

ACCESS TO FAMILY JUSTICE: ANCHORING DEEPER, EXTENDING WIDER

FAMILY JUSTICE COURTS
ANNUAL REPORT 2016



ONE
JUDICIARY
UPHOLDING OUR VALUES



ANNUAL REPORT

2016

VISION

Justice that protects,
empowers, restores.

MISSION

Making justice accessible to
families and youth through
effective counselling,
mediation and adjudication.

VALUES

Every case, with fairness
Every outcome, a way forward
Every individual, with respect.



ABOUT OUR LOGO

The Family Justice Courts logo is a symbolic representation of shelter within the visual frame of a traditional courthouse. The outer maroon roof encapsulates the vision of the Family Justice Courts to be a source of justice that protects, empowers and restores individuals from troubled families. The inner roof reflects the commitment of those working within to build a vibrant, inclusive and cohesive community. An elegant typeface emphasises our aspiration to remain a modern and relevant, yet sturdy custodian of the rule of law.

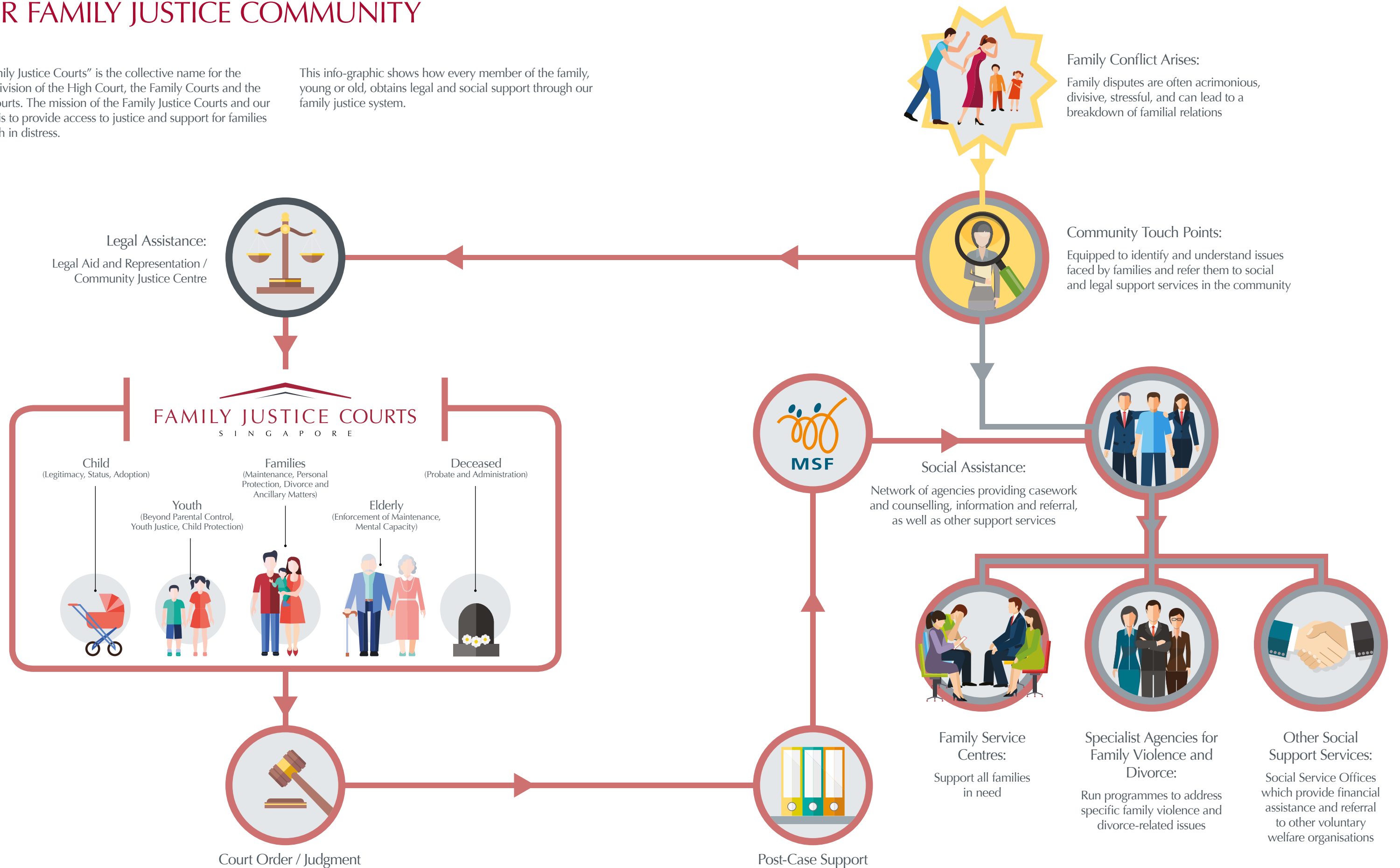
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OUR FAMILY JUSTICE COMMUNITY

The "Family Justice Courts" is the collective name for the Family Division of the High Court, the Family Courts and the Youth Courts. The mission of the Family Justice Courts and our partners is to provide access to justice and support for families and youth in distress.

This info-graphic shows how every member of the family, young or old, obtains legal and social support through our family justice system.



Family Conflict Arises:

Family disputes are often acrimonious, divisive, stressful, and can lead to a breakdown of familial relations

Community Touch Points:

Equipped to identify and understand issues faced by families and refer them to social and legal support services in the community

Social Assistance:

Network of agencies providing casework and counselling, information and referral, as well as other support services

Family Service Centres:

Support all families in need

Specialist Agencies for Family Violence and Divorce:

Run programmes to address specific family violence and divorce-related issues

Other Social Support Services:

Social Service Offices which provide financial assistance and referral to other voluntary welfare organisations

Legal Assistance:

Legal Aid and Representation / Community Justice Centre

FAMILY JUSTICE COURTS
SINGAPORE

Child
(Legitimacy, Status, Adoption)

Youth
(Beyond Parental Control, Youth Justice, Child Protection)

Families
(Maintenance, Personal Protection, Divorce and Ancillary Matters)

Elderly
(Enforcement of Maintenance, Mental Capacity)

Deceased
(Probate and Administration)

Court Order / Judgment

Post-Case Support

FOREWORD BY THE HONOURABLE THE CHIEF JUSTICE

It gives me great pleasure to present for the very first time, a *One Judiciary* annual report boxed set, which showcases the work of the Supreme Court, the State Courts and the Family Justice Courts sharing a common mission to superintend the administration of justice and make justice accessible to all. Themed “**Upholding Our Values**”, the reports detail the work of the three Courts and their initiatives that are underpinned by the values of fairness, accessibility, independence, integrity and impartiality.

The Judiciary will have to respond to an increasingly challenging global and economic climate. We must enhance the quality of our work even as we look to reduce the cost of litigating by simplifying processes where possible. On this front, we have introduced significant changes to our civil and criminal litigation processes. At the Family Justice Courts, a child maintenance matrix, based on actuarial data is also being devised to guide the resolution of cases involving children so that such disputes can be settled quickly and less acrimoniously.

On the international front, we are widening and strengthening our judicial networks. An International Advisory Council which I chair and comprising family judges from various jurisdictions provides the Family Justice Courts with many useful and diverse perspectives that will help us address present and future challenges.

I am also delighted by the success of the first judicial insolvency network conference involving judges from 10 jurisdictions which we hosted in October 2016. The conference resulted in the promulgation of guidelines for court-to-court communication and cooperation protocols. Following the meeting, Singapore and the United States Bankruptcy Court for the District of Delaware formally implemented the guidelines, with other jurisdictions expected to similarly adopt the guidelines.

Technological advancements will require the legal sector to rethink entire areas of practice. While this will likely prove to be disruptive, we should embrace and welcome the change as technology can potentially improve processes, resulting in greater effectiveness at a lower cost for society. The Courts of the Future Taskforce will make recommendations to get

our Courts “future-ready” while the Singapore Academy of Law has launched the Legal Technology Vision to help the legal sector adopt and implement technological changes.

The Supreme Court and State Courts, together with NTU SPIRIT Centre, have embarked on the development of an Intelligent Case Retrieval System. The aim is to have a more effective retrieval of key legal documents in decided cases for road traffic accidents and personal injury matters. Besides making it easier and quicker for legal research to be performed, it will add to the quality of decision making and judgment writing for judges. The technology developed through this platform may even perform other legal functions, such as Case Summarisation and Logic Reasoning. This will lead the way to a more sophisticated legal research, advisory and decision support system in the future.

The Judiciary is on the cusp of change and these are exciting times. As we implement changes, we must continue to put the interest of Singaporeans first and ensure that justice is within their reach. I am confident that my colleagues on the Supreme Court Bench as well as the judicial officers and administrators from the State Courts and Family Justice Courts will continue to work hard in ensuring effective access to justice for all. I am deeply grateful for their dedication and commitment to this extremely meaningful cause.

I hope this *One Judiciary* Annual Report will give you a glimpse into the work of the Courts in Singapore. Together, we seek to administer a world class judiciary and make justice accessible for all Singaporeans.



SUNDARESH MENON
Chief Justice
Supreme Court of Singapore

FOREWORD BY
THE HONOURABLE
THE CHIEF JUSTICE

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDING JUDGE OF THE FAMILY JUSTICE COURTS

2016 was a productive year for the Family Justice Courts (FJC), consolidating upon the changes first brought in by the establishment of these Courts on 1 October 2014 as a set of specialist family courts comprising the High Court (Family Division), Family Courts and Youth Courts, and strengthening the new family justice paradigm.

Assistance for Litigants In Person

The Community Justice Centre (CJC) has expanded the pool of volunteers serving court users so that the users who benefited from the scheme increased from 2,335 in 2014 to 2,759 in 2015. CJC also assisted to provide onsite free legal advice to more family court users. For 2015, the number of users seeking legal advice increased every quarter to the present figure of over 200 per quarter, accounting for 30% of all of CJC's load. The quality of volunteers in family justice has increased: in-house counsel from corporates are now participating. This in-house counsel pool will be further expanded in 2017.

Court-Directed Counselling and Mediation

Because of the continuing relationships at stake and the likelihood of other issues such as mental wellness, counselling and mediation is often appropriate. Within the court system, all cases where parties have children under 21 years old are dealt with by the Family Dispute Resolution Division (FDRD). Some cases require counselling intervention, and the joint judge-mediator and court counsellor model is employed. In 2016, the FJC, working with the Singapore Mediation Centre (SMC), put in place a scheme where financial matters are sent to the SMC or other private mediators, building upon the national family accreditation model that was put in place by the FJC and the SMC earlier. The FJC works closely with the SMC and other mediation centres in Singapore and abroad. A Cross-Border Mediation Framework was introduced in 2016.

Implementation of the Child Inclusive Dispute Resolution Process

The Courts' multi-disciplinary mediation and counselling services have always focused on the child, helping parents to come to arrangements that are best suited for the child. In 2016, after a pilot, FDRD has added Child Inclusive Dispute Resolution Process in all suitable cases. This child inclusion process goes a step further to involve the child, with first a developmental consultation with the child to understand his experience of his parents' conflict, and then a therapeutic feedback conversation with the parents. The intention is to support and re-align co-parenting by focusing parents on the

experience of their children and thereby effecting behaviour change, rather than just a settled agreement. Settlement rates were at 80% for some or all children's issues in 2016.

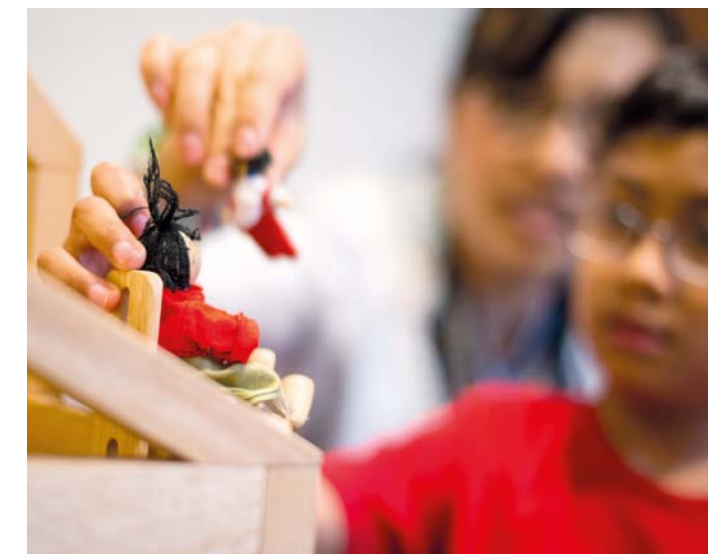
Specialised Case Management and Judge-Led Approach

Case management mechanisms put in place since October 2014 began to yield results in 2016. The number of divorce cases disposed of (including ancillaries) within the same year it was filed increased from 46% in 2012 to 74% in 2016. For cases disposed of in the same year, the average time taken for divorce cases to be granted Interim Judgment has been reduced from 68.6 days (more than 2 months) in 2012 to 53.1 days (less than 2 months) in 2016. The average time taken for Final Judgment to be granted has reduced from 155.2 days (5.2 months) in 2012 to 114.6 days (3.8 months) in 2016.

Building upon earlier docketing pilots, in 2016 the Individual Docketing System was set up to docket cases more comprehensively, to ensure that a single judge manages a case from beginning to end. This has resulted in more effective case handling and more certainty to litigants.

The Family Justice Rules allow judges to take a proactive approach in managing evidence, affidavits and witnesses. In child matters, the Rules allowed for the appointment of a single expert. In 2016, the Rules were enhanced to provide for single experts in other circumstances, such as for adults who are vulnerable by reason of mental capacity, or in matters of forensic

MESSAGE FROM
THE PRESIDING JUDGE OF
THE FAMILY JUSTICE COURTS



Focused on the child's best interests

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDING JUDGE OF THE FAMILY JUSTICE COURTS

accounting. Amendments were also made to enhance the maintenance and protection processes, in probate matters, and other miscellaneous issues.

Maintenance Enforcement Regime

Our maintenance work engenders challenges of respondents who are unable to pay maintenance ordered. Under the existing framework, the Court may make orders to require a respondent to meet his obligations, ranging from undergoing financial counselling, monthly repayments, terms of imprisonment, to attachment of earnings for failure to pay in compliance with court orders. In doing so, the Court differentiates between maintenance debtors who are genuinely unable to pay, and recalcitrant maintenance debtors who deliberately choose not to meet their obligations. This task is made more challenging as parties who are acting in person are unable to marshal and present evidence.



Enhancing the maintenance regime

In 2016, the FJC and the Ministry for Social and Family Development (MSF) worked together to appoint Maintenance Record Officers (MROs). In such cases where a respondent raises an inability to pay, the MROs are asked to investigate the respondent's or both parties' financial circumstances and submit their findings to the judge dealing with the matter. Should parties refuse to cooperate in the MRO's investigations, the MRO will then apply to the Court for the production of relevant documents. The MRO's findings will be made available to parties and the MRO can be cross-examined on his findings. The MRO will also be on hand to provide assistance to needy parties, be they maintenance debtors or creditors. The MRO also acts as a liaison officer between the Court, the CJC and the MSF where needy parties may receive financial assistance in deserving cases. With the MRO, the Court is better equipped to carry out its role in the maintenance enforcement regime. This scheme will be further expanded in 2017.

Parenting Coordination

The FJC introduced a Parenting Coordination pilot near the end of 2016, to aid parents in joint parenting. Current research educates us that children require more time than initially thought to regain their emotional equilibrium after divorce. Where there is on-going conflict between parents around the court access and care arrangements, this makes it harder for children. With high-conflict parents, disagreements frequently occur on how access is to be carried out by the non-resident parent. For example, the location for access, the timing for handover of the children, or whether the children are allowed a playdate on the non-resident parent's access day. While these disagreements may appear to be trivial to the uninitiated, they can be a significant source of acrimony between divorced parents. Children, caught in the middle, suffer developmental harm

from the mental stress engendered. Parenting Coordinators provide practical help to resolve access issues and avoid the parents engaging in a cycle of litigation.

Pre and Post Court Assistance

In 2016, the FJC worked with the MSF, and the Divorce Support Specialist Agencies (DSSAs) for parties in all cases with children under 14 to receive appropriate information and referral to help agencies before entry into the court system. This ensures that they are able to get help within the eco-system. Where parties reach agreement prior to filing, they may use a simplified system of doing so. Post-divorce, judges may now also send cases to the DSSAs for counselling, and for the Child-In-Between programme.

Family Law Review Working Group

The Family Law Review Working Group concluded their report on the Guardianship of Infants Act. The report made recommendations that seek to enhance and rationalise the law in relation to the care of children and guardianship, and to bolster coherence in the legal framework between parenting and guardianship; a change of name to the Care of Children Act was also suggested. The report has been submitted to the Minister for Law for consideration and I thank the members of the Working Group for their valuable contribution to this field of child law.

International Network of Judiciaries

The FJC's cases are increasingly international in nature. Out of all the divorce cases filed, the percentage of international divorces involving at least one party who is a foreigner increased from 31% in 2011 to 40% in 2016. The FJC actively works with and learns from other judiciaries. In September 2016, the FJC hosted a series of events that brought together internationally renowned family judges,

experts in family law and social science, and participants from many countries. The FJC's International Advisory Council, chaired by The Honourable the Chief Justice and comprising leading judges, legal and social science experts and academics, held its first meeting. The highlight of the week was the FJC's inaugural International Family Law Conference, co-organised with the Law Society of Singapore, the Singapore Academy of Law, and the Ministry for Social and Family Development. The Conference had some 450 participants. On its sidelines, the International Hague Network of Judges and ASEAN judges held a Symposium with about 100 participants on Cross-Border Child Issues, and the Council of ASEAN Chief Justices' Working Group on Cross Border Disputes Involving Children met to discuss issues particular to the ASEAN region.

We have been privileged, within the FJC, to have a dedicated team; within our *One Judiciary*, to have wider and deeper infrastructure; and in the wider family justice eco-system, to have an excellent bedrock of stakeholders, agencies on the ground, family lawyers, academics and legal and social science experts. As we move forward together to another year ahead, I am deeply appreciative of our judges, counsellors and administrators; the *One Judiciary* team; and the family justice community's commitment and contributions.

JUDICIAL COMMISSIONER
VALERIE THEAN

OVERVIEW OF THE FAMILY JUSTICE SYSTEM

The Family Justice Courts (FJC) are established pursuant to the Family Justice Act which was passed by Parliament on 4 August 2014. The Family Justice Act was enacted based on the recommendations of the Committee for Family Justice which was formed in 2013 to review how Singapore’s family justice system may be reformed to address the needs of youth and families in distress.

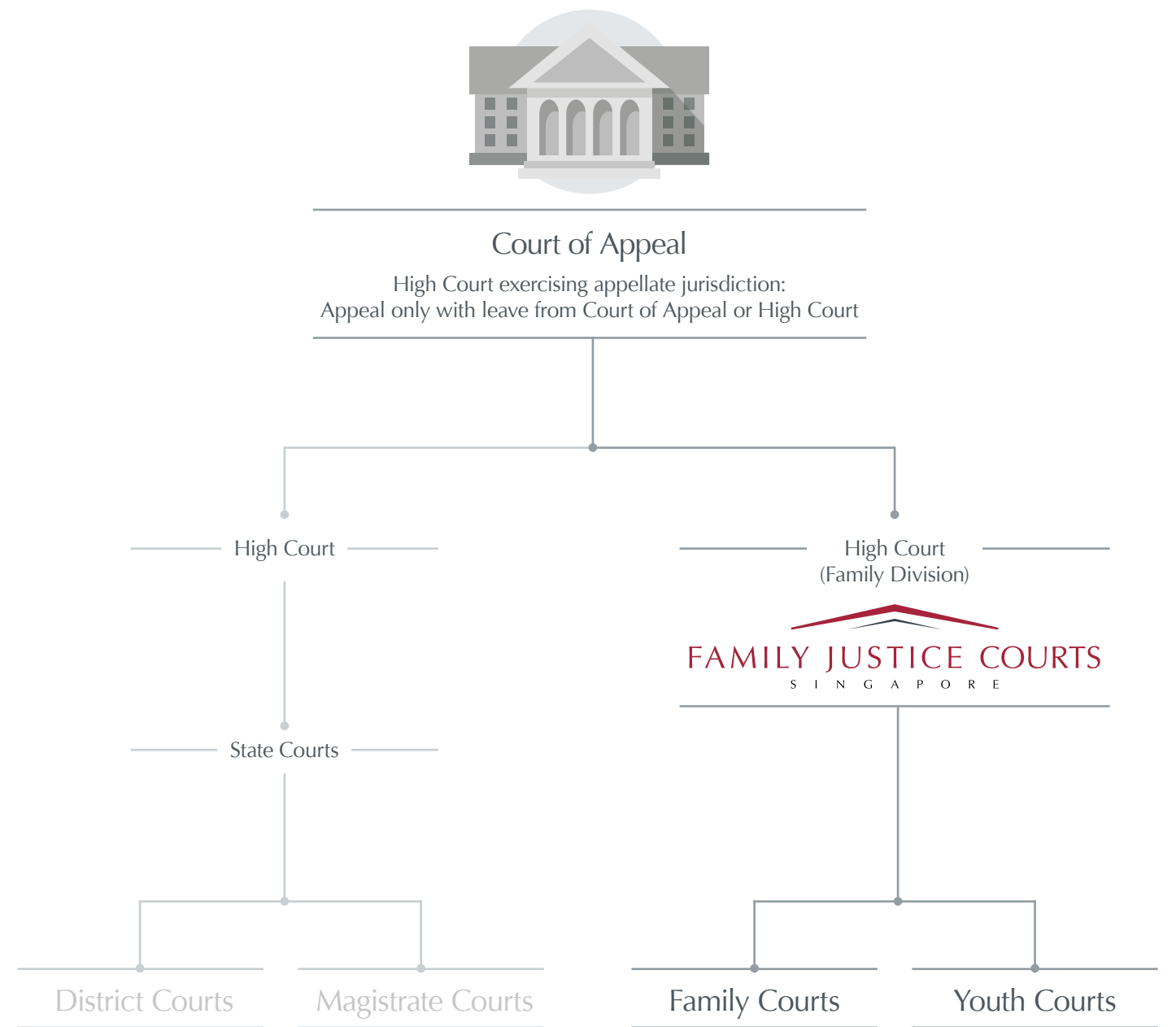
The FJC is a restructure of our court system to better serve litigants. By bringing together all family-related work under a specialised body of courts, we would be able to frame disputes from the perspective of families and the individuals within. This is in contrast to other types of cases which are traditionally dealt with in an adversarial manner. In addition, we would be able to provide a suite of family-specific services, enhance processes and identify relevant training programmes that develop family-specific skills in judges, lawyers and other family practitioners.

The “Family Justice Courts” is the collective name for a body of courts which comprise the Family Division of the High Court, the Family Courts and the Youth Courts. These Courts are administered by the Presiding Judge of the FJC. The FJC will hear the full suite of family-related cases including all divorce and related matters, family violence cases, adoption and guardianship cases, Youth Court cases, applications for deputyship under the Mental Capacity Act, and probate and succession matters.

FJC deals with cases involving the following legislations:

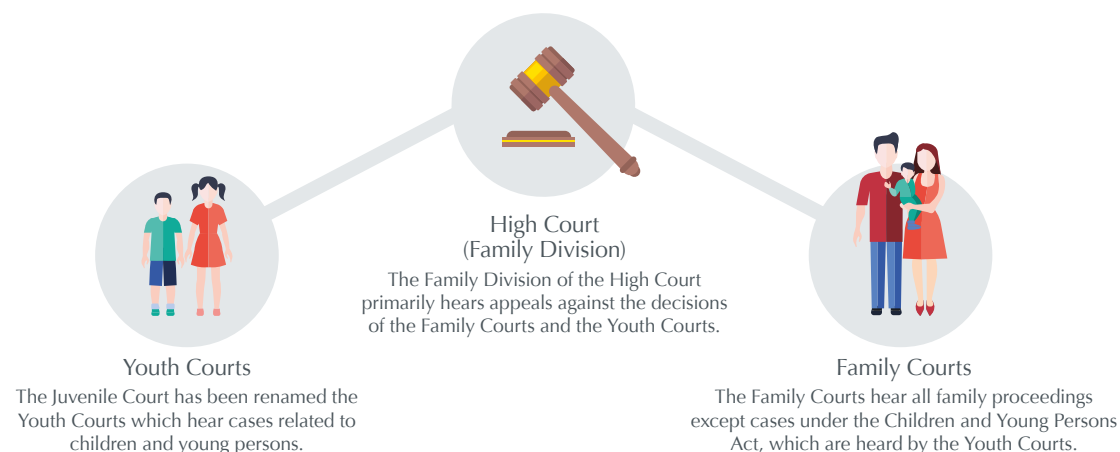
- Administration of Muslim Law Act (Cap. 3)
- Adoption of Children Act (Cap. 4)
- Children and Young Persons Act (Cap. 38)
- Criminal Procedure Code (Cap. 68)
- Family Justice Act 2014 (Act 27 of 2014)
- Guardianship of Infants Act (Cap. 122)
- Inheritance (Family Provision) Act (Cap. 138)
- International Child Abduction Act (Cap. 143C)
- Intestate Succession Act (Cap. 146)
- Legitimacy Act (Cap. 162)
- Maintenance of Parents Act (Cap. 167B)
- Maintenance Orders (Facilities for Enforcement) Act (Cap. 168)
- Maintenance Orders (Reciprocal Enforcement) Act (Cap. 169)
- Mental Capacity Act (Cap. 177A)
- Mental Health (Care and Treatment) Act (Cap. 178A)
- Probate and Administration Act (Cap. 251)
- Status of Children (Assisted Reproduction Technology) Act 2013 (Act 16 of 2013)
- Supreme Court of Judicature Act (Cap. 322)
- Voluntary Sterilization Act (Cap. 347)
- Wills Act (Cap 352)
- Women’s Charter (Cap. 353)

The diagram below illustrates how the FJC now operate as a separate set of specialist courts within the overall Court structure in Singapore.



- Overseen by the Presiding Judge of the FJC
- Hear all matrimonial, probate, adoption, mental capacity and youth issues
- Centralised Registry

More than a change of name, the FJC is a fundamental restructure of our court system, creating a separate and specialist body of courts to manage the full suite of family related disputes.



The wide-ranging family jurisdiction incorporated probate and succession from the Civil Division of the State Courts and the High Court from January 2015.

ORGANISATION CHART

HIGH COURT (FAMILY DIVISION)



Presiding Judge

The High Court (Family Division) consists of the Presiding Judge of the FJC, Judges of the High Court (Family Division), Assistant Registrars and Court Administrators of the FJC.

FAMILY COURTS & YOUTH COURTS



Deputy Presiding Judge/Registrar

The Family Courts and the Youth Courts consist of the Judicial Officers, Counsellors, Social Workers and Court Administrators of the FJC.



Chief Executive Supreme Court



<p>Family</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Divorce Probate Adoption Mental Capacity International Child Cases 	<p>Family Protection & Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Family Violence Maintenance Youth Arrest Beyond Parental Control Child Protection 	<p>Family Dispute Resolution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alternative Dispute Resolution Services Maintenance Mediation Counselling & Psychological Services 	<p>Strategic Planning & Research Division</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning & Policy Performance Management Research Strategic Relations & Programmes Judicial Capability Development 	<p>*Corporate Support Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finance & Procurement Infrastructure Interpretation Services Human Resources Administration Security Office of Public Affairs Computer & Information Systems
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* Centralised support services with the Supreme Court

HIGH COURT (FAMILY DIVISION)

JUDICIAL COMMISSIONERS



Left to Right: Judicial Commissioner **Debbie Ong** | Judicial Commissioner **Valerie Thean**, Presiding Judge of the FJC | Judicial Commissioner **Foo Tuat Yien**

SENIOR MANAGEMENT



Seated from left: **District Judge Jen Koh**, Deputy Registrar | **Ms Juthika Ramanathan**, Chief Executive (Office of the Chief Justice) | **Judicial Commissioner Valerie Thean**, Presiding Judge of the FJC | **Mrs Clara Goh**, Deputy Chief Executive (Office of the Chief Justice) | **District Judge Joyce Low**, Group Manager (Family Protection and Support Division) and Principal Director (Strategic Planning and Research Division)

Standing from left: **Deputy Presiding Judge Chia Wee Kiat**, Registrar (FJC) | **Mr Vincent Hoong**, Registrar (Supreme Court) | **District Judge Kevin Ng**, Group Manager (Family Dispute Resolution Division)

Not in picture: **Principal District Judge Muhammad Hidir Abdul Majid** (Family Protection and Support Division) | **District Judge Toh Wee San**, Group Manager (Family Division)

DEVELOPING THE LAW AND PROCESS INNOVATIONS IN THE FJC

I. CASE SUMMARIES 2016 (HIGHLIGHTS)

A. Division of Matrimonial Assets

1. Providing the default operative date to determine the pool of matrimonial assets (*ARY v ARX* [2016] 2 SLR 686)

The Court of Appeal determined that the starting or default position for the operative date to determine the pool of matrimonial assets is the date on which interim judgment is granted. This is because interim judgment puts an end to the marriage contract and indicates that the parties no longer intend to participate in the joint accumulation of assets.

However, the Court of Appeal also held that the Court retained the discretion in appropriate cases to depart from the starting point, such as where the matrimonial assets have been unjustly depleted. On the facts of the case, the Court found that the appropriate operative date in that case was the date of the ancillary matters hearing. This was because, since interim judgment was granted, the wife had continued to care for the children, enabling the husband to acquire a tremendous amount of salary and bonuses that greatly increased the pool of matrimonial assets.

2. The appropriate ancillary financial relief for homemakers in long marriages (*TNK v TNL* [2016] SGHCF 7)

In this case, the High Court considered whether the structured approach in *ANJ v ANK* affected previous caselaw which tended towards an equal division of matrimonial assets in respect of long marriages. The Court considered the caselaw to this effect, and found that it was not inconsistent with the application of the *ANJ v ANK* structured approach.

On the facts, the Court took the view that equal division was the just and equitable result, bearing in mind the consistent financial and non-financial contributions made by both the parties. It was also in line with the parties' understanding that they would each take sole charge respectively of the financial and non-financial aspects of running the family unit.

3. When to use the "classification approach" for matrimonial assets (*TNC v TND* [2016] 3 SLR 1172)

The High Court considered when it might be appropriate to treat different classes of assets differently in the division

of matrimonial assets. Apart from the quintessential matrimonial assets (such as the matrimonial home), there could be other categories of assets. The High Court held that the classification methodology should be used if some of the matrimonial assets are not wholly the gains of the co-operative partnership of efforts that the marriage represents. Based on the facts, the High Court decided that a number of properties should be set aside from the majority of the matrimonial assets and divided differently. In dividing the properties which were set aside, the Court took into account the husband's higher contributions to those particular properties.

B. Maintenance

1. Nominal maintenance not to be awarded as matter of course (*ATE v ATD* [2016] SGCA 2)

The Court of Appeal held that nominal maintenance for ex-wives ought not to be ordered as a matter of course. It is insufficient for an ex-wife to make a bare claim that her circumstances *may* change as basis for such maintenance, otherwise the ex-husband will wind up a general insurer of sorts.

2. Duty of non-parent to maintain child (*TDT v TDS* and another appeal and another matter [2016] SGCA 35)

The Court of Appeal held that the duty of a non-parent to maintain a child under section 70 (Cap 353, 2009 Rev Ed), arises when (i) he/she has "accepted" the child into the family, *i.e.* that the non-parent has voluntarily assumed parental responsibility for the child, and (ii) the biological parents have failed to adequately maintain the child. The non-parent entering into marriage with the other parent knowing of the child's existence is *prima facie* evidence of acceptance. The duty would ordinarily cease when interim judgment has been granted or the parent has taken the child away from the non-parent.

3. Effect of post-nuptial agreements on ancillary orders for child maintenance (*AUA v ATZ* [2016] SGCA 41)

The Court of Appeal held that whilst significant weight would be given to the provisions of such deeds where they related to proprietary entitlements, where the interests of the child were impacted in the areas of child maintenance and custody/access, the Court assumes a more prominent custodial role. The Court will not give effect to such provisions unless it is satisfied they are in the child's best interests.



ENHANCING
ACCESS TO JUSTICE

DEVELOPING THE LAW AND PROCESS INNOVATIONS IN THE FJC

I. CASE SUMMARIES HIGHLIGHTS 2016

C. General issues

Setting aside of interim judgment under section 99(2) can only be invoked by non-parties (*Yap Chai Ling and anor v Hou Wa Yi* [2016] SGCA 39)

The Court of Appeal upheld the High Court's ruling that section 99(2) (Cap 353, 2009 Rev Ed) can only be invoked

by non-parties to the marriage. This was due to the historical origin of the section's equivalent in the UK. Besides, allowing parties to mount an attack on a *decree nisi* or interim judgment would allow parties to re-litigate matter and engage the doctrine of *res judicata*.

II. LAW REFORM

A key focus of the FJC is the reform of laws that impact families and youth.

The Family Law Review Working Group (FLRWG) is chaired by Judicial Commissioner Valerie Thean and its members include officers from the relevant Ministries, leading family law academics and senior family law practitioners.

• Recommendations for Guardianship Reform in Singapore

1. The Guardianship of Infants Act (GIA) has its roots in a 1934 Straits Settlements Ordinance. Since that time, the Women's Charter (Cap 353, 2009 Rev Ed) and the Courts have placed a stronger focus on parental responsibility and the welfare of the child.¹ The United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child* has also gained widespread acceptance internationally. In keeping with the current jurisprudence of Singapore's Court of Appeal² and developing international norms, reform is suggested by FLRWG in two broad areas.
 - i. Delineating "parental responsibility" by reference to a non-exhaustive list;
 - ii. Providing a statutory definition of a "guardian" and clarifying "guardianship responsibility";
 - iii. Emphasising the co-operative nature of parental and guardianship responsibility by including a provision to state such a principle; and
 - iv. Refining the appointment and revocation of testamentary guardians.
2. The first broad area will bring greater clarity to the law on guardianship by introducing a framework applicable to parents, guardians, their relationships and responsibilities, as follows:
 - i. Suggesting a statutory definition of "child" for the purposes of the Act;
 - ii. Emphasising the welfare principle by including a provision on this principle with a non-exhaustive list of factors a court should consider when applying the principle;
 - iii. Providing for the grant of specific powers relating to the care and upbringing of a child, to enable a wider range of remedies for the care of the child;
 - iv. Providing a wider *locus standi* provision to better support the specific care orders available under the Act; and
 - v. Renaming the GIA to the "Care of Children Act", to better convey the scope of the augmented Act.
3. The second set of proposals will enhance the welfare of the child, in the following manner:
 - i. Suggesting a statutory definition of "child" for the purposes of the Act;
 - ii. Emphasising the welfare principle by including a provision on this principle with a non-exhaustive list of factors a court should consider when applying the principle;
 - iii. Providing for the grant of specific powers relating to the care and upbringing of a child, to enable a wider range of remedies for the care of the child;
 - iv. Providing a wider *locus standi* provision to better support the specific care orders available under the Act; and
 - v. Renaming the GIA to the "Care of Children Act", to better convey the scope of the augmented Act.
4. The FLRWG is of the view that these changes are needful, at this time, for a legislative platform that advances well the best interests of children in Singapore.

¹ Section 46 highlights the responsibility of parents to cooperate for the sake of their children.

² *CX v CY* (minor: custody and access) [2005] 3 SLR(R) 690 at 700 – 701; *AUA v ATZ* [2016] SGCA 41.

• Changes to the Women's Charter

In February 2016, the Women's Charter (Amendment) Bill 2016 was passed in Parliament. Incapacitated husbands and ex-husbands are now allowed to apply for spousal maintenance where there is a clear need. The amendments were passed in April and took effect on 1 July. The following are amongst the amendments made:

- i. Mandating divorcing couples with minor children to attend a mandatory parenting programme before they can file for divorce. Prior to that, the divorcing parties only need to attend mandatory mediation and counselling, after a writ of divorce has been filed;
- ii. Where one of the parties is below the age of 21, the party has to attend a marriage preparation programme. Previously, the programme is targeted only to couples where one party is 18 or under, or where both parties are minors;
- iii. Allowing for spousal maintenance to be extended to incapacitated husbands or ex-husbands;
- iv. Making a marriage void if one party to the marriage is convicted of the marriage of convenience offence under the Immigration Act;
- v. Prohibiting the publication or broadcast of any information in the mass and social media that will reveal or is likely to identify the location of a shelter, residential facility, or its residents; and
- vi. Making it an offence for persons in Singapore to operate or maintain in Singapore any website or other remote communication service that offers, or facilitates the provision of sexual services in return for payment.

• A new Vulnerable Adults Bill

The Vulnerable Adults Bill is currently being looked into together with the Ministry for Social and Family Development. The Act seeks to safeguard vulnerable adults from abuse, neglect or self-neglect through the issuance of care and protection orders and restraining orders by our courts. The draft Bill has been issued for public consultation in 2016.

• On-going Refinement of the Family Justice Rules

The introduction of the Family Justice Rules on 1 January 2015 was an important milestone for the FJC. For the first time in Singapore's legal history, all procedural rules for family proceedings were consolidated in one composite document. With this development, the FJC is now in a position to review and adapt these rules to cater to the unique nature of family proceedings.

The Family Justice Rules allow judges to take a proactive approach in managing evidence, affidavits and witnesses. In child matters, the Rules allowed for the appointment of a single expert. In 2016, the Rules were enhanced to provide for single experts in other kinds of matters. Amendments were also made to enhance the maintenance and protection processes, in probate matters, and other miscellaneous issues.

• Proposed Amendments to Legal Profession (Professional Conduct) Rules (PCR)

1. In some other jurisdictions, specific rules and/or guidelines have been promulgated to provide legal practitioners with a framework for the practice of family law. In Singapore, the PCR presently provides specific rules for the conduct of criminal proceedings, but not family law proceedings.³
2. In the last quarter of 2016, the FJC and the Law Society's Family Law Practice Committee formed a Workgroup to look into new family-specific rules which would thereafter be proposed for the consideration of the PCR Working Group. The proposed introduction of new rules in the PCR relating specifically to the practice of family law will provide legal practitioners with a set of principles to guide them in their practice. This is particularly relevant and important given that the practice of family law often presents some of the most difficult ethical issues which face lawyers, given the sometimes divergent interests of their clients and the children involved in the dispute.
3. The broad intention of the proposed amendments is to:
 - (a) Reduce the adversarial nature of family proceedings by ensuring that practitioners consider and advise

³ See paragraphs 14 and 15 of the PCR.

DEVELOPING THE LAW AND PROCESS INNOVATIONS IN THE FJC

II. LAW REFORM 2016

- their clients on alternative dispute resolution options; and
- (b) Ensure that the interests of any children involved in family proceedings are considered by practitioners. In brief, the proposed amendments seek to:
- i. Ensure that practitioners take a constructive and conciliatory/non-confrontational approach towards the resolution of family proceedings;
 - ii. Ensure that practitioners inform their clients about alternative dispute resolution options such as mediation and counselling, and advise their clients to consider an amicable resolution of family proceedings whenever it is possible to do so on a reasonable basis;
 - iii. Where a matter has to be adjudicated, ensure that practitioners advise their clients to adopt a constructive and reasonable approach to the resolution of the dispute;
 - iv. To make it clear that practitioners have a duty to advise their clients to consider the welfare of, and potentially adverse impact of the family proceedings on, any children who may be involved in the family proceedings; and
 - v. Set out the duties of practitioners in relation to potential conflicts of interest, such as when they have been appointed as Child Representatives.
4. A “Best Practices Guide for Family Law Practitioners” is also being developed by the family lawyers of the working group. It aims to set out useful guidelines for legal practitioners in the conduct of family proceedings in Singapore, and cover best practices in relation to a family lawyer’s dealings with the court, clients, fellow practitioners and litigants in person, amongst other things.

III. STREAMLINED PROCESSES

• Child Inclusive Dispute Resolution Process

Moving from child-focused conversations with parties in dispute, the FJC will in suitable cases deepen the interactions by adopting a child inclusive dispute resolution process. This initiative seeks to ensure that the views of children, as affected parties, are included into the court process in a sensitive way that safeguards and aids their development.

In 2016, 62 cases went through child inclusive counselling. Out of those cases, 80% of them had at least one or all children’s issues settled by the time they completed their mediation.

• Individual Docketing System

In tandem with the unique approach stated by the Chief Justice at the opening of the FJC in October 2014, the FJC

commenced docketing for selected categories of cases to designated judges so that they can be more familiar with the issues confronting the parties and be able to manage the case from start to end, ensuring better outcomes for parties who may have multiple applications and proceedings in court.

The approach also helped in expediting the disposal of cases as the judge would lead the pace of the case and control the timelines based on the complexity of the case. This has resulted in faster clearance of cases pending before the Court.

The Court reported an increase in the number of divorce cases disposed of (including ancillaries) within the same year it was filed; from 46% in 2012 to 74% in 2016⁴ while cases that proceeded onto contested Ancillary Matters hearing saw a drop⁵.

⁴ For cases disposed of in the same year, the average time taken for divorce cases to be granted Interim Judgment has been reduced by a quarter, from 68.6 days (more than 2 months) in 2012 to 53.1 days (less than 2 months) in 2016. The average time taken for Final Judgment to be granted has also reduced by a quarter from 155.2 days (5.2 months) in 2012 to 114.6 days (3.8 months) in 2016.

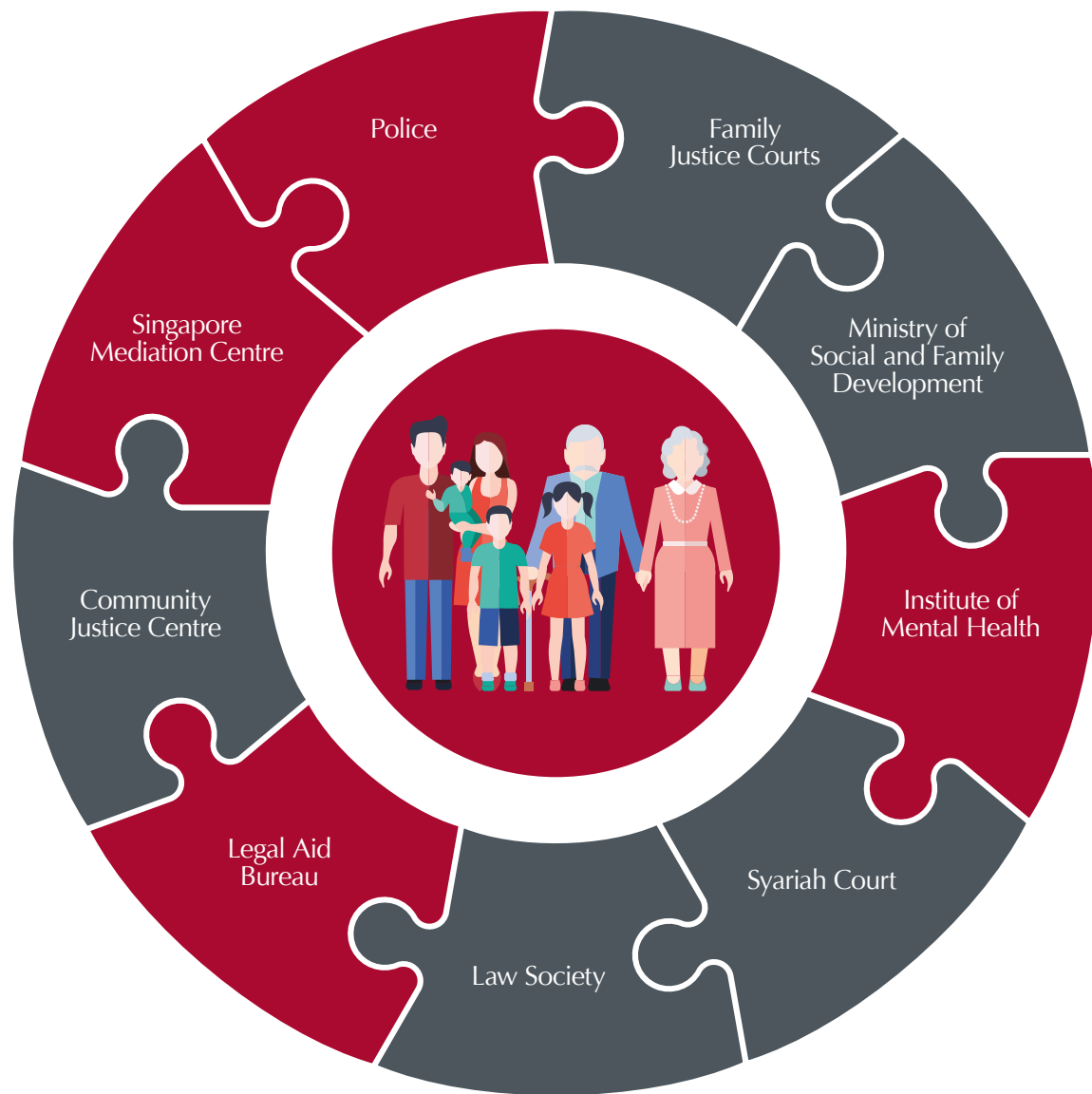
⁵ A comparison of the 2012 and 2014 cohorts of cases also indicates a drop in the cases that proceeded onto contested Ancillary Matters (AM). In 2012, 524 AM cases were contested out of 6,275 cases filed. In the 2014 cohort, only 429 AMs were contested out of 6,019 divorces.



STRENGTHENING OUR INTEGRATED SUPPORT NETWORK

I. INCREASED SUPPORT

The Courts come into the frame of family life at a critical juncture. While each case has its unique complexities, the FJC's approach is to seek to use the moment to protect the vulnerable, empower individuals to resolve their disputes with a sustainable outcome, and to restore viable relationships. Yet we do not do this alone. Working with our partners, we hope to provide holistic, multi-disciplinary support to families and youth in distress and prevent escalation of the dispute as early as possible and after court resolution, to support them in finding new pathways ahead. Our network comprises -



- **Pilot Project on Parenting Coordination**

Recognising a need to assist parents in their transition after a divorce, in particular, in the area of settling the access and care arrangements for their children, the FJC piloted a project to have court appointed Parenting Coordinators provide practical help to resolve child access issues focusing on the best interests of the child. 24 lawyers have undergone basic training in Parenting Coordination and assisted in the design of the scheme.

- **Strengthening the Enforcement of Maintenance**

Enforcement of maintenance was strengthened with the introduction of the Maintenance Record Officers (MROs) scheme. Working in conjunction with the Ministry of Social and Family Development, the MRO is appointed by the Court in contested enforcement cases and his/her role is to assist the Court in ascertaining the respondent's ability to pay the maintenance ordered. The pilot commenced in the second half of 2016, targeted at repeat enforcement cases where parties are divorced, unrepresented and the particular case included the provision of maintenance for a minor child aged 14 years and below.

- **Child Representative**

A Child Representative (CR) represents a child's best interests and does his/her best to ensure that is the focus of any decision relating to the child. The FJC can order that a CR be appointed in cases where the Court considers it necessary for a child's welfare and wellbeing. The CR represents the voice of the child as well as presents an objective assessment of the arrangements which are in the best interests of the child. There are currently 26 CRs since its inception on 1 October 2014.



CR training programme conducted by Ms Kylie Beckhause



CR training participant, Mr Imran H Khwaja raising a question



Mr Yap Teong Liang sharing his views at the session

BUILDING COMPETENCIES

I. WITHIN THE FAMILY JUSTICE COURTS

The FJC has embarked on programmes and training to increase understanding and build competencies both within the organisation as well as in the community.

• List of Training Programmes Conducted by External Trainers

S/N	Topic	Speakers/Trainer	
1	Role of Police in Management of Family Violence	Mr She Zhaozuo Assistant Superintendent of Police, Operations Officer Community Involvement Division Singapore Police Force	
2	Moving Beyond Acrimony: Using Parenting Coordination Effectively	Dr Debra K. Carter, Ph.D Chief Clinical Officer National Cooperative Parenting Centre Florida, USA	
3	Project Contact	Ms Karen Sik Senior Principal Clinical Psychologist Office of Chief Psychologist Ministry of Social & Family Development	Mrs Chong Cheh Hoon Assistant Director Family Education & Support
4	Overview of the English Family Justice System Including Reflections on the 1980 Hague Convention	Sir Mathew Thorpe Retired Lord Justice of Appeal Courts of Appeal of England & Wales	
5	Docketing - The Australian Experience	Judge Michael Baumann Federal Circuit Court of Australia	
6	Focus on Assets : • Valuation of Assets • Tracking of Assets • Profiling	Mr Kheng Tek Chan Partner, Forensic Services Mr Kwok Wui San Partner PwC Singapore	Mr Kok Keong Lie Partner, Transactions
7	Voice Coaching	Ms Petrina Kow Speech Coach, Public Speaking & Voice Acting Coach Art of Voice Company Pte Ltd	
8	Parenting Pact and Child in Between - What happens?	Mrs Chong Cheh Hoon Assistant Director Family Education & Support Ms Nellie Mok Senior Social Worker HELP Family Services Centre Ministry of Social & Family Development	Mr Tony Leong Assistant Director Centre for Family Harmony @ Commonwealth
9	Child Representative Training	Ms Kylie Beckhouse Acting Deputy CEO Family Law Practice Legal Aid New South Wales	AP John Wong Vice-Chair Medical Board (Education) Head & Senior Consultant Department of Psychological Medicine National University Hospital
10	Suicide and Serious Violence Risk Assessment & Managing Them in Court Context	Dr Derrick Yeo Consultant Psychiatrist General & Forensic Psychiatry Institute of Mental Health	

II. IN THE COMMUNITY

• Certification Programme for Family Mediators

The FJC together with the Singapore Mediation Centre (SMC) and the Singapore International Mediation Institute (SIMI) has established the Singapore Family Mediation Training and Certificate Framework. To date, there are 72 specialist family mediators.

With effect from 1 October 2016, in partnership with the FJC, the SMC will be one of the service providers for suitable family cases ordered by the Courts to attend private mediation.



Working in collaboration with SMC and CJC



Trainee officer examining the case check-list

• Divorce Support Specialist Agencies

The FJC worked with the Ministry of Social and Family Development and the Divorce Support Specialist Agencies (DSSAs) to support families in the event of issues arising post-divorce. For example the court-mandated Supervised Exchange & Supervised Visitation (SESV), set-up on 1 April 2016. It is for cases where there are difficulties with access handover or where access has to be supervised. The FJC had referred 96 families to DSSAs for supervised access and/or related services last year. Another programme, the Mandatory Parenting Programme gazetted 1 December 2016 is also conducted by counsellors from DSSAs. This is a one-to-one consultation session for parents with minor children before they file for divorce.

• Providing Support for Litigants in Person

The FJC partnered with the Community Justice Centre (CJC) to meet the needs of the increasing number of Litigants in Person (LIPs). The Friends of Litigants in Person (FLiP) programme, which is modelled after the McKenzie Friend, was conceived to empower LIPs when they conduct their own trial. A FLiP volunteer essentially offers practical assistance to LIPs such as helping them with their case notes and providing emotional support during a court hearing, thus empowering them to conduct their case with confidence.



A FLiP volunteer engaging a court user

FAMILY JUSTICE WEEK

For the first time, top jurists and policy makers from the ASEAN region and Hague Convention countries as well as an International Advisory Council on family justice met in Singapore from 26 to 30 September 2016, to discuss ways to better manage cross-border disputes involving children and address emerging trends.

Recognising the challenges of globalisation and the increasing context of cross-border disputes involving children around the world, the FJC in its sophomore year, have been actively engaging in the international arena to increase awareness and opportunities for collaboration in this regard, with different jurisdictions.

Families form the bedrock of society. However the family unit today is becoming increasingly fragile. In developed nations across the world, there has been a general increase in the occurrence of family breakdowns and Singapore has likewise been confronted with a growing rate of divorce and family-related disputes.¹ We have, in Singapore, witnessed a significant rise in international marriages which often take on a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-racial dimension. There has also been a corresponding rise in family disputes involving international marriages. Of all the divorce cases filed, the percentage of divorces involving at least one party of a different nationality increased by about 5% in a short span of 3 years.²

Family disputes with cross-border elements raise complex and difficult questions. Whether for relocation or the return of child in abduction cases,³ decisions could result in the separation of the child from one parent across national boundaries. Conversely, it could result in the primary caregiver being compelled to remain in a jurisdiction where he or she may not have any roots or access to support networks. Whichever way the Court decides, the decision is bound to cause considerable pain and anguish to one of the parties. The child being caught in the centre of the dispute is certainly not spared. The challenge is to see past the competing tensions between the parents and focus on the welfare of the child as the guiding principle. The issues are also not legal per se but require a multi-disciplinary approach. Take for example, the issue of the assistance of mental

health professionals in addressing the on-going familial relationships despite the separation and any follow-up work to bring about sustainable outcomes for all concerned.

Both local and foreign delegates attending this inaugural event were impressed by its efficiency and the level of hospitality shown to them. They agreed that this event raised international and local awareness of the concerns of cross-border disputes and their impact on the children and families involved.



Symposium participants engaging in Table Discussion



JC Debbie Ong (seated second left) hosting some of the IFLC speakers at the welcome dinner

EXTENDING
INTERNATIONAL
RELATIONSHIPS

¹ Crude divorce rates (per 1,000 residents) grew from 0.8 in 1980 to 1.9 in 2014. See Department of Statistics Singapore (<http://www.singstat.gov.sg/publications/publications-and-papers/marriages-and-divorces/marriages-and-divorces>).

² 31% in 2011 to 33% in 2012 to 36% in 2013.

³ Applications for return of child in abduction cases may be made to the Court under the International Child Abduction Act (Cap 143C) and the 1980 Hague Convention to which Singapore is a signatory or where the other country involved in the dispute is not a Hague Convention country, by applying for relief under the Guardianship of Infants Act (Cap 122).

FAMILY JUSTICE WEEK

International Advisory Council (IAC)

On 28 September 2016, the IAC held its inaugural meeting at the Supreme Court, chaired by The Honourable the Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon. Judicial Commissioner Valerie Thean, Presiding Judge of the FJC, was Vice-Chairman.

The seven distinguished overseas members of the IAC who attended the meeting were:

- Chief Justice Diana Bryant AO, Chief Justice of the Family Court of Australia;
- Justice Jacques Chamberland, Judge of the Court of Appeal, Quebec, Canada;
- Emeritus Professor Dagmar Coester-Waltjen, University of Göttingen, Germany;
- Justice Michael Hartmann, Non-Permanent Judge of the Court of Appeal, Hong Kong;
- Sir Mathew Thorpe, former Judge of Appeal of the Court of Appeal, United Kingdom;
- Professor Linda Silberman, New York University, USA; and
- Dr Robert Emery, University of Virginia, USA.

In his welcome remarks, CJ Menon shared that the IAC has been established to bring together some leading thinkers from around the world in the field of family justice. The members were specially chosen to represent a diversity of experience and views across the common law and civil law jurisdictions. They include judges, retired judges, law academics, as well as a social science expert.

CJ Menon explained that the purpose of the IAC is to provide a platform for comparative learning through a robust exchange of views and perspectives on the latest developments in family law and practice. In the last two



CJ Menon addressing the IAC members



Presentation by CJ Diana Bryant AO (second from left)



Members of IAC meeting in discussion



IAC lunch hosted by CJ Menon



Justice Jacques Chamberland in conversation with CJ Menon



Participants of the inaugural IAC meeting gather for a photo moment

decades, it has been recognised that increasingly complex family issues call for solutions that are multi-disciplinary in nature, hence, the importance of obtaining perspectives from the social science angle as well. While the FJC learns from other jurisdictions, CJ Menon highlighted our commitment to share the fruits of our experience with others. He encouraged the IAC to generate ideas and identify potential areas of research in this area.

Following the inspiring opening remarks, the meeting commenced with robust and lively discussions. Thereafter three parallel breakout groups were held with IAC members on specific topics.

CJ Menon also hosted a lunch for the IAC members. Amongst the guests were Ms Indraneel Rajah S.C., Senior Minister of State, Ministry of Law; Mr Ng How Yue, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Law; and Mr Chew Hock Yong, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Social and Family Development. The lunch was an opportunity for the IAC members to interact and speak with policy makers and other key stakeholders of the family justice eco-system.

The FJC will harvest the rich and fruitful learning gained from a very invigorating first meeting of the IAC, as it plans its work cycle for the upcoming year; and will continue to mine the expertise of the IAC in its ongoing efforts to help drive and shape policy changes in the area of family law, practice and justice.

The IAC was established on 1 April 2016 for a period of two years at first instance. The FJC expects to hold the next meeting of the IAC in August 2017.

FAMILY JUSTICE WEEK

Symposium on Cross-Border Disputes involving Children

From 26 to 27 September 2016, the Family Justice Courts and The Hague Conference on Private International Law jointly organised a Symposium on Cross-Border Disputes Involving Children at the Supreme Court Auditorium. The theme of the Symposium was *Perspectives on Family Disputes Involving Children in a Globalised Society*, and the Symposium brought together 109 judges, policy-makers and family law practitioners from 23 jurisdictions to identify present day challenges involving children in cross-border situations.

Symposium participants were welcomed by Judicial Commissioner Valerie Thean, Presiding Judge of the FJC, with opening and keynote addresses delivered by Dr Christophe Bernasconi, Secretary General of the Permanent Bureau of the Hague Conference on Private International Law, and Chief Justice Diana Bryant AO from the Family Court of Australia respectively.

The Symposium sought to raise awareness of The Hague 1980, 1996 and 2007 Conventions in Asia and it provided a regional forum for the exchange of information, experiences and practices of participating jurisdictions in cross-border

child issues. Topics discussed at the Symposium included judicial communications, grave risk and child objection in return applications, mediation, child support, and access.

Participants engaged in interactive table discussions on case scenarios and exchanged perspectives on the diverse areas confronting international family law. Symposium participants found the discussions enriching, enhancing mutual understanding between jurisdictions, while rooted in the common pursuit of protecting the welfare of the child.



JC Foo Tuat Yien (second from left) chairing a Panel Discussion

Council of ASEAN Chief Justices' Working Group Meeting (CACJ WG)

Two representatives, comprising at least one judicial officer from each ASEAN country, were invited to attend the meeting. More than half of the ASEAN representatives were Working Group (WG) members, which ensured the continuity of the CACJ WG discussions on this very important issue.

The participating delegates were candid in providing their views which allowed a useful and fruitful discussion. The delegates shared about their local governance, the common issues faced and were open to the opportunity to learn from each other. The meeting was a success as the delegates unanimously agreed on a few key issues, including setting up an ASEAN Family Judges' Forum (AFJF) for training and learning, to have mediation as the first training topic which could be held in conjunction with the next CACJ WG meeting and to maintain informal communications with each other through the AFJF platform.

Post-meeting and learning visits were organised for the delegates to introduce them to some of the legal branches of Singapore, namely, the Ministry of Law, the Supreme Court, the State Courts and the Family Justice Courts. The feedback from the delegates was that these activities were invaluable as, in addition to learning about Singapore's exemplary legal

system, it gave them the opportunity to interact and bond with each other and with officials from Singapore, thus cementing ASEAN ties further.

The delegates shared that they had a productive and enjoyable time in Singapore. By the end of the week, it was clear that firm friendships had been formed. They said that while they may have left a little bit of their heart in Singapore, they also returned home with an abundance of new friendships and fresh knowledge, giving them the confidence to continue discussions within ASEAN on the issue of cross-border disputes in the future.



Participants of CACJ WG at the welcome dinner

International Family Law Conference (IFLC)

The theme of the two-day conference was *The Future of Family Justice – International and Multi-Disciplinary Pathways*. Modernisation and globalisation have led to a growing diversity of family forms and structures. Every society needs to respond to the challenges presented by these changing families and help them nurture the next generation.

Plenary and workshop sessions were held for the IFLC from 29 to 30 September 2016.

The IFLC has brought together eminent local and foreign speakers from the legal, psychological and social science sectors. They examined how family justice systems around the world are meeting current challenges while developing multi-disciplinary pathways and facilitative eco-systems. The IFLC facilitated an exchange of insights and a platform for learning and sharing best practices in the area of family justice.

About 450 participants gathered in Singapore for the IFLC made up of the following:

- Family Law practitioners both locally and overseas;
- Participants from the Ministry of Social and Family Development;
- Foreign Judges, Registrars and Magistrates from Australia, Fiji, Philippines, Namibia, New Zealand, UK, USA and Zimbabwe;
- Local Counsellors, Mediators, Child Psychologists and Social Workers from various Family Support & Mediation Centres; and
- Law Professors, Researchers, Writers, and Associate Deans from NUS, NIE, SMU, Tanglin Trust School and Fellowship of Evangelical Students.

The IFLC was co-organised by the FJC, the Law Society of Singapore, the Singapore Academy of Law with the Ministry of Social and Family Development as our IFLC partner.



CJ Menon hosting dinner for the IFLC speakers



Minister for Social and Family Development, Mr Tan Chuan-Jin addressing the IFLC participants



JC Debbie Ong (third from left) chairing a Panel Discussion



Dr Robert Emery presenting his paper

REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL PARTICIPATION

OVERSEAS CONFERENCES

In 2016, the FJC hosted and participated in a number of regional and international events.

1. New York, USA

Date	Event	Participant(s)
2-4 February	Legal Tech 2016	PD Joyce Low

2. The Hague, Netherlands

Date	Event	Participant(s)
23-25 May	15 th Online Dispute Resolution (ODR)	Mag Goh Kiat Yi

3. Washington, D.C., USA

Date	Event	Participant(s)
26-29 May	International Association of Women Judges' (IAWJ) 13 th Biennial Conference 2016	DJ Kimberly Scully

4. Seattle Washington, USA

Date	Event	Participant(s)
1-4 June	AFCC 53 rd Annual Conference organised by the Association of Family and Reconciliation Courts (AFCC)	DJ Angelina Hing Ms Sophia Ang Ms Sylvia Tan

5. Halifax, Canada

Date	Event	Participant(s)
5-17 June	Commonwealth Judicial Education Institute (CJEI) Intensive Study Programme for Judicial Educators	DJ Yarni Loi



6. Hong Kong, SAR

Date	Event	Participant(s)
8-10 June	Hong Kong International Conference on Social Science	Ms Ye PeiShi Ms Julia Wong
9-11 June	6 th LAWASIA Family Law & Children's Rights Conference	DJ Goh Zhuo Neng Mr Yeo Eng Kwan
28 November - 2 December	Parenting Coordination Meeting & Training	DJ Geraldine Kang

7. Tokyo, Japan

Date	Event	Participant(s)
28-30 June	Bilateral Meeting with Japanese Mediation Organisation and Asia Pacific Symposium on 1980 Hague Convention	PJ Valerie Thean DJ Wong Sheng Kwai

8. London, UK

Date	Event	Participant(s)
6-8 July	Culture, Dispute Resolution and Modernised Family Conference	GM Kevin Ng

9. Berlin, Germany

Date	Event	Participant(s)
13-17 September	International Guardianship Network Meet & Greet and 4 th World Congress on Adult Guardianship	DJ Daniel Koh DJ Miranda Yeo

10. Boston, USA

Date	Event	Participant(s)
14-19 October	Child Custody Certificate Course and Study Trip to Centre for Excellence for Children, Families and the Law	Ms Hazel Yang

11. Melbourne, Australia

Date	Event	Participant(s)
18-21 October	17 th National Family Law Conference	Dy PJ Chia Wee Kiat Ms Nagaletchumi d/o T Jevaraza
12-14 November	Exchange Programme with State Trustees	GM Toh Wee San

12. Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia


Date	Event	Participant(s)
4-6 November	4 th Joint Conference between Brunei, Malaysia & Singapore	PDJ Muhd Hidhir DJ Cassandra Cheong DJ Christine Lee

13. Nagoya, Japan

Date	Event	Participant(s)
3-4 December	2 nd Asian Conference on Advocacy and Support for the Elderly and Persons with Disabilities in Aged Society	DJ Daniel Koh

REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL PARTICIPATION

OUR OVERSEAS GUESTS



"Thank you for your hospitality. We are very excited to see the directions that you are taking. We look forward to a long and continuing friendship between our courts and the judges."

- Judge Michael Jarret

"Thank you for your generosity, insight and time. We have learnt a great deal today and look forward to continuing this relationship between Australian Courts and your Family Justice Courts."

- Ms Jane Reynolds

Federal Circuit Court of Australia
- 27 January



"It is a pleasure and honour for me to visit Family Justice Courts."

- Chief Justice Htun Htun Oo

Supreme Court of the Union of Myanmar
- 1 September

"We can draw on the judicial experience of the Singapore Family Justice Courts and we hope to further strengthen the judicial exchange and collaboration between the countries and together we shall propel and promote judicial development and advancement."

- Mr Zhou Jiye




Jiangsu High People's Court, China
- 14 June

"Congratulations to Singapore for setting up the Family Justice Courts! This is an excellent idea and we hope to borrow your ideas and put forward a proposal to our Chief Justice for consideration for a similar structure. Thank you again!"

- Justice Bebe Chu

"Thank you for the opportunity to visit the Family Courts to hear first hand of your plans for the future and hopefully be able to incorporate some of your initiatives into our own Family Court structure."

- Judge Sharon Melloy

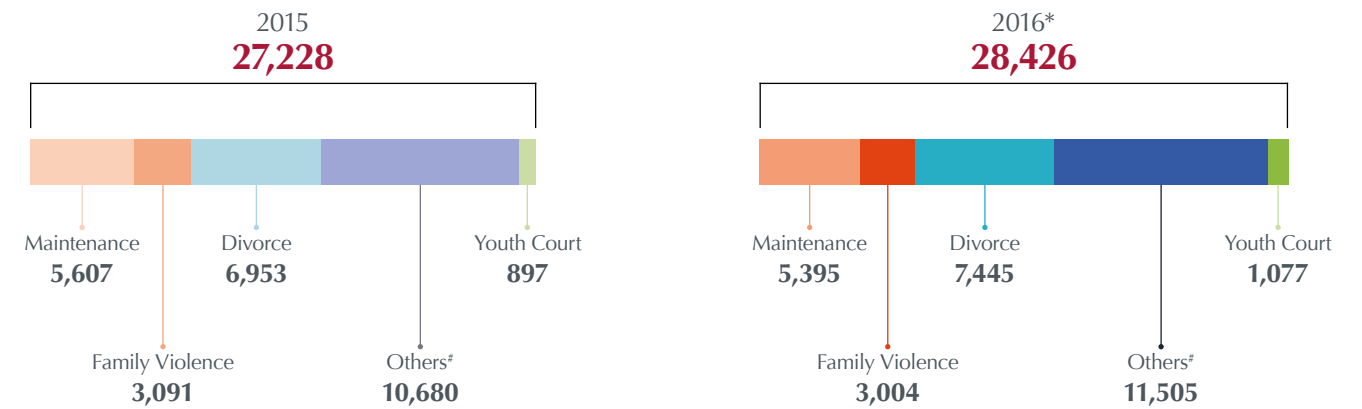


Hong Kong Judiciary
- 27 September

CASELOAD STATISTICS

The FJC handled a total of 28,426 cases in 2016. There is an increase of about 4% of cases compared to 2015. Divorce, Maintenance and Probate cases made up more than half of the total caseload handled by the FJC in 2016.

Number of Cases Handled by the Family Justice Courts



YEAR IN REVIEW

	2015	2016*
Family Justice Courts	27,228	28,426

	2015	2016*
Maintenance	5,607	5,395
Fresh Applications	1,504	1,434
Enforcement of Maintenance Orders	2,753	2,651
Variation/ Rescission/ Suspension of Maintenance Orders	987	934
Enforcement of Maintenance of Parents Tribunal Orders	35	29
Enforcement of Syariah Court Orders	328	347

	2015	2016*
Family Violence	3,091	3,004
Fresh Applications for Personal Protection Orders (PPO)	2,885	2,811
Variation/ Rescission of PPO	68	42
Breach of PPO ¹	138	151

(*) Others comprise of - Adoption, Probate, Originating Summons (Family), Breach of Syariah Court Orders and Summonses (Family).

(*) Figures for 2016 are subjected to revision.

¹ Refers to cases filed at FJC only.

	2015	2016*
Divorce	6,953	7,445
Divorce Writs	5,921	6,301
Ancillary Matters	1,032	1,144
	2015	2016*
Others	10,680	11,505
Adoption	332	404
Probate	4,874	5,222
Originating Summons	715	757
Breach of Syariah Court Orders	259	241
Summonses (Family) ²	4,500	4,881
	2015	2016*
Youth Court	897	1,077
Youth Arrest Charges	658	751
Beyond Parental Control ³	82	80
Child Protection Orders ³	80	219
Youth Summons Case/ Youth Court Notice ⁴	77	27

(*) Figures for 2016 are subjected to revision.

² Includes Divorce, Originating Summons (Family), Probate and Adoption Summonses.

³ Refer to number of youths.

⁴ Formerly refers to Police Summonses/ Summonses & Tickets, and Other Charges.



SUMMARY OF KEY HIGHLIGHTS FOR 2016

2016 was an important year for the Family Justice Courts. We trace the key highlights of our journey in this diagram.

15 Jan

The FJC Opening of the Legal Year

16 Feb



Visit by Senior Minister of State, Ministry of Finance & Ministry of Law, Ms Indraneel Rajah S.C.

6 Apr



Dialogue session during the FJC Workplan 2016

1 Jul

1st Amendments to the FJC Practice Directions - spousal maintenance to be extended to incapacitated husbands or ex-husbands

1 Aug

2nd Amendments to the FJC Practice Directions - a bankrupt is allowed to commence, continue or defend a matrimonial proceeding without obtaining the previous sanction of the Official Assignee

26-30 Sep

Family Justice Week

- Symposium on Cross-Border Disputes Involving Children
- Council of ASEAN Chief Justices' Working Group Meeting
- International Advisory Council Inaugural Meeting
- International Family Law Conference

1 Oct

3rd Amendments to the FJC Practice Directions - Court Ordered Private Mediation for divorce and probate proceedings concerning assets that total S\$3 million and above, and proceedings which meet certain criteria



Judiciary Cares is part of the FJC's Corporate Responsibility programme - reaching out to the Society for the Aged Sick

1 Nov



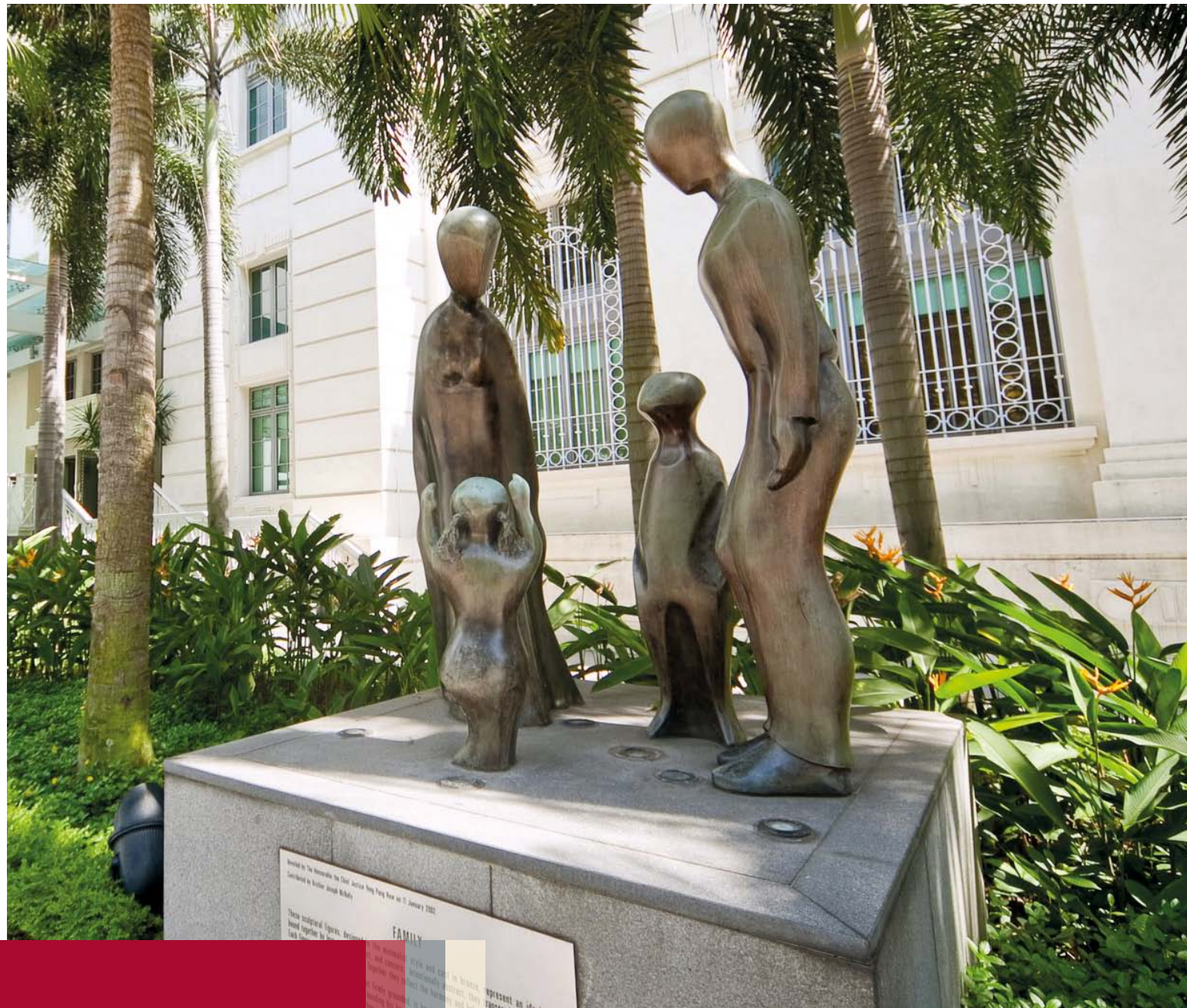
Volunteers Appreciation event at the Grand Copthorne Waterfront Hotel

10 Nov

PS21 ExCEL Awards 2016, Certificate of Merit for Most Innovative Project Transformation of Court Spaces

1 Dec

4th Amendments to the FJC Practice Directions - mandating divorcing couples with minor children to attend a mandatory parenting programme before they can file for divorce



THE FJC FAMILY

REGISTRY JUDGES



FAMILY TRIAL AND PROBATE, ADOPTION AND MENTAL CAPACITY REGISTRIES JUDGES



JUDGES FROM THE FAMILY PROTECTION AND SUPPORT DIVISION



OFFICERS FROM THE FAMILY DIVISION



JUDGE-MEDIATORS FROM THE FAMILY DISPUTE RESOLUTION DIVISION



OFFICERS FROM THE FAMILY PROTECTION AND SUPPORT DIVISION



OFFICERS FROM THE FAMILY DISPUTE RESOLUTION DIVISION



TEAM OF CASE MANAGERS ASSISTING JUDGES WITH DOCKETED CASES



OFFICERS FROM THE PROBATE, ADOPTION AND MENTAL CAPACITY REGISTRIES



TEAM OF COURT INTERPRETERS



OFFICERS FROM THE COUNSELLING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES



OFFICERS FROM STRATEGIC PLANNING AND RESEARCH DIVISION



MAINTENANCE MEDIATION CHAMBERS MEDIATORS AND REGISTRY OFFICERS



OFFICERS FROM FINANCE AND PROCUREMENT DEPARTMENT



OFFICERS FROM ADMINISTRATION AND SECURITY DEPARTMENT TOGETHER WITH CISCO OFFICERS STATIONED AT THE FJC



OFFICERS FROM OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS



OFFICERS FROM HUMAN RESOURCE DEPARTMENT



OFFICERS FROM THE INFRASTRUCTURE DEPARTMENT



OFFICERS FROM COMPUTER AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS DEPARTMENT





WE ARE FAMILY

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Family Justice Courts would like to thank all who have contributed to the work of the FJC from its beginnings and in this publication of Access to Family Justice: Anchoring Deeper, Extending Wider.

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