Franco Urlini

Retired Vic Family Court Counsellor

Franco shared some of his near 4 decades of experience as a counsellor at the Victoria Family Court. He brought home that there are many sad clients of this court. Only a small number of separated couples go to Court. The ones that do, are often sad and or angry. Having restricted access to your kids is tough and it can be difficult to maintain a good relationship with the children.

Franco Urlini became a counsellor in the Victoria Family Court in 1977, 2 years after the new Family Law Act, and one year after the Family Court began. The Court was set up to more humanely resolve family disputes. Before this new Act, divorce could only be obtained by proving one person was at fault for the marital breakdown or to be separated for at least 5 years. In the first year of opening, the Family Court mainly handled divorces under the new Act, based on irretrievable marriage breakdown or one year separation.

In the early days of this new court, only married people could be dealt with. Now people in a de facto relationship and ex-nuptial children can be dealt with. Also in the early days, there was disquiet and perhaps suspicion between the legal practitioners and the court counsellors (mainly psychologists and social workers).

Separation is difficult for all parties, especially when only one person initiates it. Clients can often became emotional and perhaps angry. The Court has power over a number of things, including child matters, property matters and preventing parents from doing certain things, e.g. taking a child overseas.