



FEDERAL MAGISTRATES COURT OF AUSTRALIA

Celebrating its 10th Anniversary



The Federal Magistrates Court of Australia celebrates 10 years

Since the Federal Magistrates Court of Australia was established ten years ago it has experienced significant growth in workload, judicial numbers and jurisdiction and it is now the nation's largest federal court.

From the Chief Federal Magistrate

Chief Federal Magistrate Pascoe AO said that he was extraordinarily proud of what has been achieved by the Court. "The evident success of the Federal Magistrates Court is measured not just by the volume of work which comes to it but also by the efficiency with which it manages that workload".



The establishment

The establishment of the Federal Magistrates Court marked a change in direction in the administration of justice at the federal level in Australia, as it was the first lower level trial court established at the federal level since the passage of the Judiciary Act in 1903. Applications were first filed in the Federal Magistrates Court of Australia on 23 June 2000 and the Court's first sittings were conducted on 3 July 2000.

The law

The Federal Magistrates Court of Australia (the Court) was established by the *Federal Magistrates Act 1999* (the FM Act) and its jurisdiction at inception was conferred by the *Federal Magistrates (Consequential Amendments) Act 1999*. These Acts received royal assent on 23 December 1999. The Court is an independent federal court under the Australian Constitution.

"All past and present members of the Court, their Associates and staff should be very proud of their achievements over the last ten years and look forward to the future with confidence." CFM Pascoe



The judiciary

Ten years ago in 2000, the Court started with its original Chief Federal Magistrate, the current Chief Justice of the Family Court, the Honourable Diana Bryant and nine other Federal Magistrates. There has since been a considerable increase in the membership of the Court which currently consists of 61 judicial officers.

Some interesting facts and figures

- As an example of the Court's expanded workload, in the Court's first full year of operation (2000-01) it received 36 435 applications. Eight years later that figure had more than doubled with 85 984 applications filed in the Court in 2008-09.
- The balance of family law work has evolved significantly since the inception of the Federal Magistrates Court and now over 80% of all family law applications (except those filed in WA) are filed in the Federal Magistrates Court with the Family Court now dealing with appeals and the most complex family law matters.
- In addition, the Court deals with the majority of bankruptcy applications and approximately 95% of all migration applications filed in the federal courts.
- In its family law jurisdiction in 2008-09, the Court finalised approximately 84% of matters within 6 months and 95% of all matters were finalised within 12 months. In the Court's general federal law jurisdiction in 2008-09 the Court finalised approximately 79% of matters within 6 months and 93% within 12 months.
- The Federal Magistrates Court regularly conducts regional circuits. Currently the Court circuits to 35 rural and regional locations throughout Australia.

The Court's wide jurisdiction

The jurisdiction of the Federal Magistrates Court has grown since its inception and currently includes family law and child support, administrative law, admiralty law, bankruptcy, copyright, human rights, industrial law, migration, privacy and trade practices. The Court shares its jurisdictions with the Family Court and the Federal Court.

General federal law

The Court has a number of specialist panels to ensure that those judicial officers sitting in particular areas of general federal law receive ongoing judicial education in those areas and can develop appropriate expertise.

The Federal Court of Australia can transfer any matter within its jurisdiction to the Federal Magistrates Court.