RICH MAHLER
MEDIATION & THERAPY
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CHILD-INCLUSIVE MEDIATION

I facilitate Child-Inclusive Mediations (**CIMs**) drawing upon my dual qualifications and experience in family law and psychology as a Specialist Family Law Mediator and Relationship, Family and Co-Parenting Counsellor / Psychotherapist.

A CIM empowers school-aged children with a voice to express their lived experience and can involve play or art therapy. I screen caregivers to safeguard against them weaponising the process against each other or the children.

I assess children for signs of trauma, attachment issues and third-party influence such as coaching or parental alienation. I reassure children that the dispute between their caregivers is not their fault, and encourage them to express their needs, concerns, and overall wishes. I discourage children from attempting to make decisions about their relationships with significant caregivers such as who they live with and how much time they spend with them.

A CIM is strictly confidential (subject to Duty of Care limitations) and non-reportable. The children's statements cannot be used in Court proceedings.

How does a CIM work?

My CIM services are only provided in person. Zoom is not utilised as this could expose children to undue influence out of sight from the camera.

A CIM has two parts. Part 1 is a lawyer-free zone and involves me spending time with the children and their significant caregivers (generally parents). Part 2 generally involved lawyers and is where the parents mediate the issues in dispute as informed by the children's lived experience.

I spend the morning with significant caregivers and children in a professional yet relaxed environment such as a specialist mediation centre. I also observe how children interact with caregivers. We begin with a (joint) meet-and-greet with caregivers and each child, then a first (individual) session with each child, then a first (joint) debrief with caregivers, then a second (individual) session with each child to clarify any issues raised during the debrief, then a second (joint) debrief with caregivers. Caregivers can observe my sessions with each child through glass windows to provide each child with the benefits of both safety and privacy. My approach is flexible and adapted as required to address any issues relating to allegations of domestic and family violence between caregivers.

If there are numerous children involved or complicated issues to consider, I may run the CIM over two days – Part 1 on the first day and Part 2 on the second day.

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CIM DO'S & DON'TS

Before the CIM

Do's – What to say to the child

- *You haven't done anything wrong*
- *You're not in trouble*
- *You don't have to choose between us as your parents*
- *You don't have to decide how much time you spend with each of us as your parents*
- *Rich is going to talk to you about what it's like having separated parents*
- *You should tell Rich the truth*
- *You can talk to Rich about anything you want to*
- *You don't have to talk to Rich about anything you're not comfortable with*
- *Rich is going to try to help us make the best decisions for you as your parents*

Don'ts – What NOT to say to the child

- *Make sure you tell Rich about _____*
- *Don't tell Rich about _____*
- *You want to live mostly with me, don't you?*
- *What are you going to tell Rich?*

After the CIM

Do's – What to say to the child

- *Did you feel heard when talking to Rich?*
- *Did you feel safe?*
- *Did you feel comfortable?*

Don'ts – What NOT to say to the child

- *What did you tell Rich?*
- *Why did you tell Rich _____ ?*

Do's – What to say to the other parent

- *How can we work better together to address _____ 's needs?*

Don'ts – What NOT to say to the other parent

- *See, I told you so!*
- *I'm glad _____ finally told the truth about you!*