

MEDIA RELEASE

DIVORCE – AUSTRALIAN STYLE

As outlined in yesterday's "Courier Mail" article, divorce is conducted very differently depending on which country you are from. For example, Malaysian men can divorce by simply saying the words "I divorce you" three times to their wife. In this modern era, this message can even be relayed by text but does need the agreement of a Court to become legal!

It's not quite so simple for Australian couples although there is an on-line divorce kit available through the Federal Courts website.

Divorce is obviously something we all need to be aware of as statistics show that every third Australian marriage ends in divorce. In fact Queensland has the third highest divorce rate of any state in Australia behind New South Wales and Victoria.

Staff at the Brisbane Family Law Centre (BFLC) utilise a different approach when it comes to assisting couples through this stressful time.

Collaborative law is only a relatively new concept in Australia but it has been operating in America for around 20 years.

Despite once referring to divorce as "deriving from the Latin word meaning to rip out a man's genitals through his wallet", collaborative law was the option chosen by American comedian Robin Williams when he was faced with a relationship breakdown. Uma Thurman is another celebrity proponent of the method and it is so common in the U.S. that there were even references to the process in the recent movie "Juno".



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The use of such a method enables couples to successfully resolve their divorce through a collaborative process, benefitting themselves, their children and their family as a whole. The process also encourages the use of other neutral professionals, such as a financial advisors and/or counsellors, to offer their expertise. The emphasis is on full disclosure, looking out for the best interests of all parties and reaching win-win solutions, rather than on competing and trying to "defeat" the other party in a Court situation.

Ms Rayward's firm, Brisbane Family Law Centre, has embraced this practice even further by offering on-site services provided by a financial planner and counsellor to ease the financial and emotional stresses that accompany relationship breakdowns.

"The hope is to keep everyone communicating" points out Ms Rayward, "which is the best outcome for all, especially when children are involved".

"The divorce rate has steadily increased over recent years and as the court system becomes more and more congested this innovative and more financially viable option is going to become more and more popular", Ms Rayward said. "As collaborative law becomes more common and widely recognised I am positive that couples who are faced with the breakdown of their marriage will find it the more appealing and maybe their first required point of call".

The Law Council of Australia agrees with Ms Rayward on this point and in fact recently released National Practice Standards to assist professionals and clients as they embark on the collaborative journey together.

For further information on collaborative law, please contact Brisbane Family Law Centre on 3826 1955 or visit our website www.brisbanefamilylawcentre.com.au.

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