

## Working with you through the COVID-19 pandemic

To our valued clients, referrers and community

As the situation with the COVID-19 or coronavirus pandemic continues to develop, we wanted to contact you to re-assure you that we have activated our Business Continuity Plan. As a result we are confident that we can continue to service our clients through these uncertain times.

Since Monday 16 March 2020 we have had some staff working from home each day to ensure that our staff, particularly our administrative staff who may have never worked remotely before, are able to do so. This is also consistent with the health recommendations for social distancing.

The big test on Tuesday and Wednesday was to have our receptionist Sally working from home. We were pleased that this worked well, and that our clients and the rest of our community were very understanding of this arrangement. Our landline number, 9248 5800, still works whether we are in the office or working remotely.

Our clients have also adapted well to switching all client conferences to Skype. We have done many of these before, but mainly for overseas or interstate clients. Some of our clients who have not had Skype meetings before were so happy with the convenience that we think they may keep doing them after the crisis is over.

We anticipate that as the effects of the pandemic are felt our clients will have different problems than the usual ones. Client enquiries received this week confirm this. Our lawyers are working through different scenarios so we are ready to advise on these as they arise.

We believe that these times call for more creative solutions to resolving disputes and Forte is well set up to provide these. Our staff can work from home and we have good IT systems which enable us to do this smoothly. Jacky is a trained arbitrator and arbitrations can be done on the papers or electronically. Arbitrations can resolve interim disputes including matters which need to be resolved urgently, as well as resolve matters on a final basis. Although currently parenting matters cannot be resolved through arbitration, there will be more pressure on the Government to change this. The mediators we use are working out how to hold mediations electronically.

We recognise that these are unsettling times, but we will work with you to get through this. You can be confident that the quality of our advice and assistance to our clients will continue.

If you have any queries or concerns please direct them to Jacky and Wendy on 9248 5800 or [enquiries@fortefamilylawyers.com.au](mailto:enquiries@fortefamilylawyers.com.au).