

Parenting Mediation Guide

Supporting families to move forward with clarity and care



FAMILY FIRST

MEDIATION AND DISPUTE RESOLUTION

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Welcome

Separation is one of the most significant transitions a family can experience.

At **Family First Mediation and Dispute Resolution**, we provide a calm, structured and professionally facilitated process to help parents move from conflict to workable agreements.

Our focus is always the best interests of your children.

We do not take sides.

We do not make decisions for you.

We help you make informed decisions for your family's future.

What is Family Dispute Resolution?

Family Dispute Resolution (FDR) is a confidential mediation process conducted by an accredited Family Dispute Resolution Practitioner (FDRP).

It assists parents to resolve disputes about:

- Parenting arrangements
- Time and communication
- Education decisions
- Health and medical matters
- Travel and special occasions
- Any other issue affecting children

In most parenting matters, mediation is required before filing an application in Court.

Why Choose Mediation?

Mediation is:

- ✓ Private and confidential
- ✓ Professionally facilitated
- ✓ Faster than litigation
- ✓ More cost effective
- ✓ Focused on future solutions
- ✓ Child-centred

Court makes decisions for you.

Mediation allows you to make decisions together.

The Mediation Process

Step 1 – Intake and Suitability Assessment

Each parent attends a confidential intake appointment (1–1.5 hours via telephone).

During intake we:

- Clarify issues to be discussed
- Explore relationship history
- Assess safety considerations
- Determine suitability

Suitability is assessed carefully and continuously.

If mediation is not appropriate, you will be advised and issued with a Section 60I Certificate where required.

Step 2 – Preparation

You will receive psycho-educational resources designed to:

- Help you manage emotional responses
- Encourage child-focused thinking
- Assist with preparation of proposals
- Support constructive negotiation

Preparation significantly improves outcomes.

Step 3 – Mediation Session

Parenting mediation sessions can run from anywhere between 3 – 7 hours depending on the format of mediation determined by the Mediator.

During mediation:

- Both parties speak respectfully
- Proposals are explored

- Options are generated
- Practical arrangements are developed

Children do not attend mediation sessions.

Where appropriate, shuttle mediation may be used.

Additional sessions may be required depending on complexity.

Our Child-Focused Approach

We are a child-focused practice.

This means:

- We actively consider your child's developmental needs
- We encourage respectful co-parenting
- We help parents remain future-focused
- We support stable and practical arrangements

Child Consultation

In appropriate matters, children may be given a voice through a Child Consultation process.

This involves:

- Meeting with a trained Child Consultant
- Providing developmentally appropriate feedback to parents
- Supporting child-centred decision making

Children do not make decisions.

Both parents must consent.

Suitability is assessed carefully.

Section 60I Certificates

In most parenting matters, a Section 60I Certificate is required before filing in Court.

A certificate may state that:

- The other party refused to attend
- Mediation was assessed as unsuitable
- All parties attended and made a genuine effort
- A party did not make a genuine effort
- Mediation commenced but was discontinued

The Court may consider the type of certificate issued when making orders for costs or attending further mediation.

Safety in Mediation

Your safety and your child's safety are paramount.

We consider:

- Family violence history
- Negotiation power imbalance
- Emotional and psychological wellbeing
- Risk of harm to children

Where necessary and appropriate we may:

- Conduct shuttle mediation
- Require legally assisted mediation
- Decline to proceed

The Role of the Mediator

Your Mediator:

- Is an accredited FDRP with the Attorney General's Department
- Is impartial
- Does not give legal advice
- Facilitates structured discussion
- Reality tests proposals and may ask challenging questions
- Drafts agreements reached

The mediator does not determine outcomes.

Reaching Agreement

Agreements reached in mediation are not legally binding.

For parenting matters:

- Good will agreements are verbal or written agreements between parents.
- If signed and dated, the document becomes a Parenting Plan. Parenting Plans are not legally binding but may be used as evidence.
- If binding orders are required, Consent Orders must be prepared and filed through the Court by a lawyer.

Legal Advice

Independent legal advice is strongly encouraged before, during and after mediation.

Understanding how the law would be applied in your situation strengthens your ability to negotiate effectively.

Fees

Intake Appointment:
\$330 + GST per person

Half Day Parenting Mediation (3 hours):
\$850 + GST per person

Half Day Shuttle Mediation (4 hours):
\$1180 + GST per person

Full Day Mediation (7 hours):
\$1500 + GST per person

Invoices are due upon receipt to secure the mediation date.

Feedback and Complaints

At **Family First Mediation and Dispute Resolution**, we are committed to maintaining the highest professional standards.

Our Principal Mediator, **Tara Weir**, is a professional member of the Mediation Institute and a Registered FDRP with the Attorney General's Department and adheres to their respective Codes of Practice and professional standards.

We welcome all feedback — positive or constructive — as it assists us in continually improving our service.

If you wish to provide feedback regarding Tara's services, you may do so directly through the Mediation Institute at: www.mediationinstitute.edu.au

From time to time, you may receive an automated SMS or email inviting you to leave a Google review of your experience. Participation is entirely voluntary. Your feedback is genuinely valued and may assist other families in selecting a reputable and professional mediation service.

Next Steps

1. Schedule intake appointment.
2. Invitation sent to other party.
3. Suitability decision.
4. Preparation and education.
5. Mediation session.



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Mediation Process

STEP 1



INTAKE APPOINTMENT

Each party completes a confidential intake appointment.

STEP 2



INVITATION

An invitation is sent to the other party inviting them to participate in mediation.

STEP 3



ASSESSMENT

After both parties have completed an intake appointment, the Mediator will assess whether mediation is suitable and determine the process.

STEP 4



EDUCATION

Parties are provided with resources to help prepare for mediation.

STEP 5



JOINT SESSION

Mediation will be scheduled at an agreed time where issues are discussed, proposals made and agreements captured.

Is Mediation Right for Us?

A Self-Assessment: Why Should I Attempt Mediation?

Mediation works best when parties are prepared to engage constructively — even if emotions are still high.

Take a moment to reflect on the following statements.

Part 1 – My Mindset

- I would prefer to resolve this without going to Court.
- I want to reduce stress, cost and delay.
- I am willing to listen, even if I disagree.
- I understand that compromise may be necessary.
- I am prepared to focus on future solutions rather than past grievances.
- I am open to considering options I may not have thought about.

Part 2 – Parenting Matters (if applicable)

- I want decisions to prioritise my child/ren's wellbeing.
- I am willing to consider what arrangement is best for my child — not just what feels fair to me.
- I understand that children benefit from reduced parental conflict.
- I am prepared to improve communication, even gradually.
- I want a structured process to help us move forward
- I would prefer to negotiate rather than have a Judge decide.

Part 3 – Property Matters (if applicable)

- I am prepared to provide full and frank financial disclosure.
- I understand the Court considers contributions and future circumstances.
- I would prefer to negotiate rather than have a Judge decide.
- I am willing to seek independent legal or financial advice if needed.
- I want clarity and finality without prolonged litigation.

Part 4 – Practical Considerations

- I feel safe participating in a structured mediation process facilitated by an experienced family law mediator
- I understand mediation does not require agreement on everything immediately.
- I am willing to make a genuine effort to resolve the dispute.

Reflective Questions

- What would be different for me if this were resolved calmly?
- What impact is ongoing conflict having on my children (if applicable)?

- What are the financial and emotional costs of not attempting mediation?
- If this matter went to Court, am I prepared for the time, cost and uncertainty involved?

How to Interpret Your Responses

If you answered “yes” to most of the statements above, mediation may be a constructive pathway for you.

If you are unsure about safety, disclosure, or readiness to negotiate, these concerns can be discussed confidentially during intake with the mediator.

Mediation does not require perfect agreement – it requires willingness to attempt resolution.