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CLIENT WELCOME PACK



MASTRONARDI
— LEGAL —

Liability limited by a scheme approved under Professional Standards Legislation.

Mastronardi Legal acknowledges and pays respect to the past, present and future Traditional Custodians and Elders of this nation and the continuation of cultural, spiritual and educational practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which our company is located and where we conduct our business.





WELCOME

Thank you for choosing our firm to assist you through your family law matter.

Whether you are starting your separation journey, part way through or coming towards the end, our friendly team will guide and support you through the family law process.

This welcome guide has been written by our team to introduce you to our firm, the services we offer and how we can work with you to make your family law experience easier.

By engaging Mastronardi Legal you have selected a firm that is dedicated to family law. We have chosen not to offer any other legal services to our clients to allow us to focus solely on family law. We work closely with other firms to ensure our client's legal needs are met.

For any clients that need additional support, we offer dedicated and personalised divorce and separation coaching.

The family law process is not easy. Our team are with you to make the legal side that little bit easier.

Melissa

MEET OUR *Lawyers*



DIRECTOR & PRINCIPAL SOLICITOR

Melissa Mastronardi

Melissa started Mastronardi Legal in June 2018 after working at firms in Canberra, Wagga Wagga and Dubbo. Melissa has over 10 years' experience practising exclusively in family law. She has a wealth of experience in property and parenting matters, and prides herself on her meticulous preparation of her matters.



SENIOR ASSOCIATE SOLICITOR

Tim Virgona

Tim joined Mastronardi Legal in January 2019, having previously worked in family law, criminal law and insurance. Tim is an experienced and confident family law advocate. He prides himself on his ability to explain complex legal issues in easy to understand terms.



ASSOCIATE SOLICITOR

Dannielle Fidock

Dannielle has worked in the legal industry since 2002, when she started a Business Administration Traineeship. Dannielle worked as a family law clerk and solicitor at firms in Dubbo before joining our team in June 2022. Dannielle is one of only a handful of accredited divorce coaches in New South Wales

MEET OUR *Admin Team*



EAMON KENDALL

Director & Practice Manager



SAM WILKIN

Paralegal



WENDY SHEPHERD

Paralegal & Legal Assistant to
Melissa Mastronardi



TIFFANY NOACH

Legal Assistant to
Tim Virgona



DEE MORRIS

Legal Assistant to
Dannielle Fidock



DI MASTRONARDI

Receptionist &
Administration Assistant



Our values and culture

Knowledge, Experience & Understanding in Family Law.

When we thought about what we wanted in a family lawyer, our team decided that knowledge, experience, and understanding were the most important aspects. This is why we chose this phrase to be the focus of our business.

Building on our ethos, our team developed our values to reflect our identify as a law firm. To us, our values are not simply words on paper, they are what we strive to employ in every aspect of our work and are indicative of the standards that we, as a team, have adopted for our firm.





Office hours

Our regular office hours are Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm.

Every second month our team members offer Saturday appointments for clients who find it difficult to see us during the work week. These appointments are limited and can be booked on our website or by phoning our office.

ONLINE BOOKINGS

We are always looking for ways we can make things easier, which is why we love our online booking system.

Gone are the days of waiting until business hours to make an appointment or playing phone tag to speak with one of our team members. Our online booking system lets you book an appointment with our solicitors, our admin team or Practice Manager at a time convenient to you.

New clients can choose their solicitor or book with anyone for the next available appointment. Existing clients can use our system to book a phone call with one of our team members, as well as face-to-face or video conferences. If you only need a short appointment, just make a note in your booking request.

[BOOK AN APPOINTMENT](#)



MAKING USE OF OUR WEBSITE



Read our blogs. Our team regularly publish helpful articles about family law issues, case notes, legal updates, and team news.



Provide information. We have a range of forms available on our website where you can provide information.



Book an appointment. You can book phone, face-to-face, or video conferences with our solicitors and admin team through our website.



Access your file. We offer free and secure access to your online file through our service portal. You can read letters and documents, provide comments and upload material direct to your matter.



Access our resources. We have a range of information sheets and checklists available on our website for clients.



Protect your privacy

Do not forget to take steps to protect your privacy following a separation. Some simple ways keep your information safe are:

- change the password for your email address and social media accounts;
- change the password, pin code and login pattern on your phone and tablet;
- create a LawConnect account to access your legal documents;
- close off your apps and programs when you have finished with them.

Payment options

We accept payment by cash, cheque, direct deposit, BPAY, and EFTPOS. You can also pay using our online payment portal.

We also offer buy now / pay later through RapidPay.





FAMILY LAW *Resources*

Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia website

<https://www.fcfcoa.gov.au/>

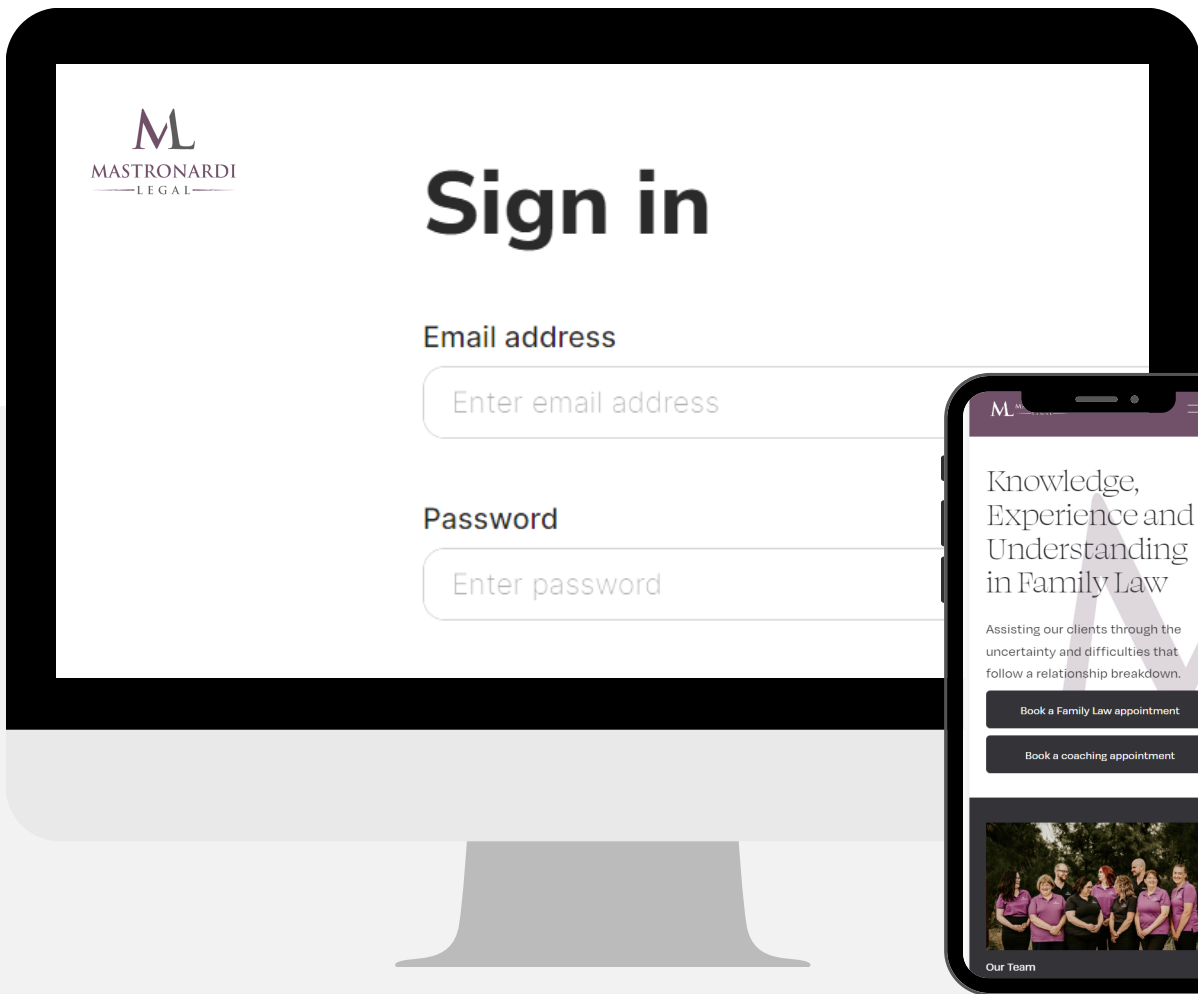
Family relationship services - Attorney-General's Department

<https://www.ag.gov.au/families-and-marriage/families/family-relationship-services>



We are proud supporters of the charity Escabags.

Escabags provides assistance to victims of domestic violence by providing free tote bags filled with the necessities that a victim of abuse and his/her children may need when initially escaping a dangerous and abusive situation.



ACCESSING YOUR FILE *LawConnect*

LawConnect is a free and secure online system where you can access your legal files. LawConnect provides you access to letters, Court documents, billing and trust statements and other important information for your matter in one location.

Through LawConnect you can easily upload documents to your file. You can set up your free LawConnect account through the Service Portal or our website. We will link your account to your Family Law matter. If you need any help setting up, or using, your LawConnect file you can ask any of our team members.



Frequently asked Questions

Can I bring a support person to my appointment?

You are welcome to bring a friend or family member to your appointments. If we need to discuss something confidential or sensitive with you, we may need to ask your support person to wait in our reception area.

I have been served with Court papers. What do I do?

Make an appointment with one of our lawyers. If possible, we appreciate if you either email or deliver a copy of the Court papers to our office before your appointment. This lets our solicitors have a read of the documents before they meet with you.

Is there anything I have to do before my first appointment?

You do not have to do anything before your first appointment. Your solicitor will talk you about your matter and make a plan with you. If you want to prepare for your first appointment, you can work through the checklist on page 14.

Is a divorce the same as a property settlement?

No, a divorce and property settlement are different. Your divorce legally ends your marriage to your former spouse. A property settlement is the division of any assets, debts or superannuation. While people who were in a de-facto relationship do not need a divorce, they should obtain advice about having a property settlement.

Is it always a 50/50 split of our property?

Property settlements are not always a 50/50 split. The Court must take into consideration numerous factors to work out what is a fair, just and equitable split. Because no two cases are exactly the same it is important you get proper legal advice from a lawyer about what a likely division is for your matter.

How much will this cost?

The cost of your matter will depend on a number of factors, for example how quickly you get back to us, how difficult your former partner is, whether your matter needs to be litigated.

We work with you to keep your costs low. Our solicitors will discuss costs with you throughout the matter and encourage you to make commercially sensible decisions.

We encourage open conversations about your legal fees, and we offer numerous ways for you to afford our services.

Can I do appointments by Teams or Zoom?

Yes, we welcome appointments by Microsoft Teams and Zoom. We are also happy to accommodate phone appointments.

Is what I tell you confidential?

Confidentiality is extremely important to us. Our lawyers are bound by a duty of confidentiality, and this extends to all our admin team. This means, whatever you tell us is confidential.

There are very few exceptions to our duty of confidentiality, such as if you tell us you are going to commit a serious crime or if we need to prevent imminent serious physical harm.

You need to feel comfortable telling us everything, including anything that you think may damage your case. It is much better for if you tell us, so we can deal with an issue rather than wait for it to be brought up at a later date.



Getting your matter underway

Checklist

1

PROTECT YOUR PRIVACY

- Change passwords and logins for your accounts and devices
- Store important documents, like your passport and birth certificate, in a safe location

2

PROVIDE US YOUR INFORMATION BEFORE YOUR FIRST APPOINTMENT

- Complete our Client Intake Form available on our website
- Complete our Parenting Information Form available on our website
- Complete our Property Information Form available on our website
- Write down any questions you want to ask your solicitor

3

ATTEND YOUR FIRST APPOINTMENT

- Bring 100 points of Identification
- Bring copies of any Court documents, family violence orders and letters recieved from your former partner's solicitor

4

FOLLOWING YOUR FIRST APPOINTMENT

- Work through our Financial Disclosure Checklist
- Consider whether you need any additional support, such as a divorce and separation coach or a counsellor

DIVORCE & SEPARATION *Coaching*

We are extremely proud to be the first firm in Central West NSW providing our client's divorce and separation coaching.

Our divorce and separation coaching works in parallel to your family law matter. While your lawyer handles the legal side of your separation, your coach is focused on helping you through the separation process. Your coach can help you set goals, mentally prepare for Court events, and help you work through the separation.

Our divorce and separation coaching is offered at a fixed rate to our clients. Choose from one-off coaching sessions or select an all-inclusive coaching package tailored to suit your needs.

If you are not sure whether coaching will work for you, book a free 15-minute consultation with our coach to learn more about how coaching may help in your family law matter.

Common Terminology

Affidavit

An affidavit is a written statement of fact used as evidence in Court. An affidavit is either sworn or affirmed to be true.

Applicant

The Applicant is the person who files first in the Court process. An Applicant files an Initiating Application.

Barrister

Barristers are trained advocates that specialise in Court work, such as Interim and Final hearings. Barristers are also used for complex matters.

Binding Financial Agreement

A Binding Financial Agreement (also known as a BFA) is one way parties can formalise their property settlement. A Binding Financial Agreement is a contract made under the Family Law Act. It is not signed by a Judge or Judicial Registrar.

Consent Order

A Consent Order is the formal written agreement between you and your former partner regarding your property or parenting matter. A Consent Order is approved by a Judge or a Judicial Registrar.

Conciliation Conference

A conciliation conference is a mediation that is conducted by a Judicial Registrar or Senior Judicial Registrar of the Court.

Contravention Application

A Contravention Application is filed when one party alleges another party has breached Court Orders. If proven a Court can impose penalties for a breach.

Custody

Custody is now an outdated term. It was used to refer to the care arrangements for children.

Disclosure

When we use the term 'disclosure' we are referring to the documents that you, and your former partner, need to provide to each other for both parenting and property matters.

Divorce

Divorce is the legal process that dissolves a marriage. A divorce is different from having a property settlement or parenting orders.

Family Consultant

A Family Consultant is an employee of the Court, usually a psychologist or social worker who specialises in child and family issues. These consultants meet with parties and children to prepare family reports for use in disputes about parenting orders for children.

Filing

The process of providing a document to the Court to be added to the Court file is called filing.

Common Terminology

Financial Statement

A Financial Statement is a document filed in all property proceedings which outlines your current financial position, including your weekly income and expenses as well as your assets and debts.

Interim Order

An Interim Order is an order made by a court before the Final Orders. In Family Law matters, these are short term orders, often urgent, about children's matters, property matters and maintenance.

Independent Children's Lawyer

An Independent Children's Lawyer is a separate lawyer appointed to represent the children in Family Law proceedings.

Parenting Plan

A parenting plan is an informal agreement between parents setting out arrangements for their children.

Maintenance

Where one former spouse provides ongoing financial support to their former spouse or their children. Spousal maintenance is usually only ordered for a limited time prior to the orders being made to sever your financial relationship with your former spouse.

Mediation

A mediation is a confidential meeting, normally involving the parties and their solicitors, where parties can discuss issues in their matter and negotiate a settlement.

Parental responsibility

Parental responsibility relates to the duties, powers, responsibilities, and authority parents have for their children. When discussing parental responsibility we are normally referring to the ability of a parent to make long term decisions for their children such as the children's names, religious upbringing, medical decisions, schooling decisions and where the children live.

Respondent

The person who received the documents filed in Court by the other person (the Applicant) is known as the Respondent. The Respondent then has the opportunity to respond with their own Court documents.

Subpoena

A subpoena is an order from the Court that requires a person to appear in Court to give evidence or to produce documents in their possession to the Court.

Without prejudice

Without prejudice is used on offers of settlement and means that the offer being made cannot be used in Court proceedings against that party. It allows parties to engage in free negotiations without fearing they will prejudice their case by doing so.

CONTACT

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Need help finding our
office? Scan the QR
code to see a video

