enable families to work towards independent transfer of children. There are currently 3 families using this service. Two supervisors are present during visits and a maximum of 2 hours is suggested as appropriate duration. The hours of operation are Fridays 2-6 pm, Saturdays 9 am-1 noon, Sundays 1-6 pm.

Interviews and assessment for acceptance into these services is subject to minimal fees, indexed according to income of parents. These are scheduled for different days for each parent, again with the aim of avoiding contact between parents.

The Coordinator of Centacare can provide more information and can be reached during normal business hours on tel: 8941 0022, fax: 8981 9739.

Family Court

Family Court of Australia advises that visiting judges will be sitting for the weeks commencing:

February 24 - March 14

June 2 - June 20

Visiting judges will be:

Justice Warnick for February/March sittings and Justice Morgan for June sittings.

Conference

Family law practitioners and others interested should be aware of the Second World Congress on Family Law and the Rights of Children and Youth, to be held between June 3 and 7 1997, in San Francisco.

The first congress, an Australian initiative, attracted world wide interest and over 850 delegates and achieved significant results including the enactment of laws imposing criminal sanctions for the abuse and exploitation of children extra-territorially.

The First Lady of the United States, Mrs Hilary Clinton is the Honorary Chair of the Second Congress and the Chief Justice Alastair Nicholson of the Family Court in Australia, the Chair.

Invited speakers include Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Attorney-General of the US, Janet Reno, Justice Aiko Noda, Chief Judge of the Tokyo Family Court and many others.

The Second Congress aims to establish a significant trust fund in order to benefit the children of North, Central and South America.

On the lighter side, the Congress also offers delegates the opportunity to take a very special post-Congress Alaskan Cruise on the MS Windward, a Wine Country Tour, a San Francisco Bay Dinner Cruise and other special activities.

The Congress is organised by the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts who may be contacted at 329 W Wilson St, Madison, WI 53703 USA, tel: (608) 251 4001, fax: (608) 251 2231, e-mail afcc@igc.apc.prg

Brochures are also available from the LAWASIA office in NT House, Darwin.

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