

Recently Separated or thinking about Separating? How should you prepare for your first meeting with a Family Lawyer?



A Chat with Townsville Family Lawyer, Jodi Dingwall.

April, 2022

The best thing you will ever do...

If you are recently separated or seriously thinking about separating, it is really important to make an appointment to speak with an *experienced* family lawyer. I think it's *critical* to obtain advice about your specific situation from a lawyer who works exclusively in this area of law.

It is *so* important to obtain *customised* advice about your particular situation and what is reasonable for you, your children and your property.

Every relationship is unique, and so every separation is unique. Rather than take advice from others who have been through this before, it is always best to talk to an experienced family lawyer.

Even if your separation is amicable, it is just a smart thing to do.

People usually have specific questions about their situation.

It's *always* a good idea to have your questions written down to bring into your first appointment.

Often people have questions and then when they get to the appointment, there is so much to take in or discuss, they forget the questions they needed to ask.

Having questions written down, will mean you get the most out of your first meeting and some peace of mind about the things that are bothering you.

How to prepare for your first meeting with a Family Lawyer

The more prepared you are the better. I like to get as much detail as possible so I can give you good advice and value for money. When you book an appointment with me or another family lawyer at OSheaDyer Solicitors, we try to get as much information as possible before your first appointment.

Before we can give you advice, we need to know things like ***how long your relationship was, if you were married, when you separated***, and if you have been ***divorced*** or not.

The length of your relationship will have an impact on property matters and if you have been divorced there is a time limit that starts to run that I need to know about.

Recently Separated or thinking about Separating? How should you prepare for your first meeting with a Family Lawyer?



A Chat with Townsville Family Lawyer, Jodi Dingwall.

April, 2022

If you have children under 18

I will need basic information like their **full names and dates of birth**.

I also want to know about their **health, schooling/education**, and if there are any matters that may affect their **safety and welfare**.

I want to know about any **care or 'spend time' arrangements** that you and your ex-partner (or others) have with the children.

If you have attended **mediation** or counselling, you should bring any **parenting plans** drawn up by the mediator, or certificates of attendance. And if there are any **court orders** you should bring them along too.

And if there are any **relevant text messages or emails** between you and your ex-partner in relation to the children, you should bring them along too.

What arrangements do you want?

It's a good idea to think about any proposals you may wish to put forward about arrangements for the children.

Having all of this information available in the first meeting means I can discuss options in a detailed manner. I can advise on the appropriate time each parent should spend with the children (and if necessary, what safety provisions are available to protect the children during their visits).

Property

I will need as much detail about your financial situation as possible.

The first thing we need to do is identify the 'asset pool'.

It's a great idea to make a **list of assets and their value**, and **any debts and their values**.

I also like to know **when these assets were acquired**.

Assets usually include your home, investment properties, shares, businesses, money that has been saved, household effects (ideally as a lump sum amount), cars and any special items of value. I also need to know about the superannuation policies of you and your partner.

Once we know property items, I will prepare an excel spreadsheet of all this to check over and discuss. This usually happens after the first appointment as it takes time to gather information.

Sometimes I need to obtain valuations, and sometimes we need to **find** all the assets and so need to go through a process of obtaining disclosure.

Recently Separated or thinking about Separating? How should you prepare for your first meeting with a Family Lawyer?



A Chat with Townsville Family Lawyer, Jodi Dingwall.

April, 2022

Once I can clearly see the value of all the assets in the asset pool, I will be able to discuss the contributions made by you and your ex-partner to these assets.

There will be direct and indirect, financial and non-financial contributions made by both parties over the course of the relationship. I can provide detailed advice on this and then how to split things.

It's a good idea to think about any proposals you may wish to put forward about property. For example, you may want to keep the matrimonial home. Or you may want to keep your superannuation. These are things I can discuss with you in detail.

Jodi Dingwall is a family lawyer and Senior Associate at OSheaDyer Solicitors, Townsville. Jodi was admitted in 2007 and has been practicing exclusively in Family law since 2014. Jodi is also a Collaboratively Trained Family Lawyer.

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

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.

Call us on 4772 5155 to make an appointment. We would love to help you.