



NZ Family Court Specialist Psychology Group
Conference 13 - 15 May 2027
Rydges Hotel - Wellington

Proudly sponsored by



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Thursday 13 May - Specialist Court Report Writers only
9.30am - 5pm

Friday 14 May - All allied Family Court Professionals
8am- 5pm

Saturday 15 May - Specialist Court Reports Writers only
9am - 1pm (+Post Conference Workshop 2pm-5pm)

Registration Prices (including catering)

Early Bird registrations valid until 30 November 2026

	3 full days		1 day only (Friday)	
	Early Bird	From 1 December	Early Bird	From 1 December
Group Member	\$500	\$600	\$350	\$450
Non-member	\$600	\$700	\$350	\$450
Post Conference Workshop	\$200	\$300		

Please [click the link](#) to complete the application form.

Registration will be accepted when payment is made.

Please make payment to:

Family Court Psychologists

12-3016-0488155-00

Please use your name and conference as reference

Rydges Wellington Accommodation option

(Discounted for Conference Attendee's)

<https://www.rydges.com/private-page/family-court-report-writers-conference/>





Thursday 13 May

9.30am - Registration (and coffee!)

10.30am Welcome (Waiata - Te Aroha)

11am -Getting started: Conference organisational discussion

11.15am - Panel session with **Ben Garber; Steven Bradley; Bruce Smyth**
“Top Issues for you in the Family Court Environment Worldwide”

12.30pm - Lunch

1.30pm - **Ben Garber: Tuning Up Child Custody Evaluations**

Ben walks through the evaluation process and provides specific tools and methods to improve efficiency, efficacy, and ecological validity; featuring the POOP protocol.

3.15pm - Afternoon tea

3.30pm - Workshop Selection

1. Questions and Answers: New or intending Family Court Report Writers: Kate Burke; Taryn Lewis; Terrence Edwards

2.Complex Formulations where a child may have multiple disabilities and adversities: Esther Yong

3.Family Intensive Therapy - Resist and Refuse: April Trenberth; Simone Powell

4.The Landscape of Regulation for Family Court Report Writers in New Zealand: Helen Buckland-Wright

5pm-6pm

Social Hour - Sponsored by Our Family Wizard
Rydges Hotel Bar



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Friday 14 May

Feedback from our 2024 conference “*One of the best conferences I have ever been too and I have been to 300 +*” (Bruce Smyth)

8am - Registration (and coffee!)

8.30am - Opening and Welcome

9.15am - Keynote Speaker: **Dr Ben Garber**

Dynamics not Diagnoses: High Conflict and Complex Situations

Family law is itself the awkward child of conflicted parents: The binary, linear thinking of the legal system and the individual pathology-focused thinking of medicine. Neither of these approaches is appropriate for answering questions about family relationships. This presentation challenges family law professionals to trade in the DSM and the ICD in favor of systemic approaches to evaluating, adjudicating, and intervening in high conflict family matters.

10.45am - Morning Tea

11am - Sponsor Presentation: Our Family Wizard
Erin Green - Professional Liaison

11.30am - Keynote Speaker: **Steven Bradley**

AI and the Family Court: Promise, Pitfalls and Practical Safeguards

Artificial intelligence, deepfakes, social media, digital surveillance and technology-facilitated abuse are rapidly reshaping Family Court practice. This session examines how these technologies are changing evidence, communication, risk assessment and professional decision-making, with practical examples that separate genuine threats from technological hype. Participants will leave better equipped to question digital evidence, recognize emerging forms of abuse, and use AI responsibly in modern family law.

1pm - Lunch



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Friday 14 May
Continued

1.45pm - Keynote Speaker: **Bruce Smyth**

**When Research meets Practice: What Social Science can offer
Clinical Work with Separated Parents**

Drawing on research into post-separation parenting, child support, high-conflict families, and children's experiences of parental separation, Bruce will explore how social science research can inform and strengthen clinical practice. The presentation will consider what research findings mean for practitioners working with separated families, how evidence can be translated into meaningful clinical responses, and the opportunities—and challenges—in bridging the gap between research evidence and everyday practice.

3.15pm - Afternoon Tea

3.30pm - Keynote Speaker: **Dr Ben Garber**

**Minimizing bias and premature closure: A rubric guides evaluation,
adjudication, and intervention with resist/refuse dynamics**

Family law professionals around the world are slowly (and often reluctantly) moving away from binary good guy/bad guy, either/or answers to embrace the complexity of family systems. Dr. Garber introduces a rubric that assists evaluators and those who rely upon evaluators' work to assure that every likely hypothesis has been considered in the course of formulating recommendations to the court. The rubric is not a test or assessment in and of itself, but instead standardizes how we approach complex relationship questions.

5pm - Wrap up and finish



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Saturday 15 May

7.30am - Breakfast with
Ben Garber, Steven Bradley, Bruce Smyth
(self-funded)

8.40am - Committee gathering - feedback and discussion

9am - Coffee

9.15am - **Bahrie Veliu**

Integrated Family Assessment Model

The Integrated Functional Assessment Model (IFAM) provides a structured framework for understanding complex parenting behaviour in Family Court assessment by integrating developmental, relational, systemic, forensic, and functional perspectives. This workshop will explore how competing functional hypotheses are assessed and tested, and how formulation informs evidence-based recommendations, intervention planning, and collaboration across professional roles.

10.15am - Morning Tea

10.45am - **Judge Black and Jennifer Wademan**

Judges and Lawyers: Cross Examination - What is helpful to the Court and Lawyer for Child

12.30pm - Closing and Feedback

1pm - Bon Voyage

BUT WAIT! There's more!!

Post Conference Workshop 2pm - 5pm: Dr Ben Garber

Ben will lead a specialised workshop designed for current and intending report writers. Using a real case and report as a foundation, he will guide participants through thoughtful approaches to both data collection and report writing, drawing on his extensive expertise in several key areas.



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Keynote Speakers

Dr Ben Garber

Ben is a psychologist and family law professional with extensive experience in the Family Court context. His work sits at the intersection of psychology and family law, with a particular focus on family separation, parenting, child development, complex family relationships and children's wellbeing. Ben brings together the complexities of family relationships, the science of psychology and the rigour of the law to maintain a clear, child-focused perspective and address the individual needs of each child. Ben has published hundreds of popular press articles, more than two dozen peer-reviewed and law review professional publications, chapters in foundational professional volumes, ten books on topics in child and family development, divorce, family law practice, and the dynamics of the conflicted family system, and a popular novel about the twisted dynamics of high conflict divorce.

Steven Bradley

Steven is an internationally recognised expert and keynote speaker with more than 24 years of experience in law enforcement and the investigation of crimes against persons, including sexual assault, child abuse, domestic violence, human trafficking and crimes against older people. He is widely recognised for his leadership at the intersection of technology and abuse and is a sought-after expert on stalking, cyberstalking, digital forensics and the role of law enforcement in responding to intimate partner violence.

Bruce Smyth

Bruce has worked as a social scientist in family law for almost three decades, including as a Senior Research Fellow at the Australian Institute of Family Studies before joining ANU in 2007. He has contributed to major family law research and policy initiatives and has received several prestigious awards, including the Stanley Cohen Distinguished Research Award (2018) and the Meyer Elkin Essay Award (2021). He is also an active member of the ANU Human Research Ethics Committee.



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