

LIGHTHOUSE PROJECT UPDATE



Guiding those experiencing family violence and other safety risks through the family law system

Update to the Profession February 2021

With the Pilot now well underway, the Court calls upon the profession to familiarise themselves with this important project and to communicate the process and benefits with their clients.

Benefits of screening and accessing the Lighthouse Project

- Early and case-specific pathway to resolution – whether by FDR (Family Dispute Resolution) or trial before a judge.
- Intensive case management for high risk cases and speedy pathway to FDR for lower risk cases.
- Referral to support services for clients.

Confidentiality

Part IIA of the [Family Law Act 1975](#) prevents the disclosure and admission into evidence of information that is in connection with a family safety risk screening process carried out by the Courts. More information on this is available from the Court's [website](#).

FAQs

Why should clients undertake early risk screening? The completion of early risk screening underpins this new process and ensures that litigants receive a Safety and Wellbeing Plan specific to their needs and service referral where appropriate. Importantly, the case will be directed to a suitable case management pathway which is likely to lead to a quicker resolution - whether by FDR or trial before a judge.

How can family law practitioners help? Practitioners can encourage clients to screen quickly and efficiently by discussing the benefits of risk screening with them before the Application or Response form is filed, and obtaining consent to provide the Court with their client's direct email address at the earliest opportunity.

Who can complete the screening? All litigants filing an Application or Response for parenting only orders at a pilot registry (Adelaide, Brisbane or Parramatta) will receive the opportunity to complete Family Doors Triage, a confidential and secure online risk-screening questionnaire which takes only 15 minutes to complete. The questionnaire is to be completed by the litigant, not their lawyer.

Can the other party access responses or contact details? No. All responses and contact details are treated confidentially and will not be provided to the other party, or the judge or registrars.

How does the client receive the risk screening questionnaire? The link to the questionnaire is sent by email directly from the Court to the litigant. It is critical that the

ABOUT THE PROJECT

The Lighthouse Pilot commenced in the Federal Circuit Court of Australia on 7 December 2020 in Adelaide, and in Brisbane and Parramatta on 11 January 2021.

The pilot is a new approach to risk screening that focuses on public health and tailored case management for families involved in the family law system. It involves:

- Early risk screening through a secure online platform.
- Early identification and development of safety plans and referrals.
- Assessment, triage and support of cases by a specialised team of judges, family consultants, senior registrars and registrars.

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client's direct email address is contained in the Application or Response form so that they can receive the link.

What happens if an email address is not provided? If privacy concerns prevent disclosure of the client's email address at the time of filing, the Court will email the client's lawyer requesting the provision of a direct email address for the client.

Can an email address be created for the purpose of screening? Yes. A new email address for the client can be created for the sole purpose of screening.

How can clients screen if they don't have access to technology or need assistance? An iPad is available in (pilot) registries for clients to use, with the assistance of the DOORS Triage Team. Clients are encouraged to call our National Enquiry Centre on 1300 152 000 to book time with a member of the Team for help, or if they need help from an interpreter.

Further information

The Federal Circuit Court of Australia's [Practice Direction No. 3 of 2020 – Lighthouse Project and Evatt List](#) sets out the procedure for family law proceedings involved in the Lighthouse Project.

For more information on the Lighthouse Project, visit the Court's [website](#).

You can contact the Court for assistance in the following ways:

- Live Chat at www.familycourt.gov.au/livechat or www.federalcircuitcourt.gov.au/livechat
- Email enquiries@familylawcourts.gov.au, or
- Call [1300 352 000](tel:1300352000).

- Tailored case management to suit the needs of each case.
- Referral of cases to a dedicated high-risk court list, known as the Evatt List.

