

## Family support and childcare at the Bar

The Equal Opportunity Committee continues its work to ensure that all barristers have the opportunity to meet both work and family obligations. A range of regular and emergency family needs can now be met through McArthur Management Services. Melissa Fisher and Kate Eastman of the Bar's Equal Opportunity Committee describe the expanded Family Support and Childcare Scheme.

The childcare scheme provided to the Bar by McArthur Management Services has been expanded to offer a greater range of family support services.

The childcare scheme was launched in 2004 with the main aim of providing emergency childcare for barristers in situations where the barrister's regular childcare arrangements had broken down. Under the scheme, barristers registered with McArthur have access to qualified and screened child-carers at short notice.

Over the two years of the scheme's operation, it has become apparent that there is a need amongst members of the Bar for family support other than emergency childcare, for example assistance with the care of elderly parents.

The emphasis of the scheme has now broadened to family support. This is a welcome development for members of the Bar with diverse (and sometimes onerous and overwhelming) family responsibilities.

The aim of the expanded scheme is to assist members of the Bar in managing the clash between their professional commitments and their family responsibilities.

### Expanded services

The expanded services include:

- ◆ assistance for barristers with responsibilities for aged relatives (for example, taking the relative shopping, to a medical appointment or providing domestic support in the home);

- ◆ childcare and domestic support where a spouse or partner is sick or hospitalised;
- ◆ childcare and domestic support when a new baby arrives;
- ◆ assistance for a spouse or partner where a barrister is interstate or overseas for an extended period of time;
- ◆ childcare during school holidays;
- ◆ childcare on weekends;
- ◆ recruiting and placing full-time nannies (the nanny can either be employed directly by the barrister or by McArthur, depending on the needs of the barrister);
- ◆ providing a short-term nanny for the period of a trial or while the regular nanny is on holidays.

Changes have also been made in relation to the provision of emergency childcare:

- ◆ it is not necessary for a barrister to be registered with McArthur prior to calling for emergency assistance (although registration remains highly desirable);
- ◆ it is no longer a requirement that a barrister engage a carer for 4 hours per fortnight for baby-sitting in order to have access to emergency childcare. However, a barrister who regularly engages a carer in this way will pay a lesser hourly rate in an emergency situation.

### Registration

All barristers with family responsibilities should give consideration to registering with McArthur as soon as possible – even if they do not currently envisage needing the service. Prior registration facilitates the provision of assistance in a stressful emergency situation.

Registration is free. All that is required is for the barrister to complete the registration form (which can be found on McArthur Management Services web site [www.mcarthur.com.au](http://www.mcarthur.com.au) or obtained by phoning McArthur on (02) 9252 0799) and for a McArthur consultant to visit the home where the care or assistance is



Kate Guilfoyle (left) and Jane Needham SC (right) with their girls Imogen, 2, and Stella, 1, 30 April 2004. Photo: Wade Laube/Fairfaxphotos

to be provided. This latter requirement is primarily for occupational health and safety reasons but presents a good opportunity to meet face to face with a McArthur representative.

Upon registration, McArthur organises for the family to meet one or more potential carers. McArthur's carers are qualified and screened. The family indicates to McArthur their preferred carer. When care is required, all the barrister need do is call McArthur to book the carer. McArthur is contactable 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Generally, 24 hours notice is required to book the carer, but it is accepted that this is not always possible in an emergency situation.

#### Further Information

For further information, see the Bar Association web site or go to [www.mcarthur.com.au](http://www.mcarthur.com.au) or phone McArthur on (02) 9252 0799.



Kate Guilfoyle (left) and Jane Needham SC (right) with their girls Imogen 2, and Stella 1, 30 April 2004. Photo: Wade Laube/Fairfaxphotos

## Kate and James

Kate and James's experience with McArthur

Kate Eastman (6 & 7 St James Hall) and James Crisp (Ada Evans) arranged a carer for their 16-month old daughter, Georgia, through McArthur. Georgia is in day care three days a week, but when both Kate and James were in long running trials, they needed a nanny for an additional day a week. James contacted McArthur. A home safety check was undertaken the following week. McArthur then organised three potential carers to meet the family. All the carers had excellent qualifications and experience. They then arranged a permanent booking one day a week for three months.

Kate said: 'We are impressed with the service offered by McArthur and that Georgia is in safe hands. Clemonce, our carer, has been flexible with times. She had been able to start early and stay a little later if needed. Georgia has benefited from the one-on-one care.'



James and Georgina Crisp.