



# The BFLC Client Handbook

(aka important information and tips on getting the best from your work with us!)

07 3862 1955 | [hello@bflc.com.au](mailto:hello@bflc.com.au) | [bflc.com.au](http://bflc.com.au)



## *A word from our founder*

**Hello I am Clarissa Rayward** the founder of Brisbane Family Law Centre (or BFLC as we tend to call it here!)

I created BFLC in 2008 when I couldn't quite find a family law firm that did things the way I thought they should be done! Fast forward 15 years, and I am really proud of the business we have built along the way.

As the owner of BFLC I know that our team will do their very best to help you. But I also know that working your way through the end of a relationship is tough. We value your feedback, appreciate your kind words more than you know and when we get it wrong, tell us (politely) as it is the only way we can keep doing what we do better.

I am looking forward to helping you and if you drop in, please do say 'Hi'!

Clarissa



**THE END OF A  
RELATIONSHIP  
BRINGS WITH IT  
ONE OF THE MOST  
CHALLENGING  
TIMES IN LIFE.**

**WE GET IT,  
RELATIONSHIPS  
ARE ALL WE DO-  
FAMILY LAW IS OUR  
THING!**



**CLARISSA RAYWARD**

Founder, Director, Accredited Specialist, Collaborative Family Lawyer and Mediator



**KIARAH GRACE KELLY**

Collaborative Family Lawyer



**JENNA HARNEY**

Law Graduate



*Your*  
**LEGAL**  
*Team*



**REBECCA BELLAMY**

Collaborative Family Lawyer



**JAIME STEFANAC**

Collaborative Family Lawyer



**MELANIE BOYD**

Collaborative Family Lawyer



**KARA BATCHELOR**

Collaborative Family Lawyer



**AMY MURRAY**  
Chief Financial Officer



**AMBER CLARKE**  
Legal Assistant



**DENAE HANIFIN**  
Legal Assistant



**KIMBERLEY WILLIAMSON**  
Legal Assistant

*Your*  
**SUPPORT**  
*Team*



**KRISTINA SIKA**  
Director of Operations  
and Happiness



**SARAH FOLLENT**  
Creative Director and Designer



**FIONA SMITH**  
Director of First Impressions



## ***Our commitment to you.***



**At Brisbane Family Law Centre (or BFLC as we like to call ourselves) we specialise in working with separating families in a way that keeps them away from the Courts and enables them to remain friends for the future.**

This takes courage, and is not for everyone, but divorce is one of the most challenging moments any of us can experience and after 20 years in family law, we have come to learn that a long, expensive and combative legal process is rarely good for anyone.

We also know that the end of a relationship means so much more than just the legal stuff which is why our team of lawyers work alongside counsellors and financial specialists to ensure that our clients receive the holistic support you need at this difficult time.

We are not for everyone but we work best if you are looking to untangle the legal aspects of your relationship with dignity and grace, so that when the dust has settled, you can look back on this tricky period with some pride.

We are here to help you so please do pick up the phone, send us an email or reach out at any time.



*“Thank you for everything, I do feel so much better about the whole situation. At the end of our first meeting I felt like I was in good hands.*

*The BFLC team made me feel so relaxed and happy because you took the time to ask how I was going and it felt so warm and sincere. Everyone else who knows I am going through all of this avoids asking me ‘how are you?’ like the plague.*

*Can’t wait to hear from you so I know it’s one step closer again.”*

**Ross- BFLC Client**

We are a team dedicated to providing the highest service to you during your time with us as your legal team.

*With BFLC on your team  
you will feel...*

**Supported**

We are here for you. You've got this!

**Transparency**

Communicate! Talking achieves in seconds what silence achieves in days.

**Understood**

We will always show empathy and consideration towards you, other professionals and colleagues.

**Organised**

We will equip you with the best tools and strategies to plan your next steps.

**Respected**

Be prepared to not only be listened to but to also be heard.

**Commitment**

Individually, we cannot always be exceptional, but together we can be an exceptional team.

**A sense of humour**

All is fair in love and divorce!





*“Thank you for everything, I am truly very thankful for your expert guidance and advice throughout this process. I have spoken to other women in my position who have not been as well guided. I credit my favourable outcome to your wisdom and plan of ‘attack’. I am very grateful.”*

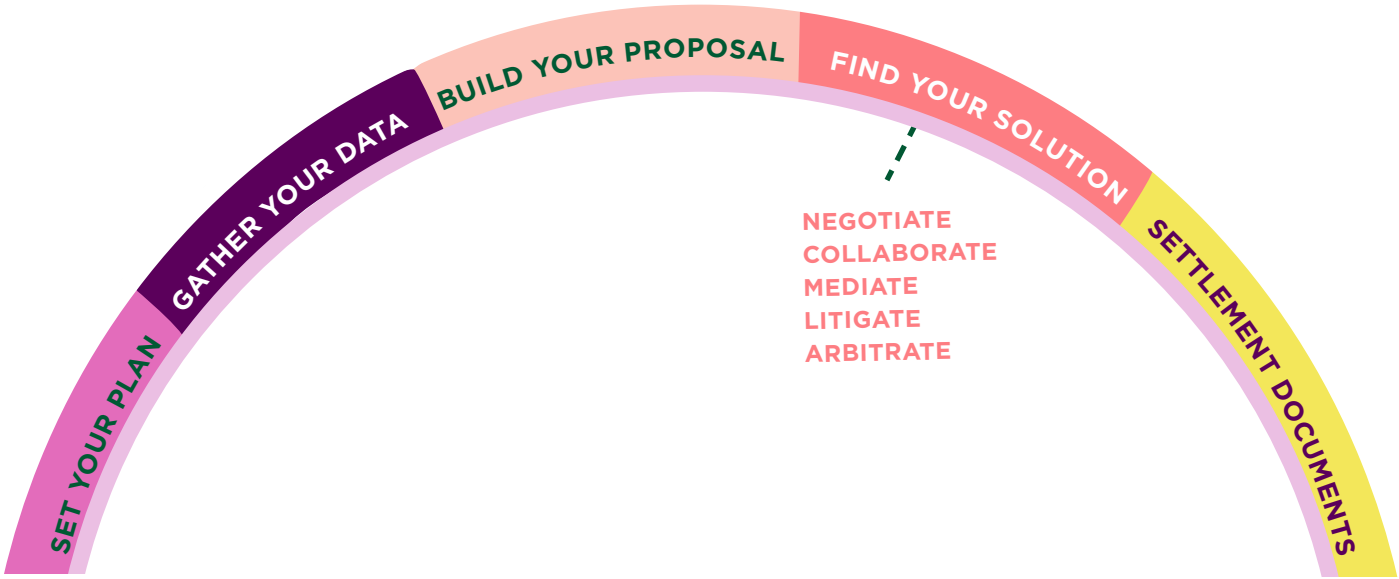
**Meg- BFLC Client**

# *Index to Client Handbook*

<b>Your Family Law Road Map</b>	<b><i>11</i></b>
<b>The Importance Of Choosing Your Path</b>	<b><i>12</i></b>
<b>The 3 Main Ways We Can Help You</b>	<b><i>14- 15</i></b>
<b>The Most Common Path</b>	<b><i>17-19</i></b>
<b>So What If You Need To Go To Court?</b>	<b><i>20</i></b>
<b>So How Much Does It All Cost?</b>	<b><i>22- 24</i></b>
<b>What Even Is A Fixed Fee?</b>	<b><i>26- 27</i></b>
<b>How Long Will It Take?</b>	<b><i>29- 30</i></b>
<b>Tips To Get The Best From Us</b>	<b><i>32- 33</i></b>
<b>'Cool' Lawyer Awards</b>	<b><i>34</i></b>



# Your Family Law Road Map



**You have the pieces**

**Now we just have to help you put them together.**

**Your new chapter**





## ***The importance of choosing your path.***

Over the past 20 years our team have helped over 3,000 families navigate the end of their relationships. **And while everyone we work with is different, there is one thing they all have in common- at the end of their legal process they have a plan- a series of legal documents that enable them to step into the next chapter in their life.**

Everyone we work with starts with a sense of confusion- not really knowing what that next chapter will look like. But the thing is, they all get there- whether it is through a negotiated agreement or with the assistance of a Court - everyone we work with will end up with a document that will guide their family through.

The choice you make on 'how' your family moves from where you are today to that place where you have a documented plan for your future is one of the most important choices you will make in your separation.

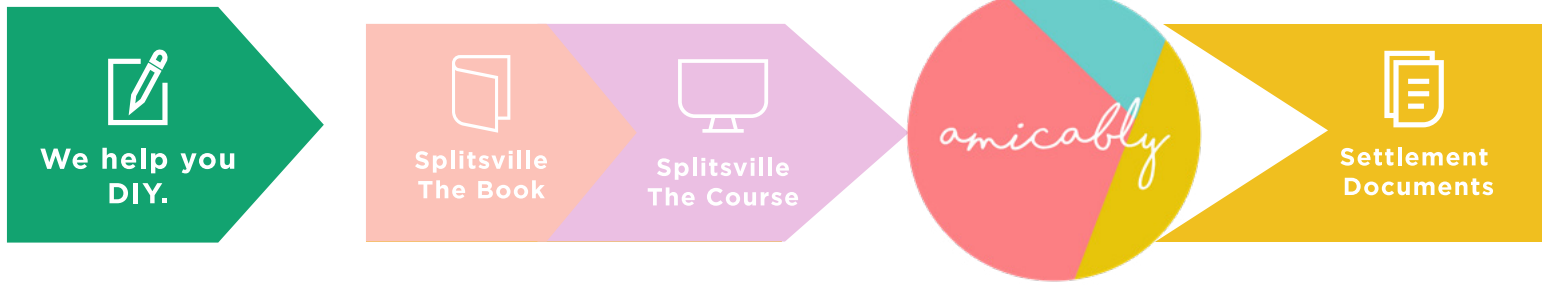
We call this choosing your path.

There are **3 main pathways or ways we help people** to get there...

**AND WHILE  
EVERYONE WE  
WORK WITH IS  
DIFFERENT, THERE  
IS ONE THING  
THEY ALL HAVE  
IN COMMON- AT  
THE END OF THEIR  
LEGAL PROCESS  
THEY HAVE A PLAN-**

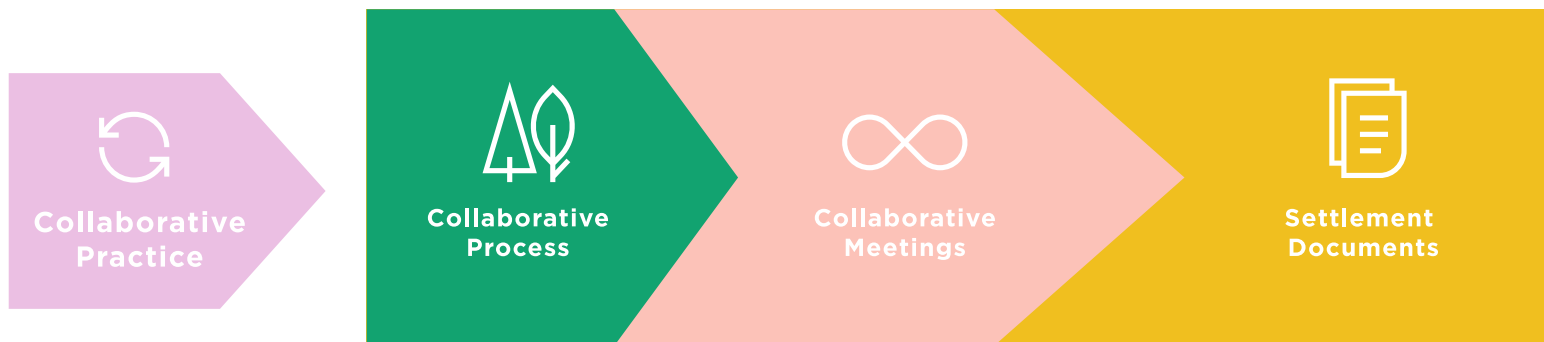
**A SERIES OF LEGAL  
DOCUMENTS THAT  
ENABLE THEM TO  
STEP INTO THE NEXT  
CHAPTER IN THEIR  
LIFE.**

## The 3 main ways we can help you are—



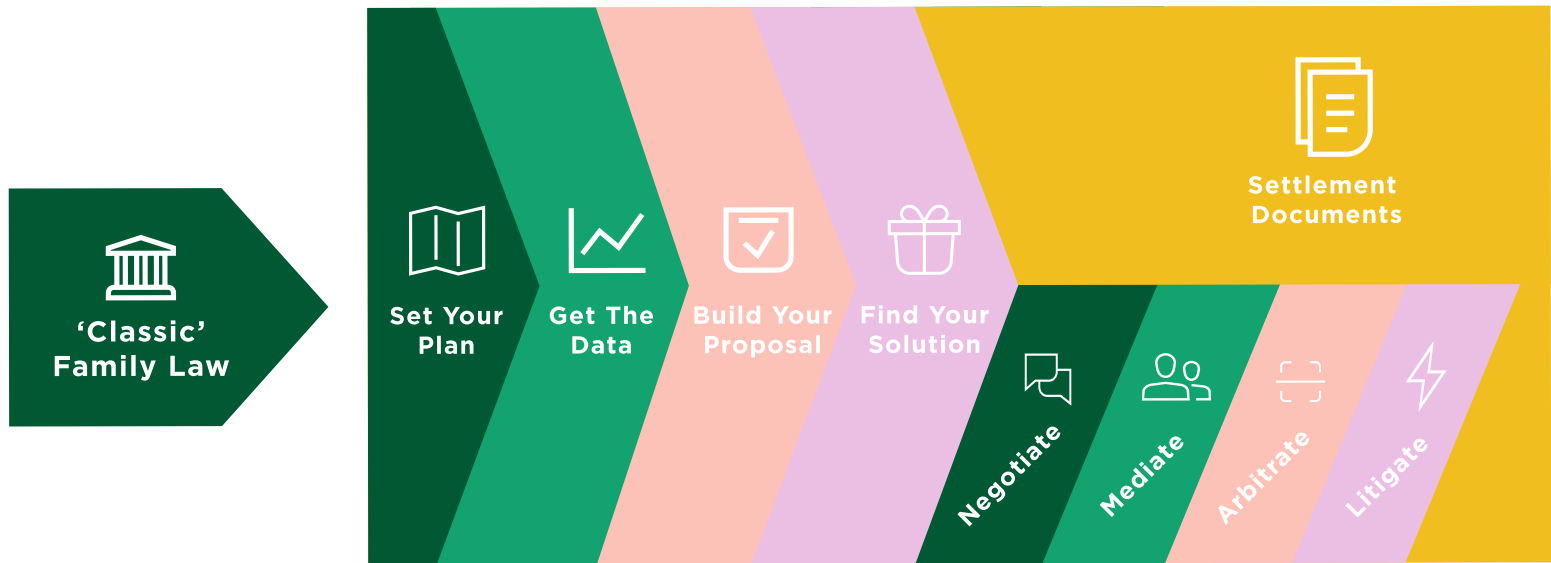
- 1. We help you DIY through our service ‘Amicably’. You can manage the legal stuff yourself with a little help from us along the way.** Amicably works best for couples who have largely reached agreement on their property division or parenting arrangements and need assistance drafting the legal documents necessary to finalise those agreements.

On average the cost to you of this process will be under \$5,000.



- 2. If it is important to you to stay out of Court and work together to find a plan for your family’s future then Collaborative Practice might be for you.** Collaborative Practice is a process that assists you to work through the legal issues arising from the breakdown of your relationship in a considered and calm way with the assistance of a team of professionals. A process which requires both you and your former partner to have legal advisors, in a series of meetings your team will help you to set goals for your families future, consider the options which might achieve those goals, and draft the documents you need to get there.

On average, the cost to you for our involvement in this process will be under \$20,000 and additional costs may be incurred depending on the professional team members you require.



**3. The majority of families we assist use the pathway that we like to call Classic Family Law. Using our 5 step process, we will help you to-**

Set your plan and identify your goals. Get the data you need to consider the options open to you to sort the legal stuff. We then help you to build a proposal to make to your former partner. If an agreement can't be reached, we help you decide which legal pathway (Negotiation, Mediation, Arbitration or Litigation) would be most suitable, and finally, draft your settlement documents.

On average, the cost to you of this process will range from \$10,000 to \$50,000 however, where arbitration or the court process are required costs can increase significantly to beyond \$100,000.

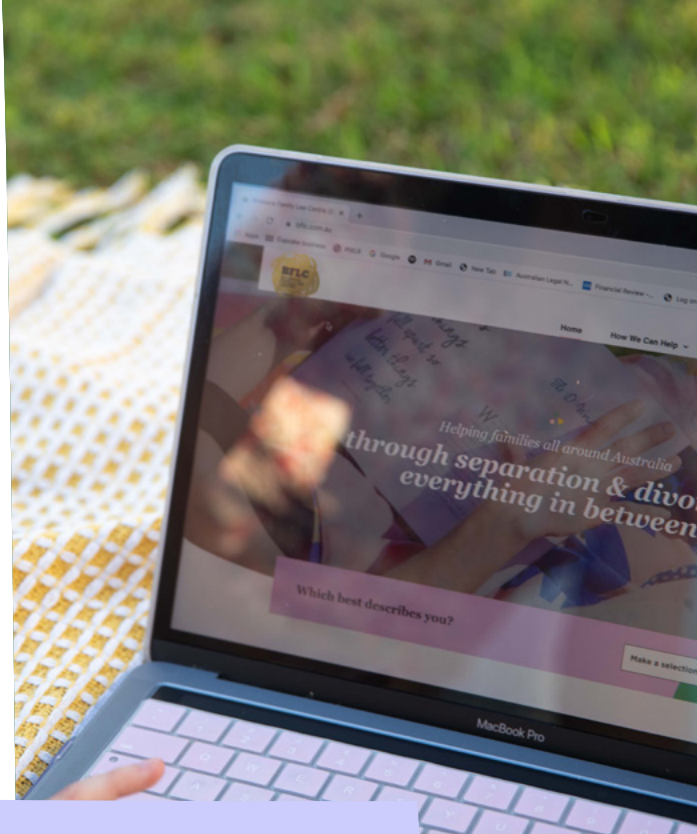


*“At the conclusion of the first meeting my decision to appoint BFLC was an easy one.*

*If the Collaborative Process fits with how you want to achieve a settlement outcome, I would have no hesitation in recommending Clarissa and BFLC.”*

Michael- BFLC Client





## *The most common path...*

The most common way **we help our clients** is by negotiating an agreement on their legal issues and documenting that agreement into the necessary formal documents.

For example, if you have financial matters to resolve with your former partner we would-



*You are here*

**1.**

**Spend time with you to understand your goals and help you set a plan.**

**2.**

**Then gather information with you about your finances so we have a full picture of what you have and how this might best be used for your families' future.**

**3.**

Then, we will provide you with advice about the likely legal outcomes to assist you to put together a proposal that can be shared with your former partner.

**4.**

If they agree, then hey presto- we can document that agreement and you are done! If they don't agree, that's ok, it just means we need to do a bit more work and we find this is where mediation is a great option to help get that deal over the line.

Over 90% of our client's find a solution at mediation.

**5.**

Once that deal is done, the formal documents are drafted and (if necessary) lodged with the Courts. This is mostly done online now and you are unlikely to ever need to go to Court.

**6.**

**And hey presto- you are done!**

On average this would take most families around a year... We know that feels like a long time, but it is probably the right amount of time so you can ensure you have all the information you need and are making the best decisions for you and your family.



# **MORE THAN JUST LAW—**

**WE KNOW THAT ENDING  
A RELATIONSHIP MEANS  
SO MUCH MORE THAN  
LAW CAN SOLVE.**

**THAT'S WHY WE WORK  
WITH A TEAM OF  
'NON-LAWYERS' TO  
HELP YOU THROUGH  
FROM RELATIONSHIP  
COUNSELLORS TO CHILD  
EXPERTS AND FINANCIAL  
PROFESSIONALS  
INCLUDING BUSINESS  
EXPERTS- OUR HOLISTIC  
TEAM WILL HELP YOU  
EVERY STEP ALONG THE  
WAY.**



## *So what if you need to go to Court?*

**Most families we assist never find their way to the Family Law Courts.** However, if your circumstances mean that a Court application becomes necessary we will be able to provide a more specific costs guide at that time. **It is no secret, engaging in a Court process is expensive.**

On average the costs of commencing proceedings would usually start from \$10,000 and to pursue an Application through to the end of a hearing would usually take over two years and cost in excess of \$50,000. There are usually many other options to consider before commencing an Application in the Courts.

Arbitration can be a great alternative to the Court process and is available in financial settlements where an agreement cannot be reached through mediation or other out of Court processes.

Arbitration is usually cheaper and quicker than the Court process however will still usually be more expensive than finding a solution using other methods such as collaboration or mediation.

# **THE BFLC DIFFERENCE—**

**AND YES WE ARE  
DIFFERENT TO MOST-  
APPROACHABLE,  
COLOURFUL, REAL  
LIFE PEOPLE WHO  
LOVE THE WORK WE  
GET TO DO WITH  
PEOPLE JUST LIKE  
YOU.**



## ***So how much does it all cost?***

We understand that the cost of your legal process will be one of the biggest things on your mind right now.

The cost of any legal process can be very difficult to predict, however **we have worked hard at BFLC to build products and services that ensure no one goes without access to legal information or advice that they need.**

At BFLC we offer a fixed price service which means **you will always know the cost before you take a step.** We will provide you with fee proposals in stages throughout your matter, depending on the process you are using and the work that you require. At any time, you can discuss your fees with us. Our goal is to ensure you are able to get the legal help you need at a price you can manage. For this reason **we offer a range of services from our popular coaching packages right through to a bespoke full service packages.** We can discuss your needs and your budget and work with you to find a package that works for you.

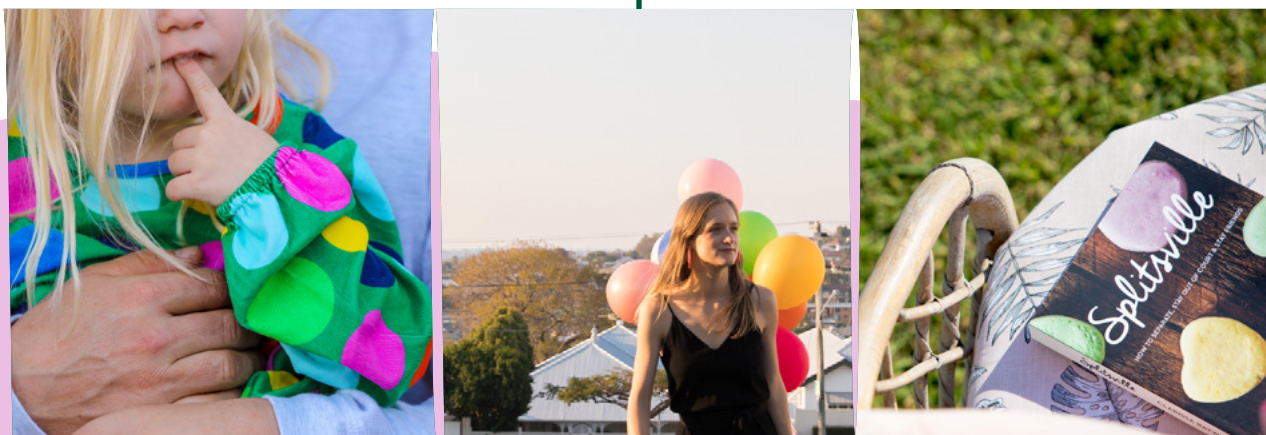
## ***How to make the most of your legal spend (and keep those costs down too!)***

When it comes to separation & divorce there are a few things that are outside of your control but how you work with us is for you to decide. **You can't control the decisions your former partner might make but you can choose what help you need and when you need it.** There are services that provide specialised loans to assist with your legal costs too.

We will always provide you with a fee proposal before we start work. **If that proposal doesn't meet your needs then tell us.**

We appreciate that legal costs can feel overwhelming and **we are not about to suggest any of this is easy or cheap but you are investing in future you.** It is important you have the information, advice and support you need.





The simplest way to **keep your legal costs down** is for you and your former partner to try and **work together to find a solution that works for you both.**

This might sound impossible right now, and maybe it won't ever be possible for your family, but it can't hurt to try first.

And it might seem like you can save money by doing things yourself- sometimes this is true, **and where we think there are steps you can do that will save you legal fees we will let you know,** but sometimes the best thing to do is to leave it to us- we have done this many times before and it is often harder to undo someone else's work (even when it was well intentioned) than it is to do it efficiently together from the outset.

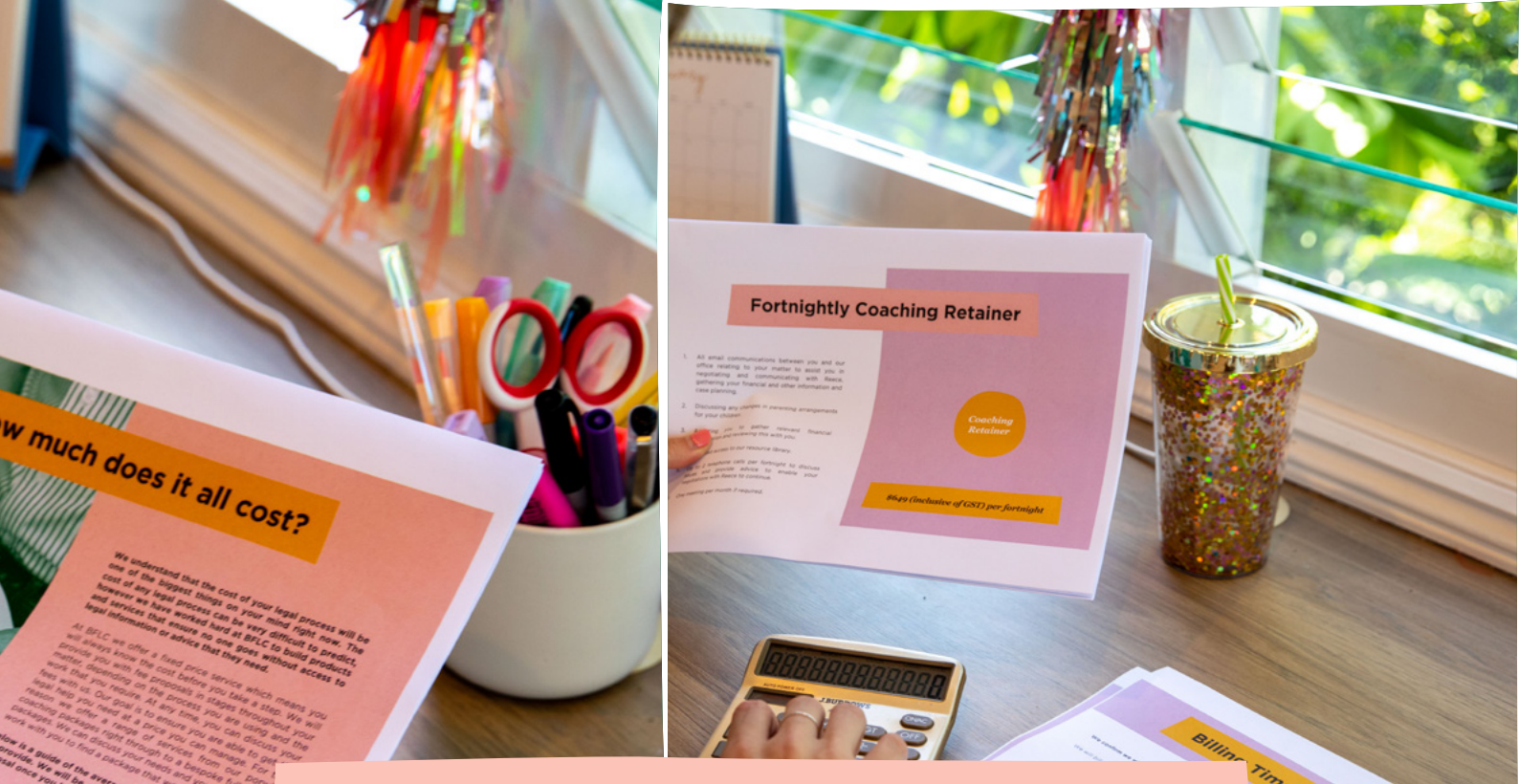




**FIXED FEES—**

**THAT'S RIGHT-  
OUR FIXED PRICE  
SERVICES MEANS  
NO HIDDEN  
CATCHES.**

**YOU CHOSE YOUR  
PATH AND YOUR  
PRICE.**



## *What even is a Fixed Fee?*

**We are a fully 'Fixed Fee' firm!** Unlike traditional 'hourly rate' billing, **Fixed Fees provide you with financial certainty** about the work we can do for you, and at what cost.

Traditionally, law firms have charged work for clients by the hour, and by the written word. When the average lawyer charges a rate of \$500 an hour, and 30-40 cents per written word, costs can escalate very quickly. With only estimates given of how many hours and words will be required to reach a resolution in your matter, the only thing that is certain about time-based billing is stress for you, and uncertainty about how much your legal matter will cost.

We instead use a fixed pricing model. **This means we will provide you with a step by step proposal setting out the work we will do and the costs for each of the steps.** If you have ever built a house or done a renovation, it is sort of like that. For each step of the build there is a fee and as your house goes up, the stages are charged.

In our case we aren't helping you build a house, but **we are helping you get all the things you need in place to start a new life chapter.**

We will provide you with a quote for the steps we expect you might need but **you will only be invoiced for those steps once they are completed.** That way, if it turns out you don't need a step you won't be charged for it.

**Sometimes plans change-** it might be that your plan changes or your former partner has a different idea to you on how to work all of this out! That's ok, **things do change in family law and when they do we will provide you a new fee proposal for you to consider.**

We understand that legal costs are a concern for many of our clients, and we find that a **Fixed Fee system provides certainty,** no scary end of month bills, and a strong plan and timeline for the progression of your matter.



*“Thankyou so much for all of your help with my property settlement. Your relaxed manner made the whole experience bearable and non-threatening yet you were very strong and determined when you needed to be.*

*I was very happy both with your conduct of my file, and with the result.”*

**Amanda- BFLC Client**



## *And, how long will it take?*

How long will it take? Well it is a bit of a ‘how long is a piece of string’! **It will take as long as it takes to help you find a solution that works.** It might feel like sorting things out quickly is best, but sometimes fast is not always fair.

We get it, no one wants to be hanging out with their family lawyer any longer than they really need to! **And just because something might take a bit longer than you thought, doesn’t necessary mean it costs more.**

So, when it comes to ‘how long’ here are **a few tips** to keep things moving-

**1.**

**Keep in touch with us- we know things are probably hard right now but keep us in the loop. We can help.**

**2.**

If we need information from you, try and get it to us quickly- and if you can't, let us know and maybe we can find another way to help you get it.

**3.**

Ask lots of questions- if something doesn't make sense then tell us. There is a good chance you haven't had to do this before but it is our bread and butter. You won't be the first to ask, and keep asking- there are no silly questions.

**4.**

Tell us how we can work best with you- let us know how you want to hear from us and when. Some of our clients love email, others can't stand it. Some love to come in and sit down for a chat, others prefer a quick call. You tell us, we can work around you!



# **OUT OF COURT SPECIALISTS—**

**WE SPECIALISE  
IN HELPING  
OUR CLIENTS  
FIND AMICABLE  
SOLUTIONS TO  
THE END OF THEIR  
RELATIONSHIPS,  
STAYING AWAY  
FROM THE COURTS  
WHERE POSSIBLE,  
REMAINING FRIENDS  
FOR THE FUTURE.**



*A few more tips to get the best from us!*

At any given time our team can be working with over 100 clients. As such, we often aren't sitting at our desks waiting for that call!

**So, what we know works best is-**

**1. Clear communication-**

Tell us when/ how and what works best for you.

**2. Planning-**

We like to schedule calls with you but if it is urgent, or something is worrying you then reach out to our team. Let us know what you need and we will do our best to get back to you with the answer as soon as we can (but it may not be in the next 10 minutes!)



### **3. We love video/ audio/ online-**

You are always welcome in our office but so much of what we do can be done from the comfort of your living room. Tell us what works best for you and we will work to that.

### **4. Team work makes the dream work-**

We work as a team so you will have more than one of us helping you out. This enables us to ensure we can deliver the best service to you and means there should always be someone here with a familiar voice to answer your questions.

### **5. R-E-S-P-E-C-T!**

We know this is hard but we won't tolerate disrespectful behaviour. You won't get that from us and we can't have it from you. If you have a concern, raise it politely. If we can't work together respectfully, we can't work together at all.





***Yes we are 'cool' lawyers!***  
***(Also known as #oneofthoseconfettilawyers)***

These are all the 'fancy' industry awards we have had the honour in receiving.

**Kiarah Grace Kelly**



**Clarissa Rayward**





**Contact details to keep at hand**

**Level 2, 27/14 Argyle Street  
Albion QLD 4010**

**07 3862 1955**

**hello@bflc.com.au**

