2006

Contact & relocation: focusing on the children: conference report

Sallie Newell
*Southern Cross University*

Anne Graham
*Southern Cross University*

Judy Cashmore
*Southern Cross University*

Robyn Margaret Fitzgerald
*Southern Cross University*

Publication details

Conference Report

Contact & Relocation: Focusing on the Children

1st May 2006

Byron Bay
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**Conference Overview**

**Director’s Welcome & Introduction**

It is my pleasure to extend to you a very warm welcome to this beautiful part of Australia to participate in an important and timely conference, *Contact and Relocation: Focusing on the Children*.

The Federal Government’s recent amendments to the Family Law Act are the most wide-ranging since its inception, in 1975. The changes will, when they become law, permeate every aspect of family law practice, particularly the way contact and relocation decisions are made.

This conference, we believe, provides an important forum in which to explore the implications of the new reforms for children. Whilst the focus is primarily on contact and relocation matters, we hope the day also provides an opportunity to identify the benefits and challenges of involving children in decision making across family law services.

The conference theme reflects a key aim of Southern Cross University’s Centre for Children & Young People (CCYP). The CCYP aims to improve child and youth focused practice, particularly in regional areas, through interdisciplinary research, education and advocacy. The CCYP undertakes its work in close collaboration with relevant agencies and organisations to help ensure its activities are underpinned by a capacity building approach that results in improved knowledge and skills for practitioners working with children, young people and families.

The conference program has been structured to provide delegates with opportunities throughout the day to engage in discussion with the speakers and with other delegates. The CCYP values dialogue as a key means for promoting improved understanding within and across the agencies, organisations and services that support children and families. We hope today’s program will foster such dialogue.

Particular thanks go to our conference presenters who have travelled from far and wide to join us today. You will undoubtedly find their knowledge, experience and commitment both inspiring and professionally rewarding. I am also appreciative of the involvement of our sponsors, whose support has enabled us to bring you this distinguished line-up of speakers. Rarely do we have the opportunity for such a forum in regional Australia.

I would also like to acknowledge the tremendous work of the organising committee. Members of the CCYP’s Advisory Board, Justice Jennifer Boland, Justice Margaret Beazley and Associate Professor Judy Cashmore have contributed significantly to the shaping of this conference, as have the efforts of CCYP staff, particularly Robyn Fitzgerald, Wendy Britt, Sallie Newell and Richard Harris.

Finally, my thanks to you, the delegate, for your interest in this important area of children’s lives. I hope you find the day informative, challenging and professionally rewarding.


**Associate Professor Anne Graham**  
**Director, Centre for Children & Young People**
Invited Speakers

Judge Peter Boshier
Peter Boshier is the Principal Family Court Judge of New Zealand. He practised law in Wellington mainly in the areas of criminal, civil and family law and was appointed as a District Court Judge, specialising in Family Court work, in April 1988. He was also appointed as a Youth Court Judge in 1997. In 1993, following a request by Principal Family Court Judge, Patrick Mahony, he completed a review of the operation of the Family Court. That review formed the basis of a number of reforms and features in recommendations on change made by the Law Commission in its report Dispute Resolution in the Family Court, March 2003.

Chief Justice Diana Bryant
Diana Bryant is Chief Justice of the Family Court of Australia. From 1997, she practised as a solicitor/advocate in Perth and was a member of the Victorian Bar from 1990 to her appointment as Chief Federal Magistrate in 2000. She was appointed Queen’s Counsel in 1997. An active member of the legal community, she was a member of the Executive of the Family Law Section of the Law Council, Vice-chair of the Family Law Bar Association, a board member of Victoria Legal Aid and regularly participated at seminars and advocacy teaching workshops. Her other major contributions to the law include her four-year involvement, with Justice Fogarty, on the committee advising the Government on the model for the Child Support Scheme and her appearance for the mother in the High Court in AIF v AMS in the first High Court relocation case.

Mr Damien Carrick
Damien Carrick, a qualified lawyer, joined the ABC in 1996 as producer of Radio National's The Law Report. During 2000, he worked as a reporter in ABC Radio Current Affairs before becoming presenter of The Law Report in January 2001. He has also worked as a legal writer for the Victorian Equal Opportunity Commission and Australian Lawyer Magazine. Before his career in the media, he worked as a solicitor in Melbourne and was a long-time volunteer solicitor at his local community legal centre in St Kilda. He is fascinated by the inner workings of our legal system and by how individuals grapple with its complexities as they strive for "justice".

Associate Professor Judy Cashmore
Judy Cashmore is an adjunct professor at Southern Cross University and Associate Professor in the Law Faculty at the University of Sydney. She chairs the CCYP’s Advisory Board. She has a PhD in developmental psychology and is a distinguished researcher in the care and protection of children. She has an extensive professional background that includes consultancies with the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, the Australian Law Reform Commission, the NSW Department of Community Services, the NSW Community Services’ Commission and the NSW Child Protection Council. Most recently, she led the non-government delegation report on Children’s Rights to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child in Geneva. She is currently a member of the Specialist Accreditation Committee for Children’s Lawyers in NSW and has served as a member and/or chaired a number of government committees concerning child protection, child death reviews and the review of child protection legislation and policy in NSW.

Professor Richard Chisholm
Prior to his Family Court of Australia appointment, Richard Chisholm was an academic and founding member of the University of New South Wales’ Law School. Following retirement from the Bench in July 2004, he was appointed an Honorary Professor of Law at the University of Sydney, a Visiting Professor of Law at Macquarie University and a part-time Commissioner of the New South Wales Law Reform Commission. He has been a member of various bodies associated with law and law reform. He was the founding President of a children’s rights group Action for Children and a founding Council member of the Aboriginal Legal Service in 1970. Recently, he has resumed academic work in the area of family law. He is currently focusing on the proposed “shared parenting” amendments to the Family Law Act, on which he has given evidence to parliamentary inquiries and presented a number of conference papers.
**Professor Paul Clark**

Paul Clark is the Vice-Chancellor of Southern Cross University. Before taking up this position, in August 2004, he was the Deputy Vice-Chancellor at the University of the Sunshine Coast. He has also held senior positions at Victoria University of Technology, in Melbourne, and Capricornia Institute, in Rockhampton. He is a physicist by discipline and has enjoyed a long-standing involvement with the Australian Vice-Chancellor’s Committee (AVCC) - including as Chair of the Committee of Pro and Deputy Vice-Chancellors (Research) and on the Standing Committee on Research. He has also served as a director on several commercial boards.

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**Ms Sue Creak**

Sue Creak is an accredited Family Law Solicitor who has been in practice since 1981. She currently practises in Byron Bay, representing children, males (both fathers and husbands) and females (both mothers and wives) in all legal matters, both family and financial, following the breakdown of their relationships.

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**Ms Nicky Davies**

Nicky Davies is the Senior Legal Consultant, Family Law, Legal Aid Queensland. She is a member of the Family Law Council, President of the Family Law Practitioners’ Association Queensland and a member of the Children’s Law Section of Queensland Law Society. She is a member of Legal Aid Queensland’s Child and Separate Representative Panel and has been involved in developing the training and accreditation of child and separate representatives.

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**Justice Linda Dessau**

Linda Dessau has been a Judge in the Family Court of Australia since 1995. Prior to 1995, she was a magistrate in the Children’s Court, Coroner’s Court and Melbourne Magistrates’ Court. She pursues interests in judicial education, case management, child abuse cases and mediation and is involved in various community boards and councils including school, hospital, opera and football organisations.

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**Baroness Hale of Richmond**

Brenda Hale became the UK’s first woman ‘Law Lord’ in January 2004. She has enjoyed a varied career, first as an academic lawyer at Manchester University, where she specialised in Family and Welfare Law; then as the first woman Law Commissioner, where she headed the Commission’s work in Family and Mental Capacity Law, leading some notable legislation, including the Children’s Act 1989, the Family Law Act 1996 and the Mental Capacity Act 2005. In 1994, she became a Judge in the Family Division of the High Court, was promoted to the Court of Appeal in 1999 and to the House of Lords in 2004. She takes a special interest in equality and discrimination issues. Inspired by the International Association of Women Judges’ Conference in Dublin in 2002, she was instrumental in founding the UK Association of Women Judges, of which she is President.

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**Professor Mark Henaghan**

Mark Henaghan is the Dean of the University of Otago’s Faculty of Law. He is a member of the Editorial Board of LexisNexis Family Law Service, a co-editor of Family Law Policy in New Zealand and is currently writing a text on the new Care of Children legislation. He has published extensively and is recognised internationally as an expert at the forefront of developments in family law. His research interests include family law, law relating to children (custody/access, child abuse, medico-legal issues), human genome law, relationship property, the judiciary and judge-made law.
Resident Magistrate Bernadette Kelly

Bernie Kelly was called as a solicitor in Northern Ireland in 1983. She worked as a partner, specialising in litigation at all levels for 12 years until her elevation to the Bench as a Resident Magistrate in 1997. In this role, she has presided over criminal and family matters and held the senior post of Youth Magistrate in Belfast, where she continues to sit. She is the honorary secretary of the Northern Ireland Magistrates' Association and the Northern Ireland representative on the UK Association of Women Judges. She has recently been offered an appointment as a Recorder for the Northern Circuit of England & Wales, where she will preside over jury trials on a deputy basis, while maintaining her office in Northern Ireland.

Ms Karen Morris

Karen Morris is the Deputy Chief Executive Officer at Interrelate and is responsible for the Counselling, Mediation, Children’s Contact Services and Relationship Education programs, as well as the new Family Relationship Centres. She is an experienced counsellor, trainer and relationship educator who combines clinical practice with her management role. She has developed cutting edge programs for couples and families and regularly conducts training programs.

Professor Patrick Parkinson

Patrick Parkinson is an Expert Adviser in the University of Sydney’s Law Faculty and Head of the University’s Law School. He is a specialist in family law, child protection and the law of equity and trusts. His books include Australian Family Law in Context (3rd ed., 2004, with Juliet Behrens), Principles of Equity (editor, 2nd ed., 2003) and Tradition and Change in Australian Law (3rd ed, 2005). He chairs the Family Law Council, an advisory body to the Australian Government, and chaired a review of the Child Support Scheme in 2004-05. He is also a member of the Executive Council of the International Society of Family Law. From 2001-2004 he was the editor of the Australian Journal of Family Law. He is also well-known for his community work concerning child protection. He has been a member of the NSW Child Protection Council, and was Chairperson of a major review of the state law concerning child protection which led to the enactment of the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998. He also works with churches on child protection issues. The second edition of his book, Child Sexual Abuse and the Churches, was published in 2003.

Mr Stephen Ralph

Stephen Ralph is the National Coordinator (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Programs) in the Family Court of Australia. He has been with the Court’s Mediation Service since 1989 and has worked in Sydney, Lismore, Alice Springs and is currently at the Darwin Registry. He is a qualified psychologist with post-graduate qualifications from the University of Sydney. Prior to coming to the Court, he worked in the Queensland Department of Family Services and the NSW Department of Community Services in the field of child protection. He is Aboriginal with close family ties to the Aboriginal community of La Perouse in Sydney. His father was a Koori who grew up in Redfern and his great grandmother was a Gumbaynggir woman from the Nambucca-Kempsey region of NSW.

Ms Naarah Rodwell

Naarah is one of seven children with many foster brothers and sisters along the way. She is currently studying arts/law in Sydney and has been a member of the CCYP’s Young People Big Voice Committee for the past two years.

The Honourable Philip Ruddock

Philip Ruddock graduated from Sydney University (BA LLB) and has been the Australian Attorney-General since October 2003. He was first elected to the House of Representatives in September 1973 and has held a number of ministerial positions – including Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (1996-2003), Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Reconciliation (1998-2000) and Minister for Reconciliation and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs (2001-2003).
**Dr Robin Sullivan**

Robin Sullivan is the first Director-General of the new Queensland Department of Child Safety. As such, she is responsible for leading a Department committed to protecting children and young people and, through implementation of the Government's Blueprint for Queensland's child protection system, ensuring they are safe from abuse and neglect. Prior to this role, Robin was the Queensland Commissioner for Children and Young People for more than five years and was successful in building up one of the world's most comprehensive screening systems for the suitability of people working with children.

**Dr Nicola Taylor**

Nicola Taylor is a Senior Research Fellow at the University of Otago, has a Bachelor of Social Work (Hons) degree from Massey University and a Bachelor of Laws (Hons) degree from the University of Otago. She has recently been awarded her PhD on family members' experiences of Family Court dispute resolution processes. She has worked at the Children's Issues Centre since its inception in 1995 and also has a part-time appointment in the Otago University Law Faculty. She has a particular interest in children's participation in family law proceedings.

**Conference Organising Committee**

This conference would not have been possible without the considerable efforts and enthusiasm of the Organising Committee, which comprised:

- **Associate Professor Judy Cashmore**, Law Faculty, University of Sydney
- **Justice Jenny Boland**, Family Court of Australia
- **Justice Margaret Beazley**, Supreme Court of New South Wales
- **Associate Professor Anne Graham**, Director, CCYP
- **Professor Jacqueline Goodnow**, AC Psychology, Macquarie University
- **Ms Robyn Fitzgerald**, PhD student & Research Officer, CCYP
- **Ms Wendy Britt**, Administrative Assistant, CCYP
- **Dr Sallie Newell**, Senior Research Officer, CCYP

**Conference Sponsors**

We would like to thank our sponsors for their generous contributions and support:

- Australian Government – Attorney-General’s Department
- Interrelate Family Centres
- YWCA NSW – Lismore Communities for Children program, funded by the Australian Government’s Stronger Families and Communities Strategy
- The Byron at Byron – Resort, Spa and Conference Centre
- Watts McCray Lawyers

**Media Coverage**

The conference received a wide range of media coverage – including interviews with the CCYP Director and a number of the invited speakers. These interviews were featured on NBN television; on ABC North Coast, ABC Mid-North Coast, 2LM Lismore and Triple Z Lismore radio stations; and in the Law Society Journal, the Northern Star, the Echo, Life Weekly and SCU E-news publications.

Damien Carrick broadcast Session 2 (the Hypothetical) on his Radio National Law Report program (20 June) and the speakers’ papers are being published in a special edition of the *Australian Family Law Journal*. 
### Conference Program

#### Opening

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Presenters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9.00 – 9.15</td>
<td>Welcome &amp; Introduction</td>
<td>Assoc Prof Anne Graham, Director, CCYP</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Aunty Irene Harrington, Bundjalung Elder</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Prof Paul Clark, Vice Chancellor, Southern Cross University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.15 – 9.30</td>
<td>Official Opening &amp; Overview of the Amendments to the Family Law Act</td>
<td>The Hon Philip Ruddock, MP, Australian Attorney-General</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Session 1: Children’s Participation in Australian Family Law Decision Making – Setting the Context

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Panel Chair</th>
<th>Presenters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9.30 – 11.00</td>
<td>Assoc Prof Judy Cashmore, University of Sydney</td>
<td>Prof Richard Chisholm, University of Sydney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Family Law Amendment (Shared Responsibility) Bill 2005: Putting children at centre stage?</td>
<td>Chief Justice Diana Bryant, Family Court of Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The role of the Family Court in promoting child-centred practice</td>
<td>Dr Nicola Taylor, University of Otago</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What do we know about involving children and young people in family law decision making? An update</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

#### Session 2: “Hypothetical” – A New Era for Children or Just More of the Same?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Panel Chair</th>
<th>Presenters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11.30 – 1.00</td>
<td>Mr Damien Carrick, ABC Law Report</td>
<td>Justice Linda Dessau, Family Court of Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Panel Participants</td>
<td>Ms Naarah Rodwell, Young People Big Voice Committee, CCYP</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Dr Robin Sullivan, Queensland Department of Child Safety</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ms Sue Creak, Hertzberg Heydon Solicitors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mr Stephen Ralph, Family Court of Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ms Karen Morris, Interrelate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ms Nicky Davies, Legal Aid Queensland</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Prof Patrick Parkinson, University of Sydney</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Session 3: Children’s Participation in Family Law Decision Making – Lessons from Overseas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Panel Chair</th>
<th>Presenters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.00 – 3.30</td>
<td>Prof Mark Henaghan, University of Otago</td>
<td>Baroness Hale of Richmond, House of Lords, London, UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Presenters</td>
<td>Judge Peter Boshier, Family Court of New Zealand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Resident Magistrate Bernadette Kelly, Northern Ireland</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Closing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Where to from here? Thank you and farewell</th>
<th>Presenters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.30 – 4.00</td>
<td>Prof Richard Chisholm, University of Sydney</td>
<td>Assoc Prof Judy Cashmore, University of Sydney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thank you and farewell</td>
<td>Assoc Prof Anne Graham, Director, CCYP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conference Attendance

Participant Numbers
Overall, 126 people attended the conference – comprising 19 invited speakers and 107 delegates, including 8 CCYP Advisory Board members and 5 CCYP staff members. As demonstrated below, the conference reached a broad diversity of individuals and organisations from across Australia, and beyond.

Organisations Represented
Speakers - Of the 19 speakers:
- 9 represented government agencies
- 5 represented universities
- 2 represented the CCYP Advisory Board
- 2 represented community organisations
- 1 represented a law firm

Delegates – Of the 107 delegates:
- 16 individuals represented 9 government agencies
- 13 individuals represented 7 universities and 1 college
- 6 Advisory Board and 5 staff members represented the CCYP
- 23 individuals represented 12 community organisations
- 29 legal practitioners represented 22 legal organisations
- 3 independent legal practitioners
- 5 individuals represented 5 private organisations
- 7 whose affiliation was unclear – possibly community members

Regions Represented
Speakers - Of the 19 speakers:
- 7 came from New South Wales
- 3 came from Victoria
- 2 came from Queensland
- 1 came from the Australian Capital Territory
- 1 came from the Northern Territory
- 5 (26%) came from overseas (3 from New Zealand and 2 from the United Kingdom)

Delegates – Of the 107 delegates:
- 58 (54%) came from New South Wales (39 from the North Coast, 14 from Sydney, 4 from the mid-North Coast and 1 from the Central Coast)
- 5 (5%) came from Victoria
- 29 (27%) came from Queensland
- 10 (9%) came from the Australian Capital Territory
- 3 (3%) came from South Australia
- 1 (1%) came from Tasmania
- 1 (1%) came from New Zealand

Conference Feedback
Response Rate
A total of 51 workshop feedback forms were completed, representing 48% of delegates (40% of delegates and speakers). Almost everyone present at the end of the conference completed the feedback sheets but travel schedules forced many delegates to leave before the end – missing the request to complete the forms.

Overall Satisfaction
The table below summarises respondents’ ratings on the two overall questions – showing very high levels of overall satisfaction and perceived usefulness of the conference.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Number of Respondents Selecting Each Rating</th>
<th>Mean Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall, to what extent were you satisfied with the conference?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And, overall, how useful did you find the conference?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Participants rating between two levels were scored as half in each level.
### Usefulness of the Conference

The table below summarises respondents’ ratings and comments (negative on the left and positive on the right) regarding the usefulness of the conference at improving their understanding of the key issues it aimed to address – showing that it was most useful at improving respondents’ understanding of the benefits of involving children in family law matters and of insights from international perspectives – and least useful at improving understanding of the particular issues for regional and rural children.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How useful did you find the conference in terms of improving your understanding of …. ?</th>
<th>Number of Respondents Selecting Each Rating</th>
<th>Mean Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>A little</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications of recent family law initiatives and reforms</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I had a good starting point.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Relatively poor understanding of the law reform amongst participants.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Needed to know more implications of shared parenting for institutions such as schools.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Would have liked more time to discuss challenges presented in practice as a result of changes.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits of involving children in family law matters</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Would have been better in reverse order – focus on Australia last – how can we do this here &amp; how do we do already?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Was expecting conference to be about issues around relocation.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Little fragmented.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Wellbeing for children.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Extremely good – easy strategies to consider.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Need to involve children – not just a legal rep, but a face.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Great to hear a shift in focus.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>c)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Strategies for doing so</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Would have liked more focus on COP and CCP.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I would have liked to see extra time so that this could have been covered.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Wider scope possible.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• This needs a bit more structure.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Would be useful to discuss this in more detail – perhaps future workshops?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• International perspectives spoken about freely was wonderful!</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Very workable.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>d)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Challenges involved</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Time to workshop how to overcome these challenges would’ve been great – it’s a huge deterrent in practice!</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• There are many more challenges than canvassed here – eg: changes children go through from early childhood to teens.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Would be useful to discuss this in more detail – perhaps future workshops? Richard Chisholm most useful.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Child rep to be appointed early in the court.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• How to get uniform practice from entrenched judges.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Appreciable enough.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Big, big issues to be addressed.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>e)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Particular issues for regional and rural children</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• No focus on this.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Didn’t feel this was explored at all.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Was this addressed at all?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Unsure.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Poor – but audience acknowledged.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Can’t remember this issue really being addressed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Very little of use – time factor.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• More funding for rural &amp; regional area.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• More generic in approach.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Insights from international perspectives</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Session 3 good but nowhere to go with it.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Listen &amp; take what we could use.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Shows retrograde possibilities for Australia.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Wow – fantastic guests!</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Handy to have perspectives from other jurisdictions with such similar law but different experiences to learn from.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• NZ way ahead!</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Bit depressing – need NZ legislation!!</td>
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<tr>
<td>• New Zealand example most useful in challenging Australian practice.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Loved all the speakers – very privileged.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Excellent.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Great value – after lunch to stay awake, it must have been inspiring.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Great speakers.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note: Participants rating between two levels were scored as half in each level.
What People Found the Most Helpful

39 participants made comments in response to the question – The most helpful part was .... The most common response topics were:

- Session 3 – the international perspectives. (14 comments – 6 general & 8 about particular speakers)
- Session 1 – setting the context. (11 comments – 5 general & 6 about particular speakers)
- The high calibre of the speakers & presentations. (7 comments)
- The opportunities for discussion, debate & networking. (7 comments)
- Parts from all sessions / All of it / The range & structure. (7 comments)
- The range of speakers & perspectives. (6 comments)
- Learning about the Australian family law reforms. (6 comments)
- Session 2 – the hypothetical. (4 comments)
- The discussion about children’s involvement. (3 comments)

What People Felt Could Have Been Improved

35 participants made comments in response to the question – You could have improved .... The most common response topics were:

- Session 2 – the hypothetical – needed more focus / summing up. (9 comments)
- The coverage of relocation issues – wasn’t really covered. (7 comments)
- Allowing more time for discussion, debate & networking. (7 comments)
- Organisation – Tighter time control / Papers available in advance / Fewer speakers / Making it more days. (6 comments)
- Refreshments – Coffee on arrival / Coffee temperature / Access to water / More healthy & veggie food options. (6 comments)
- Nothing / Very little in the time available. (6 comments)
- Venue features – Sound quality / Room temperature. (3 comments)
- More in-depth coverage or discussion about specific topics. (13 comments across 11 topics)

What People Found the Best Tip for Practice

28 participants made comments in response to the question – The best tip for practice was .... The most common response topics were:

- The practical examples shared – of ways to involve children & young people. (5 comments)
- Improving our focus on children’s voices / views. (4 comments)
- That involving children IS possible / Focus on what we CAN do. (3 comments)
- Need to respect children & young people / Not involving them is disrespectful. (3 comments)
- Continue questioning our current practices. (2 comments)
- Make sure children understand what happens in court. (2 comments)
- Need better inter-disciplinary cooperation / input. (2 comments)
- Other ways of focusing on children’s needs, views or involvement. (6 comments across 6 topics)

Suggestions for Future Conferences

28 participants made comments in response to the question – If there’s another conference, make it on .... The most common response topics were:

- Workshopping practical ways to achieve children’s best participation / child-centred practice. (10 comments)
- Child protection issues in the family law reforms. (7 comments)
- Scheduling suggestions – which days / number of days / etc. (5 comments)
- Relocation issues in the family law reforms. (4 comments)
- Workshopping inter-disciplinary ways of working. (4 comments)
- Child support issues in the family law reforms. (2 comments)
- A review of how it’s going in 12 months. (2 comments)
- Other specific issues in the family law reforms. (3 comments across 3 topics)
Other Comments People Made

35 participants made comments in response to the question – *Any other comments?* The most common response topics were:

- Great conference – very well organised / presented – Thank you / Congratulations. (18 comments)
- Very informative / worthwhile / useful – thought provoking. (9 comments)
- Great speakers. (8 comments)
- Great location / venue / setting. (8 comments)
- Great food. (4 comments)
- Would have liked another day on “how” we do it. (4 comments)
- Would have liked more time for in-depth discussion of issues. (3 comments)
- Would have liked the papers to be available. (3 comments)
- Other specific aspects of the conference’s organisation or content. (11 comments across 8 topics)