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### What is a Family Report?

A Family Report can be useful to parents or other persons negotiating parenting arrangements for children. A report can be organised by agreement between the parties or can be ordered by the Court if there are proceedings on foot.

A family report is one of many documents that will be considered when negotiating parenting arrangements, or by the Court if a Judge/Registrar has to decide the outcome.

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### Who Writes the Family Report?

The report is written by a qualified Psychologist or Social Worker that has met with each parent/party.

Dependent on the circumstances, the report writer may also meet with the children.

As every family dynamic and situation is unique, the report process in terms of what order the report writer meets with parents, and whether they meet with the children, can vary.

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### Information Considered by the Family Report:

Generally, the report writer collects information for their report by:

- a) Meeting with the parents/parties and other relevant adults (such as step-parents or other parents);
  - b) Dependent on the circumstances, meeting with the children;
  - c) Reading information given to them by the parents if agreed between the parents;
  - d) If there are Court proceedings:
    - a. Reading Court documents filed by the parties and records from subpoenas (such as police records or medical records);
    - b. If an Independent Children's Lawyer has been appointed, communicating with them;
  - e) Making their own inquiries – for example, with the child's school, day care, or Doctor.
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## Confidential Nature of The Family Report

Once the report writer has gathered all information, they will prepare their report and release it to the Court (if the report is ordered by the Court), or to the parties.

A Family Report is strictly confidential and must not be disclosed to any person other than the parties.

There can be serious consequences for parties that disclose or publish a Family Report to any other person.

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## Recommendations made by the Family Report

Once the report is received, the parents/parties can consider the recommendations in the report. A family report can, but does not always, provide recommendations about:

- a) Who should have parental responsibility, which means the obligation to make major decisions for the child (for example, about their health or education);
  - b) What time the child should spend with each parent, or other family members (such as siblings or grandparents), on a daily basis, during school holidays and/or on special occasions;
  - c) Any support services that may benefit the family, such as counselling, parenting courses, or rehabilitation services;
  - d) How any safety concerns can be addressed; and
  - e) Any other issues relevant to the specific family. For example, how cultural considerations can be taken into account, or how any health issues affecting the child may be managed.
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## Value of the Family Report

The recommendations in Family Reports, and the 'why' behind each recommendation, can assist the parents in negotiating parenting arrangements. Sometimes, the reports help the parties to see things clearer from the other parties perspective. Sometimes, the reports give parties confidence in a particular arrangement when a qualified Psychologist or Social Worker considers it to be in the best interests of the child.

Usually, Family Reports are a valuable piece of evidence that assist parents in reaching an agreement on some, or all, of their parenting disputes.

If you want more advice regarding the Family Report process, please contact our office.

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### **O'Shea Dyer Townsville has experienced lawyers who practice exclusively in Family Law**

**Everyone's situation is unique.**

**We always recommend seeing an experienced family lawyer so you can discuss your situation and obtain customised advice about how this process specifically applies to you.**

**We offer first appointments with experienced family lawyers for \$220 - a low fixed fee so that everyone can afford to obtain advice about their situation.**

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