

# Family Mediator on the Move

On 10 July, Ross McSwan, the Development Officer/Senior Mediator at Resolve since September 1995, farewelled those instrumental in the founding of the family mediation service.

He quits the NT to take up a position as coordinator of Lifeline Family Mediation on the Sunshine Coast, Queensland, commencing his work there on 20 July.

Ross, in conjunction with others, was responsible for the establishment of the only mediation program funded by the Federal Attorney-General in the Northern Territory. Resolve operates from the Anglicare premises in Ludmilla and has ten sessional mediators who come from legal and social service backgrounds.

"My three years in the Territory have been a time of fantastic opportunity. Not only have I enjoyed the challenge of establishing a mediation service but I also met Briony, my wife," Ross said.

"Mediation in the NT has come a long way in recent years. There is greater collaboration between the main media-

tion bodies of Resolve, LEADR, MANT and EAS. Territorians are in a unique position to learn from the teething problems of alternative dispute resolution in other states. One of the advantages we have is the ability to connect personally with others committed to providing realistic alternatives to litigation."

When asked about the major achievements of Resolve during his time there, Ross identified three.

"First, I think Resolve has developed a team of professional competent mediators who can provide a realistic alternative to litigation for separating couples. Secondly, we are justifiably proud of the productive working relationship that has been forged between the family law practitioners, the Family Court and Resolve. I'd like to take the opportunity to thank Eileen Terrill and Stuart Barr, who as former and present chair of the Family Law Group respectively, have assisted in the acceptance of mediation amongst the legal profession. Stephen Ralph, Head of Family Court Counselling and former Registrar Peter Liddle have also

been very supportive. The support of the legal profession and the Family Court has resulted in a better service for separating couples who are trying to cope at a very difficult time in their lives."

He noted that Resolve had been invited to give two papers at the 4th National Mediation Conference held in April this year. These were entitled *The Development of Indigenous Mediation in the Northern Territory* and *Can You Afford to Separate? - Mediation and Financial Counselling Working Together*.

"The invitation...shows that the work Territorians undertake is regarded with considerable interest by those interstate," he said.

With regard to indigenous mediation, Ross mentioned "the privilege of working with Patsy Raymond, Sue Murdoch, Kim Hill and John Maher in running *Introduction to Mediation* workshops in which fifty indigenous people participated with great success." This work has created a particular interest on the part of the federal Attorney-General, Daryl Williams.

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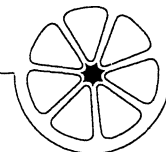
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