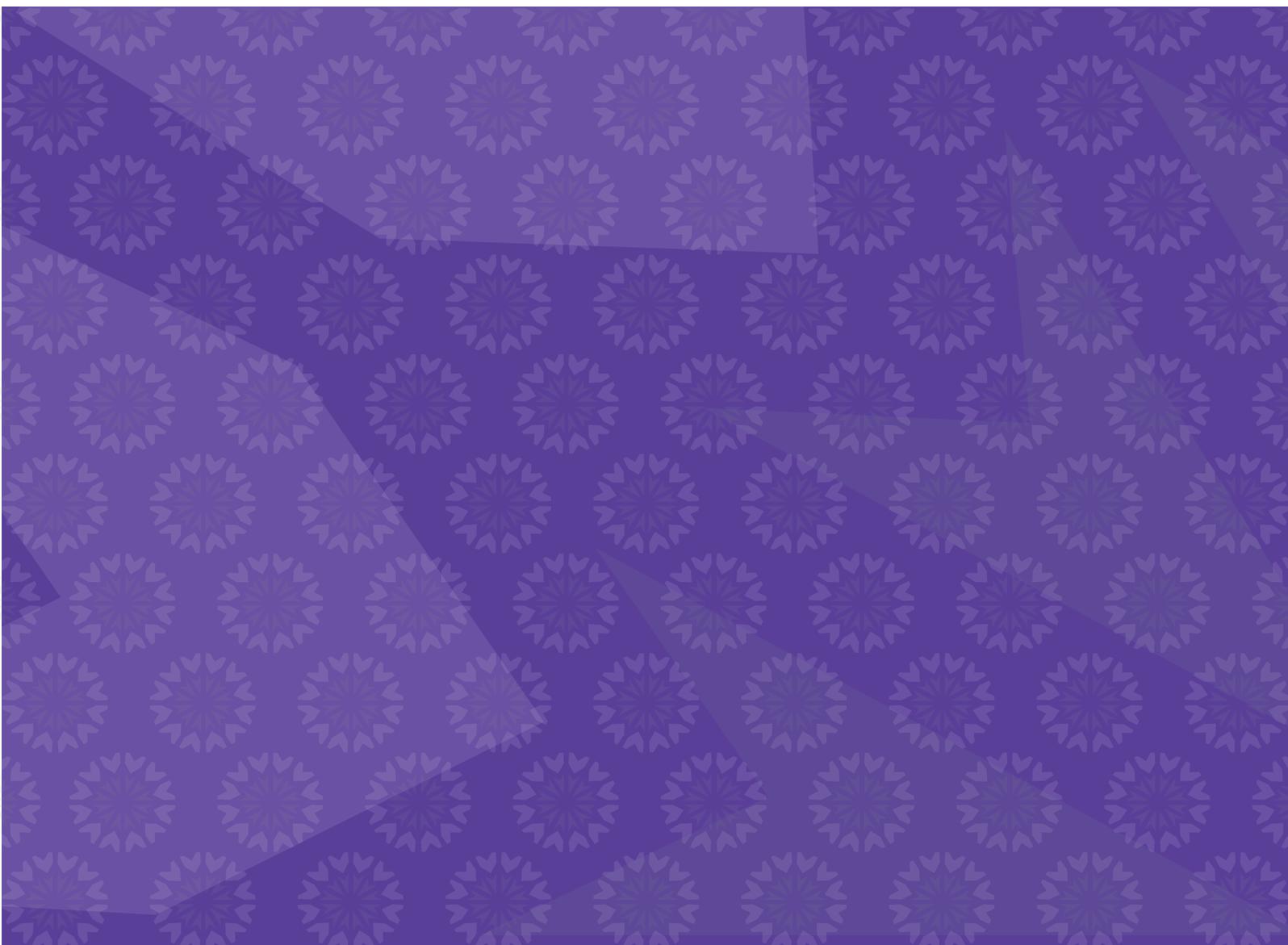


# Annual Report 2018-2019

Family Law Pathways Network  
Greater Brisbane



Australian Government



Family Law  
PATHWAYS  
NETWORK

GREATER  
BRISBANE

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# About Us

The Greater Brisbane Family Law Pathways Network ("Brisbane FLPN") supports the Brisbane family law community to:

- develop professionally
- work collaboratively
- maintain strong working relationships and
- develop appropriate referral mechanisms, so that families are able to access the services they need as quickly and seamlessly as possible

## Project Officer

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The Project Officer coordinates the Brisbane FLPN with a focus on education and learning, community development, information sharing and resource development, networking, communication and innovation.

Jane Aitken commenced in the role of Project Officer in July 2018. Jane has worked as a family law solicitor in private practice and as a solicitor in community legal centres.

As Project Officer, Jane is able to combine her legal knowledge and experience with her passion for access to justice, fairness, equality and accessibility of service, support and information.

## Auspice Agency

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The Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department funds Relationships Australia Queensland to carry out the work of the Brisbane FLPN. The objective of the network is to foster strong links with locally based providers who operate as part of, or alongside, the family law system, to enhance collaboration and improve overall assistance to separated and separating families. This is to be done by promoting awareness of services and conducting cross-sectoral training.

## Terms of Reference

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In September 2018, the Steering Committee developed Terms of Reference for the Brisbane FLPN Steering Committee. These can be viewed [here](#).

## Funding

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The Brisbane FLPN receives funding from the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department to carry out the objectives of the funding agreement. This funding enables the Brisbane FLPN to offer information, resources, networking and training opportunities either for free or at a substantially subsidised cost.

## Membership

The Brisbane FLPN has 670 registered members from across the family law sector. Many of our members are in management roles and disseminate information and event invitations to their staff.

### **Our membership is broad and vast and includes:**

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community and Support Workers
- Academics
- Barristers & Solicitors
- Caseworkers
- Child and Family Therapists
- Child Contact Service staff
- Family Relationship Centre staff
- Financial Counsellors
- Queensland Government Department staff
- Judicial Officers
- Managers
- Mediators
- Medical practitioners
- Parenting Orders Program coordinators and staff
- Psychologists and Family Consultants;
- Queensland Police
- Relationship Counsellors
- Social Workers
- Students

In 2018, Brisbane FLPN made the membership process easier by creating an [online membership registration page](#). Membership is steadily building with new membership requests being received each week.

## Steering Committee

The Brisbane FLPN is chaired by Stephen Page of Page Provan Family and Fertility Lawyers and has dedicated representatives from the following members, each supporting and driving its work and objectives:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service
- Brisbane Domestic Violence Service
- Caxton Legal Centre
- Centacare Brisbane
- Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women
- Family Court of Australia and Federal Circuit Court of Australia
- Family Law Practitioners Association
- Legal Aid Queensland
- Pine Rivers Community Legal Service
- Queensland Indigenous Family Violence Legal Service
- QUT Law and QUT Family Mediation Service
- Relationships Australia Queensland
- UnitingCare
- Women's Legal Service Queensland

Brisbane FLPN endeavours to consult broadly with the family law sector and continually invites input and involvement from across the sector. Stakeholders are encouraged to participate as members of the Steering Committee or by regular consultation with Steering Committee members and/or the Brisbane FLPN Project Officer.

If you or your organisation would like to be involved in the Brisbane FLPN, please contact [pathwaysprogram@raq.org.au](mailto:pathwaysprogram@raq.org.au).

# Cross-Sector Training

## Who is a Parent? Networking Evening

Held at the Queensland Terrace of the State Library of Queensland from 6.30pm to 8.30pm on Thursday, 13 November 2018, this event was an opportunity to re-engage with longstanding members of the Brisbane FLPN and to generate new interest and involvement from the sector.

Stephen Page, Chair of the Brisbane FLPN and an Accredited Family Law Specialist gave a keynote presentation on the question, "Who is a Parent?" Attendees were taken through a series of scenarios that represented recent judicial outcomes in Commonwealth and State

jurisdictions and demonstrates inconsistencies and nuances in relation to those outcomes.

The presentation proved to be a great talking point for attendees who spent the evening networking with peers and colleagues.

The 56 registered attendees covered the broad Brisbane family law sector and included professionals from community legal services, domestic violence services, family relationships centres, mediators, academia, social services and the private legal sector.

'Excellent topic!  
Very engaging!'

'Great presentation  
and really good  
opportunity to  
network'

'Customised well  
to the audience'

'Really nice simple  
but elegant event.'



## Impacts of Alcohol & Other Drugs on Family Law Matters

Wednesday, 6 March 2019 8.45am-3.00pm

The Edge Auditorium, State Library of Queensland

**This sold out training event had 110 registered attendees from across the Brisbane FLPN network - with attendees from the legal and social sectors, private, government and NGOs.**

Attendees were given a warm Welcome to Country by Ashley Ruska of Nunukul Yuggera on behalf of the traditional custodians of Brisbane and its surrounds.

### Our event included:

- Her Honour, Judge Leanne Turner of the Federal Circuit Court discussing the problematic use of substances in the context of family law
- Her Honour, Magistrate Annette Hennessy of the Queensland Drug and Alcohol Court sharing her knowledge and experience
- Michelle Taylor & Sonia Boyd from Insight Centre for Alcohol and Other Drug Training sharing key information about substance use and relevance to those working with families
- Jane Bowman from Queensland Injectors Health Network (QulHN) sharing a better understanding of the complexities of parental substance use
- A Panel Discussion Chaired by Belinda Cox of Brisbane Domestic Violence Service and including Joanne Trentin, Practice & Quality Manager, Child & Family Services, UnitingCare, exploring case studies and audience questions

### 38 attendees completed an online feedback survey and, of those:

- 100% indicated that their expectations had been met
- Presenters were scored 90-100% for delivering valuable and relevant information
- All respondents rated the content as excellent or very good

‘...extremely insightful and I have walked away with a different perspective.’

‘Best training day I have been to in a long time.’

‘I felt engaged and interested for the entire day.’



## Child-Inclusive Mediation Breakfast Seminar

Wednesday, 1 May 2019 7.30am-9.00am

Ground Floor Function Room, The Wesley Mission, Ann Street, Brisbane

### Another sold out event with 65 registered attendees.

Presenters Anne-Marie Rice, Family Mediator and Family Lawyer, Tom Fitzgerald, Family Report Writer and Norma Williams, Practice Manager at Logan Family Relationships Centre explored the legal and social considerations in relation to the inclusion of children in family law mediation. The presenters navigated the process by which children may be given opportunities to express their views freely and have their voices heard. Attendees were able to hear about two models of child-inclusive mediation being practiced in Brisbane and explore the merits and practicalities of both.

Attendees who responded to a feedback survey gave positive responses, indicating that the content was relevant and the presenters were engaging and that expectations had once again been met.

‘I found it very helpful to hear about child inclusive mediations from both a private and a not for profit perspective’

‘Thank you Jane Aitken for your work in making more sense of legal pathways to those of us outside that sector!’



## Subpoenas - Warrants in Family Law, Child Protection & Domestic Violence Matters - Panel Discussion

Friday, 21 June 2019 9.30am - 11.30am

The End Room, Brisbane Square Library, George Street, Brisbane

### 109 Registered attendees heard from a panel of experts consisting of:

- LaTanya Lemuelu, Team Leader, Subpoena Team, Right to Privacy & Information, Queensland Police Service
- Dr April O'Mara, Manager Practice, Governance & Research, Centacare Family & Relationship Services
- Stephen Page, Accredited Family Law Specialist, Page Provan Family & Fertility Lawyers
- Julie Sarkozi, Women's Legal Service Solicitor, Counselling Notes Protect
- Chris Spink, Senior Registrar, Family Court of Australia
- Teresa Stewart-Hunter, Manager, Right to Information and Subpoena, Department of Child Safety, Youth & Women

### The panel considered the following key questions:

- Why do professionals keep notes and what should and should not be recorded?
- Who can access notes and in what circumstances can they be relied upon as evidence?
- How do the Queensland Police and the Department of Child Safety, Youth & Women respond to subpoenas in relation to family law matters?
- How should professionals respond if they are served with a warrant or subpoena?

**Over 75% of those who responded to our feedback survey found the content useful and interesting and the vast majority indicated that the event met or exceeded expectations.**

## Visits to the Family Court and Federal Circuit Court

An important and valued offering by the Brisbane FLPN are our facilitated visits to the Family and Federal Circuit Courts at Brisbane.

On ten occasions throughout the year, small groups of no more than 10 have had the opportunity to observe family law proceedings and to meet with representatives of the Brisbane Registry to develop a greater understanding of the experience many clients will have as they navigate the family law system.

Attendees included domestic violence support workers, counsellors, lawyers, family dispute resolution practitioners and many others from across the family law sector.

**One hundred percent of respondents to feedback surveys indicated that the court visits had given information and insights which would enhance their practice.**

Attendees were provided with comprehensive information about the Family Court system, including courtesies, formalities and processes. They then experience the busy Duty Lists of the Federal Circuit Court Judges in action or observe hearings on parenting and/or financial disputes.

At lunchtime, participants gathered at a nearby café to share experiences and ask questions. As well as developing a deeper understanding of the systems and processes, participants were able to network with other service providers and develop stronger working relationships.

‘This is something that everyone working with clients using this system should experience.’

‘This will allow me to better support my clients.’

# Networking, Referrals & Collaboration

## Stakeholder Lunch with Child Protection Expert, Dr David Tobis (Phd)

On 3 June 2019 stakeholders from Women's Legal Service Queensland, Legal Aid Queensland, the Family Court of Australia, Pine Rivers Community Legal Centre and Micah Projects met with Dr David Tobis PhD to share and discuss a recent study ([click here for full report](#)) with broad implications for child welfare practices. The immediate focus of the study was to determine whether a new kind of representation for parents in child welfare cases (in which families are represented by an interdisciplinary team) makes any difference in the length of foster care stays for children and termination of parental rights. Dr David Tobis has worked to reform the child welfare system in the US and internationally over four decades and was in Brisbane to participate in a Forum & Panel Discussion on behalf of Micah Projects' Family Inclusion Network.

Stakeholders at the lunch meeting were interested to hear that providing parents with the right kind of legal representation in child welfare cases not only significantly reduced the time children were in foster care but had significant economic benefits across the sector.

This lunch meeting was an example of how Brisbane FLPN is well-positioned to enhance and strengthen relationships across the sector - so that stakeholders can share knowledge and experiences to develop and advocate for better outcomes for families and children.

## Steering Committee Meetings

In addition to driving the work of the Brisbane FLPN, the regular meetings of our Steering Committee create further opportunities for key stakeholders within the Brisbane family law sector to connect and communicate. Steering Committee members bring their unique skills, experiences and learnings to each meeting. As news and ideas are shared by member representatives, connections are enhanced and perspectives are broadened.

## Thoughtful Choices

The Brisbane FLPN endeavours to make thoughtful choices when carrying out its objectives. When catering events, our preferred supplier is Hope Street Catering, a not-for-profit social enterprise that provides opportunities for people in the community. We seek to supply environmentally low-impact pens and stationery at training events. And in all of our planning and decision-making, we are constantly striving to make choices that will have a positive impact on our community and planet.



# Information, Resources & Referrals

## Newsletters

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Brisbane FLPN circulates a regular newsletter to its members, with the objectives of:

- communicating news and information to the family law sector that is relevant, topical and useful
- promoting upcoming events of Brisbane FLPN and
- sharing information on behalf of not-for-profit or government organisations that is deemed relevant and of interest to Brisbane FLPN members

### **2018-2019 Newsletters included the following articles:**

- [Is your service meeting the needs of families with same- sex parents?](#) (September 2018)
- [Children’s Participation in Family Law Disputes](#) (December 2018)
- [Parenting Coordination: a new service option for separating families?](#) (February 2019)
- [Legally Assisted Culturally Appropriate Family Dispute Resolution](#) (May 2019)

### **News Updates for the Family Law Sector**

- [Family Law Act amendment bans personal cross-examination where there is domestic violence in family law proceedings](#) (April 2019)
- [Non-Lethal Strangulation in Domestic and Family Violence](#) (April 2019)
- [Harmonisation of Family Court and Federal Circuit Court Rules](#) (April 2019)
- [Queensland Legislation passed making it a crime to share intimate videos and pictures without consent](#) (May 2019)
- [Injustice of Intimacy Podcast Series: stories and information in relation to intimate partner sexual abuse](#) (May 2019)

### **Spotlight on a Service or Resource**

Each issue features a local service or resource in our “Spotlight on a Service” item. In recent issues, there has been a feature on each of the following:

- [QUT Mediation Service](#) (September 2018)
- [Men Choosing Change Moreton Bay](#) (October 2018)
- [Family Advocacy & Support Services - FASS](#) (December 2018)
- [Community Family Mediation Service: Property & Financial](#) (February 2019)
- [Nundah Neighbourhood Centre & Brisbane North Community Legal Service Domestic Violence & Family Support Program](#) (April 2019)
- [Child Protection Guide](#) (May 2019)

This item gives local services an opportunity to share information about their service and organisation directly with service providers across the sector, giving detailed information about the services provided, information for clients, referral processes, wait times, funding and costs and other relevant information.

## Attorney-General's Department News

- [Tougher Penalties for International Parental Child Abductions - AG Department](#) (October 2018)
- [New Domestic Violence Services for Caboolture](#) (October 2018)
- [Government responds to Surrogacy Report](#) (November 2018)
- [FASS improves outcomes and receives more funding](#) (December 2018)
- [New Funding for Family Law Services to Support Women to Recover Financially After Separation](#) (December 2018)
- [Improving visibility of superannuation assets in family law proceedings](#) (December 2018)
- [Evaluation of FDR Services](#) (February 2019)
- [Enhanced Communication between Child Protection Officials & the Family Court](#) (April 2019)
- [Family Violence Law Help Website](#) (April 2019)
- [National Hotline responding to Abuse of Older Australians](#) (April 2019)
- [Strengthening Family Safety by Enhancing Communication between Family Law Courts and States and Territories](#) (April 2019)
- [Family Violence Law Help Website Launched](#) (April 2019)
- [Australian Law Reform Commission Review of the Family Law System](#) (April 2019)
- [Family Court Appointments](#)

The Newsletter also publishes a link to a [Schedule of Wait List Times](#) for family support services offered by non-governmental organisations, such as Parenting Orders Programs, Child Contact Services, Family Dispute Resolution Services and other counselling and support programs.

## Website

The National Family Law Pathways Network website ([www.familylawpathways.com.au](http://www.familylawpathways.com.au)) serves as a useful centralised landing page for people seeking further information about the Family Law Pathways Network generally and to find their local network.

There is also a Queensland Family Law Pathways Network website ([www.qldfamilylawnet.org.au](http://www.qldfamilylawnet.org.au)) with links to the nine networks throughout Queensland, including [Greater Brisbane](#).

Brisbane FLPN utilises the Queensland FLPN website as a platform for members and the general public to access:

- Brisbane FLPN Newsletters
- Referral resources, such as the Directory of Post-Separation Counselling Services
- Links to information about local service providers and useful information sources
- Information about Brisbane FLPN Training and Networking events as well as events being hosted by other local organisations
- Online membership sign-up form
- News and information

The Brisbane FLPN continues to encourage promotion and use of this valuable resource for the purpose of keeping members informed and up to date.

## Directory of Post-Separation Counselling Services

Brisbane FLPN was encouraged by members of the family law sector to create a directory of post-separation counselling services.

A comprehensive directory has been created which includes social workers, psychologists, family report writers, drug and alcohol services, children's counselling and support, mental health services, financial and gambling counselling, LGBTIQ support, domestic and family violence and sexual assault, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander counselling and support and counselling and support organisations such as Relationships Australia, Centacare, Unitingcare and Anglicare.

Practitioners are able to be added or removed from the directory by contacting the Project Officer.

The directory is available on the Queensland Family Law Pathways Network website [here](#).

## Email Updates

Members of the Brisbane FLPN are kept up-to-date with newsletters, event invitations and other news and information by email.

## LinkedIn

Brisbane FLPN uses LinkedIn as a platform for sharing the newsletter and invitations to training events. Steering Committee members and others can "share" and "like" posts which broadens the reach and impact of the network. The Brisbane FLPN LinkedIn page can be viewed [here](#).

## Engaging with Stakeholders

### Steering Committee

The Brisbane FLPN Steering Committee provides broad representation across the family law sector, ensuring that the work of the Brisbane FLPN is relevant and appropriate.

### Project Officer Meetings and Consultation

To further ensure an integrated and connected family law system, the Project Officer participates in meetings and consultations with organisations across Greater Brisbane.

This year, the Project Officer engaged with the following individuals and organisations:

- Child Dispute Services, Family Court of Australia
- Caxton Legal Centre
- Centacare
- UnitingCare
- Family Inclusion Network - Micah Projects
- Presentation at Family and Children's Forum - Ipswich (hosted by Anglicare)
- Department of Home Affairs
- Stephen Page, Page Provan Family & Fertility Lawyers
- Donna Cooper, QUT Family Mediation Service
- Judge Jarrett, Federal Circuit Court of Australia
- Family Relationship Centre, Upper Mount Gravatt - Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Mediation Service
- LifeCare
- Leading Family Law Specialists, Anne-Marie Rice, Trent Waller and Damien Greer
- Julie Gilfoyle (TAFE) & Kathryn Rendell (99 Steps/Access Logan)
- Family Relationships Centre Logan - Norma Williams
- Ladies Luncheons - family law sector
- Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Stakeholder meetings at Eidfest, Acacia Ridge

- Pine Rivers Community Legal Service team meeting
- Carolyn Devries, CEO New Way Lawyers
- Queensland Injectors Health Network
- Insight Alcohol and Other Drug Training - Queensland Health
- North Brisbane Family Supported Accommodation Team - Salvation Army
- Launch of "Injustice of Intimacy" Podcast - Parliamentary Annexe, Parliament House Queensland
- Global Parents Forum hosted by the Family Inclusion Network
- Parenting Coordination Information Evening at Hopgood Ganim Lawyers
- Logan Multicultural Network
- Northside Alliance Against Domestic Violence (Nundah Neighbourhood Centre)

These networking opportunities ensure the Project Officer is continually up to date with the topics and issues impacting the sector and is able to direct information and training that is responsive to the needs of Brisbane FLPN members.

The Project Officer, also travelled to Canberra in March to attend the annual Family Law Pathways Network Project Officers Conference. The thirty-three networks gathered to share ideas and develop strategies for continuing to enhance the family law system by sharing information and professional development and ensuring strong working relationships. Retired Judge Richard Chisholm, ANU Professor Bruce Smyth, CEO of Legal Aid ACT John Boersig and Attorney-General's Department representative Sue Harris all met with the group to voice their support for the importance of the Family Law Pathways Networks ensuring strong collaborative practice within the family law system.



## Looking ahead

This has been an exciting and dynamic year for the Brisbane FLPN and we are busy working to deliver more information, referral pathways and networking opportunities for the Brisbane family law sector. We will continue to encourage broad membership and strong engagement and connection so that families achieve the best possible outcomes.

**We have already started planning a number of exciting events and concepts. While some of these events are still being developed, we welcome the input and involvement of our members. If you would like to be involved in the development of any of any Pathways events training or networking events, please contact us to arrange a meeting.**

Some ideas we are currently working on include:

- Culturally and Linguistically Diverse clients within the family law system
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander experiences and strategies in the family law system
- Discussing the ALRC Family Law System Review - exploring the problems and challenges and seeking solutions
- Pathways Information Expo - showcasing services across the sector
- Facilitating eSafety training for frontline support workers to raise awareness of technology-facilitated abuse and provide up-to-date skills and knowledge to support women and families
- Ongoing development of referral resources
- Development of a Family Law Pathways Network Podcast

## Stay in Touch

The Brisbane FLPN is constantly seeking to engage with members and stakeholders to ensure that we are meeting our objectives in meaningful and useful ways.

We encourage individual members and organisations to get in touch and let us know how we can work with you to enhance service delivery and referral networks.

Our Project Officer, is happy visit your organisation and meet with you and your team.

We look forward to building ongoing relationships and connections across the sector.

**Jane Aitken**

**Pathways Community Development Officer**

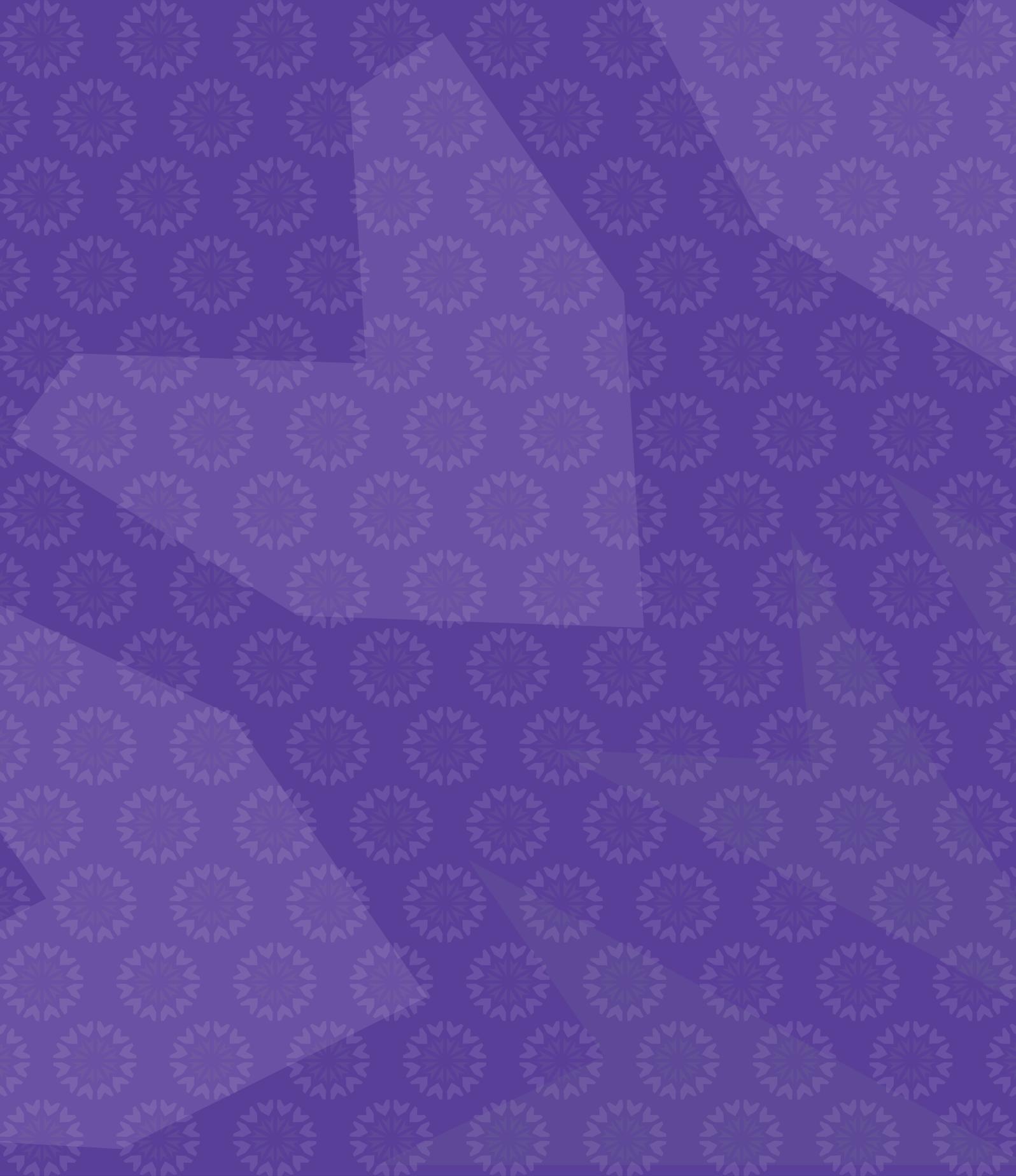
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