

Big enhancements to family law eFiling coming soon

Parties wishing to initiate a Family Law proceeding or file supporting documents on an existing file in the Family Court of Australia or the Federal Circuit Court of Australia will soon be able to do so through an improved Family Law Electronic Filing system.

The federal courts' innovative Digital Court Program will deliver benefits to those in the family law jurisdiction through strengthening electronic filing, implementing a digital court file for family law as well as improvements to the courts' existing case management system, and implementing a new document management system for the courts' digital information. The Digital Court Program will also see the digitalisation of most court forms, files and administrative processes.

A significant part of this initiative is to improve eFiling on the Commonwealth Courts Portal (the Portal) – www.comcourts.gov.au.

In 2017, a survey conducted with the legal profession enabled the Court to identify a list of enhancements that would maximise the benefits of eFiling for Portal users.

In October 2018, the Court will release these enhancements – the most significant being the ability to file a greater number of applications online.

Other improvements in the October release include:

- support for fee reduction/exemption applications (for financial hardship)
- online lodgement for correspondence
- ability to indicate
 - safety considerations
 - urgency, and
 - the need for interpreters
- ability to upload 30Mb sized documents, and
- support for Parenting Orders sought with Family Dispute Resolution (FDR) Exemptions.

In the 2017 survey, legal practitioners also told us they wanted a faster, more streamlined way to upload documents which has led to the development of a new eFiling feature referred to as 'unguided'. This feature requires practitioners to enter the minimum amount of data required to initiate a proceeding, allowing the remaining information to be uploaded as a PDF of the completed application, response or notice. This saves valuable time by not having to manually re-enter information and does not require any changes to lawyer's internal precedent forms.

The existing electronic filing process will be retained providing practitioners two avenues for electronic filing.

Further information and supporting material will be published on the Family Court and Federal Circuit Court websites in the lead up to the eFiling release.

You can also follow the courts on Twitter @FamilyCourtAU and @FedCctCourtAU for links to the latest information.