International Academy of Family Lawyers
Asia Pacific Chapter

AsPacEd

November 2026

From the Chapter President

Kia ora koutou katoa (greetings everyone),

Here we are in November already! I am now approaching two months into my presidency, and it has certainly been a busy start to the new IAFL year.

The Asia Pacific Management Committee has hit the ground running. We have been busy establishing our new committee, welcoming new members and managing some changes to the key officers.

Following Ivan Cheong's decision to step down from the Vice President role, I am delighted to announce that Eleanor Lau is our new Vice President. We warmly congratulate Eleanor on her appointment. With Eleanor's move into the Vice President position, Jemma MacKenzie has stepped into the role of Secretary. Congratulations to Jemma on her appointment. We are delighted to have both Eleanor and Jemma taking on these important roles.

We are also delighted that Ivan will remain with us as an elected member of the Management Committee until the conclusion of this IAFL year. He will also continue as editor of AsPacEd for the time being, which is very much appreciated. Thank you, Ivan, for your continued contribution to the Chapter and your support during this transition.

New Fellows

I am delighted to announce that Her Honour Justice Evrol Mariette Peters from Malaysia has joined the IAFL family as a Judicial Fellow. Justice Peters was an integral part of our Chapter meeting in Kuala Lumpur, and we are thrilled to welcome another Judicial Fellow from the Asia Pacific region.

I am also very pleased to welcome Atsushi Shiraki from Japan and Siu Lin Goh from Malaysia as new Fellows of the Asia Pacific Chapter.

We are delighted to have you as part of our Chapter and look forward to seeing you at future IAFL events.

Asia Pacific Chapter Meeting – Auckland, 17–21 February 2027

The countdown is well and truly on! As we head towards the end of the year and the Christmas and summer holiday season here in the Southern Hemisphere, preparations for our Chapter meeting in Auckland are continuing at pace.

We have been delighted with the uptake in registrations and are equally pleased to be welcoming lawyer guests to join us. It is shaping up to be a fantastic meeting.

Our hotel allocation at the Horizon Hotel Auckland has now sold out. However, there are other excellent accommodation options available, all virtually on the doorstep of the New Zealand International Convention Centre (NZICC), where our meeting will be held.

In the first instance you can still make a reservation directly with the Horizon Hotel at its normal rates. Alternatively, The Grand by SkyCity (Level 3, 90 Federal Street, Auckland Central) is an excellent option, connected by SkyBridge to both the Convention Centre and the Horizon Hotel. Also nearby, and directly across the road from the Convention Centre, are the brand-new Hotel Grand Chancellor (80 Wellesley Street, Auckland Central) and Sudima Auckland City (63–67 Nelson Street, Auckland Central).

We have also been delighted by the demand for our social programme. We have managed to increase capacity for some of our most popular activities, but if you are contemplating attending, I strongly encourage you to register as soon as possible to avoid missing out.

In particular, one of our most popular social activities is proving to be the whale-watching excursion. New Zealand is blessed with an abundance of marine mammals, and the Waitematā Harbour is home to an impressive variety of wildlife, including common and bottlenose dolphins, orca, Bryde's whales and pygmy blue whales. We are also visited by other species of whales and dolphins throughout the year, so you may be lucky enough to spot something a little more unusual.





We are also delighted to be offering an outstanding selection of dining experiences across our Dine Arounds, Thursday evening dinner and Waiheke Island excursion. We have carefully selected some of Auckland's finest

restaurants and venues, all of which have impressive national and international accolades.

Here is a little taste of what awaits:

Origine Restaurant – Michelin Guide-selected for 2026 and awarded two hats by the Cuisine Good Food Guide.

Cassia Restaurant – Selected for inclusion in the inaugural Michelin Guide in New Zealand, recipient of the Sommelier Award and recognised in the Metro Restaurant of the Year awards. Cassia has also been awarded two hats by the Cuisine Good Food Guide.

The French Café – Michelin Guide-selected, with its General Manager receiving the Sommelier Award, and awarded two hats by the Cuisine Good Food Guide. The French Café has previously topped the New Zealand rankings and achieved a ranking of 309 in the world rankings by La Liste.

Metita – A two-hatted Cuisine Good Food Guide restaurant, named Hotel Restaurant of the Year in 2025, crowned Oceania's Best Restaurant at the 2024 World Culinary Awards and nominated for New Zealand's Best Restaurant in 2026.

Stonyridge Vineyard, Waiheke Island – Internationally renowned for its flagship Bordeaux-style red wine, Larose, Stonyridge was named by The Guardian UK as one of the world's top 10 wineries to visit. In a remarkable endorsement, an elite team of French sommeliers ranked the 1996 Stonyridge Larose equal first alongside Bordeaux legends including Château Pétrus, Lafite Rothschild, Latour and Cheval.

Mudbrick Vineyard, Waiheke Island – Another outstanding Waiheke destination, Mudbrick has enjoyed considerable success, taking out Champion Wine Company of the Show, together with six trophies and seven Gold and Double Gold medals. Its winemaker, Patrick Newton, was also named Winemaker of the Show.

We really are spoiling you with this programme, and we can't wait to share the very best of Tāmaki Makaurau (Auckland) with you. See you in February!

Hobart – The IAFL Family Gets Together

There was a record turnout of Australian Fellows, together with a wonderful contingent of international IAFL Fellows, at the 21st Australian Family Law Conference, organised by the Law Council of Australia (Family Law Section), in Hobart from 20–23 October 2026.

The IAFL panel, *Global Assets, Local Problems: Cross-Border Disputes*, featuring Suzanne Todd, Isaac Hikaka KC, Derek Ho, Shu Mei Hoon and Stephen Yoda, was exceptionally well received and proved to be a popular session at the conference.

A special thank you to William Sloan and Jemma MacKenzie for organising the Fellows' breakfast and lunch catch ups, they were fantastic opportunities for fellows to connect while all gathered in one place.

I encourage you all to read the AsPacEd report on the Hobart conference and take a look at the photos from the event. We even managed to get most of the IAFL family together for a photograph at the gala dinner on the final evening!



Fort Lauderdale – Next Stop!

It will soon be time for me to head to Fort Lauderdale, Florida, for the American and Canadian Chapter meeting. I am looking forward to catching up with our American and Canadian friends, as well as Fellows travelling from further afield.

Kathy Maddox and her team have put together an excellent educational programme, complemented by some fantastic social events. If you are considering attending, I would certainly encourage you to register. Our American and Canadian colleagues always give us such a warm welcome, and I know they love seeing Fellows from the Asia Pacific region joining them. After all, we do have a bit of a reputation for bringing the fun!

I look forward to sharing some highlights in the next newsletter.

Ngā mihi nui,

Inger Blackford

IAFL presence at the 21st National Family Law Conference (Hobart)

Jemma Mackenzie

A strong contingent of International Academy of Family Lawyers Fellows gathered in Hobart, Tasmania, from 20–23 October 2026 for the Law Council of Australia, Family Law Section's 21st National Family Law Conference.

Drawing a record attendance of more than 1,400 lawyers, judges, and legal professionals, the conference was one of (if not the) largest event of its kind held in the Southern Hemisphere. Congratulations and thanks to IAFL Fellow and Chair of the Family Law Section, Jason Walker (Melbourne) and the organising committee for such a successful conference.

The four-day program including discussions about how practitioners and courts navigate complex, evolving areas of family law practice. Key topics included legislative reforms focused on safety and the best interests of the child, artificial intelligence, developments in neuroscience, lived-experience perspectives in relation to family violence, and practitioner wellbeing.

As is customary, the end of conference gala was a highlight. Hosted at Princes Wharf No 1, attendees were encouraged to don their black-tie best in keeping with the theme '"Hobart's harbour after dark," to reflect Tasmania's twilight forests and starlit skies. IAFL fellows did not disappoint, with many remaining on the dance floor until the very end of the incredible set by Australian DJ 'Hot Dub Time Machine'.

The IAFL panel ""Global Assets, Local Problems: Cross Border Disputes" chaired by Justice Peter Campton, Senior Finance Judge of the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia (Sydney) was a stand-out on the education program. Congratulations to IAFL Global President Suzanne Todd, Steven Yoda (California, USA), Derek Ho (Hong Kong), Shu Mei Hoon (Singapore) and Isaac Hikaka (New Zealand) for what was an informative and engaging session.

Fellows from around the globe also took the opportunity to connect with colleagues, and to enjoy the very best that Hobart and the surrounding area had to offer. Multiple fellows made the trip on the ferry to MONA (Museum of Old and New Art), as well as visiting local wineries, galleries and fitting in some shopping. Many made the most of the warm and sunny Hobart weather, to enjoy the beautiful Botanic Gardens and Cascade Gardens – complete with platypus sightings!

More than 30 Fellows enjoyed a delicious, long lunch at Maldini Italian Restaurant in Salamanca Place on Tuesday, 20 October 2026 at which Past

IAFL Asia-Pacific Chapter President, Geoff Wilson, was presented with the IAFL 40th anniversary book. Lunch provided a convivial lead-in to the Conference opening function later that evening.

IAFL fellows gathered again for an (early!) breakfast on Thursday 22 October 2026 at Old Wharf, located directly on the stunning Hobart waterfront. It was evident the venue's barista was at times overwhelmed by our collective need for caffeine, prior to making our way to the Convention Centre in time for the commencement of the education program that day.

Thanks to William Sloan (Perth) and Jemma Mackenzie (Melbourne) for organizing and to the all the Fellows who took part in those events, which provided yet another opportunity for IAFL Fellows to catch up in person and to strengthen ties not only across the Asia-Pacific but the global family law community.

It was wonderful to see such a strong IAFL presence contributing to the program and connecting in Hobart.

We hope to see an equally strong IAFL contingent at the next Family Law Section's 22nd conference to take place in Darwin, Northern Territory in 2028 – mark your calendars!




MACCHERONI
PIANIGIANI


APEROL


landscapes
HOBART CONVENTION & EXHIBITION CENTRE
HOTEL GRAND CHANCELLOR
Presented by IAFL: Global
Local Problems: Cross-Bo
Disputes
Suzanne Todd, President of IAFL and Partner at With
Isaac Hikaka, Mills Lane Chambers, New Zealand
Derek Ho, Tonys Lawyers, Hong Kong
Shu Mei Hoon, Drew & Napier, Singapore
Steven Yoda, Walzer Melcher & Yoda LLP, California,
Session Chair and Presenter: Justice Campton, Feder
Court of Australia (Division 1)





IAFL Fellows join the celebrations for the Hong Kong Family Law Association 40th Anniversary: 5 and 6 November 2026

Caroline McNally

The Hong Kong Family Law Association's 40th Anniversary Symposium and Gala Dinner marked a significant milestone in the development of family law in

Hong Kong, celebrating four decades of professional excellence, education, and community. Held under the theme of Appropriate Dispute Resolution, the symposium brought together leading judges, lawyers, mediators, academics, and allied professionals from Hong Kong and other jurisdictions. Discussions explored best practices in mediation, collaborative law, and other approaches designed to support families in resolving disputes constructively and effectively. Speakers and participants highlighted the importance of collegiality, innovation, and a continued commitment to serving families facing some of life's most challenging transitions.

The Gala Dinner at The Hong Kong Club included keynote addresses on the development and future of family law in Hong Kong by Mr Justice Johnson Lam, Mr Justice Russell Coleman, Jacqueline Leong QC SC and Sir Robert Peel from England. The event honoured the achievements of past and present members while reaffirming the HKFLA's commitment to nurturing future generations of family law professionals. There was a strong sense of community that has been at the heart of the Association's success over the past forty years. IAFL fellows from other jurisdictions joined in the celebrations including Jason Walker, Eleanor Lau and Samantha Gershon from Australia and Steve Yoda from California.



AP Hour on 16 November 2025
Beyond Billables: What does success really look like in a modern law firm?

Moderator: Caroline McNally

Speakers:

Marco Raccuia, Chief Operating Officer of Hugill & Ip, Hong Kong

Robert Russell, Chief Financial Officer, Cage & Miles, USA

The discussion considered what traditional financial measures can — and cannot — tell us. Billable hours offer insight into workload and capacity, but they do not capture every contribution that makes a firm stronger, from mentoring and knowledge-sharing to building lasting client relationships.

While every firm talks about culture, the discussion covered what a strong culture looks like in practice. Measures of a positive culture include whether lawyers feel supported in their work, particularly in the challenging area of family law. The conversation also examined how leaders can create a culture in which people feel trusted, supported and able to raise concerns. That includes recognising collaboration and leadership alongside individual financial performance.

The question of culture also touched on how to manage a high-performing lawyer or rainmaker who is part of the problem. Robert shared his experience of how personality testing has helped to create teams with more complimentary personality traits.

Developing people requires more than good intentions. Mentorship needs time, meaningful feedback and recognition. Junior lawyers also benefit from appropriate opportunities to join client conversations, build confidence and develop their business skills under supervision.

The speakers agreed that business development, or business awareness should start on day 1. The more involvement a junior lawyer has in client management, including client acquisition, retention and good financial discipline, the better equipped they will be as future leaders.

As technology and AI reshape legal work, the speakers highlighted what productivity means when tasks can be completed more quickly. In sensitive family and private client matters, professional judgement, confidentiality and human oversight remain essential.

Ultimately, sustainable success is about building a firm where clients feel supported, people can grow and the next generation is ready to lead.

The December AP Hour: Year End Quiz and Asia Pacific Catch Up!

14 December 2026 UTC 08:00	Washington D.C. Virginia New York Florida	London	Hong Kong Taiwan Singapore Beijing	Japan	Brisbane	Sydney Melbourne	New Zealand	Malaysia
Start time	03:00	08:00	16:00	17:00	18:00	19:00	21:00	16:00
End time	04:00	09:00	17:00	18:00	19:00	20:00	22:00	17:00

It's that time of year again! To mark the festive season, join us on 14 December at UTC 8:00hrs for the end of year quiz and wine tasting notes.

Put on your festive-wear and hone your wine tasting and quiz answering skills for our final get-together of the year.

There will be a competition for the most festively dressed person, and the winner will receive a bonus point for their team. Please send your interest to Inger Blackford and Caroline McNally, and we will arrange the teams for you.

Ian Kennedy will be hosting a special virtual wine tasting session to inspire everyone to try something new for the holiday season.

Hosts: Inger Blackford and Ian Kennedy

Mark your calendars to join Fellows across the AsPac region and beyond for this festive hour.

Please join us for some end of year fun!
Don't forget to register using this link!

See you on 14 December 2026!

- **NB:** When you log-in for the AP Hour, you may have to use your "personal" Zoom password first, then enter the Meeting ID & passcode.

Click here to register

IAFL ASIA PACIFIC CHAPTER MEETING, AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND



Join us in Auckland in Feb 2027

Hot on the heels of what was a truly outstanding Meeting in Kuala Lumpur, we're already looking forward to what's next, **Auckland, 17–21 February 2027**. Kuala Lumpur truly raised the bar with its energy, connections, and memorable moments, so no pressure… but we know there are some pretty big shoes to fill ! That said, we're excited to take on the challenge and create something just as special (and a little bit different). Auckland will bring its own unique flavour, incredible scenery, a warm welcome, and plenty of opportunities to reconnect, catch up, and build on the conversations we started. We're working on putting together something fresh, engaging, and genuinely worthwhile for everyone coming along. Until then…Nau mai, haere mai, we look forward to welcoming you to Aotearoa in February 2027, we can't wait to see you there.

The Auckland Sponsorship Prospectus can be found at this link:
https://www.iafl.com/media/v4fhtchk/20261028-auckland-sponsorship-opportunities-v16.pdf

If you are interested in magnifying your presence at the meeting through involvement as a sponsor, please direct your enquiry to:
Ele Dexter, European Chapter Manager, IAFL
ele.dexter@iafl.com.

Pre-Conference Golf Day (at own cost) - Tuesday 16 February

Anyone interested in playing 18 holes at the Te Arai links is welcome to join on Tuesday 16 February.

The cost is NZ $975 for international guests and NZ$550 for New Zealanders and Australians.

Tee off is at 12:50 (and thereafter).

Te Arai golf links is 90 minutes from Auckland.

Please contact Mark Sandelin (mailto: mark.sandelin@millslane.co.nz) to book; Mark plans to arrange a shuttle bus at an additional cost.



We acknowledge the sponsors of the 2027 Chapter meeting:

Add 'IAFL Asia Pacific Chapter Meeting Auckland' to calendar



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Please note: adding the event to calendar does not register you for the event.
Please click on the separate registration button.

Upcoming Events

2 - 6 December 2026 USA & Canadian Chapter's Meeting, Fort Lauderdale, USA

17 - 21 February 2027 Asia Pacific Chapter Meeting, Auckland, New Zealand

12 - 15 May 2027 USA & Canadian Chapter Meeting, New York City

31 May - 2 June 2027 IACP Collaborative Practice Training, Nagoya, Japan

3 - 5 June 2027 LawAsia Family Law & Children's Rights Conference, Nagoya, Japan

15 - 19 September 2027 IAFL Annual Meeting, Mumbai, India

1 - 5 December 2027 IAFL European Chapter Meeting, Vienna, Austria

Please note the dates, times, and topics may change and are not finalised. We hope to see you at as many of the events as possible!

AsPacEd would love to hear from Fellows!

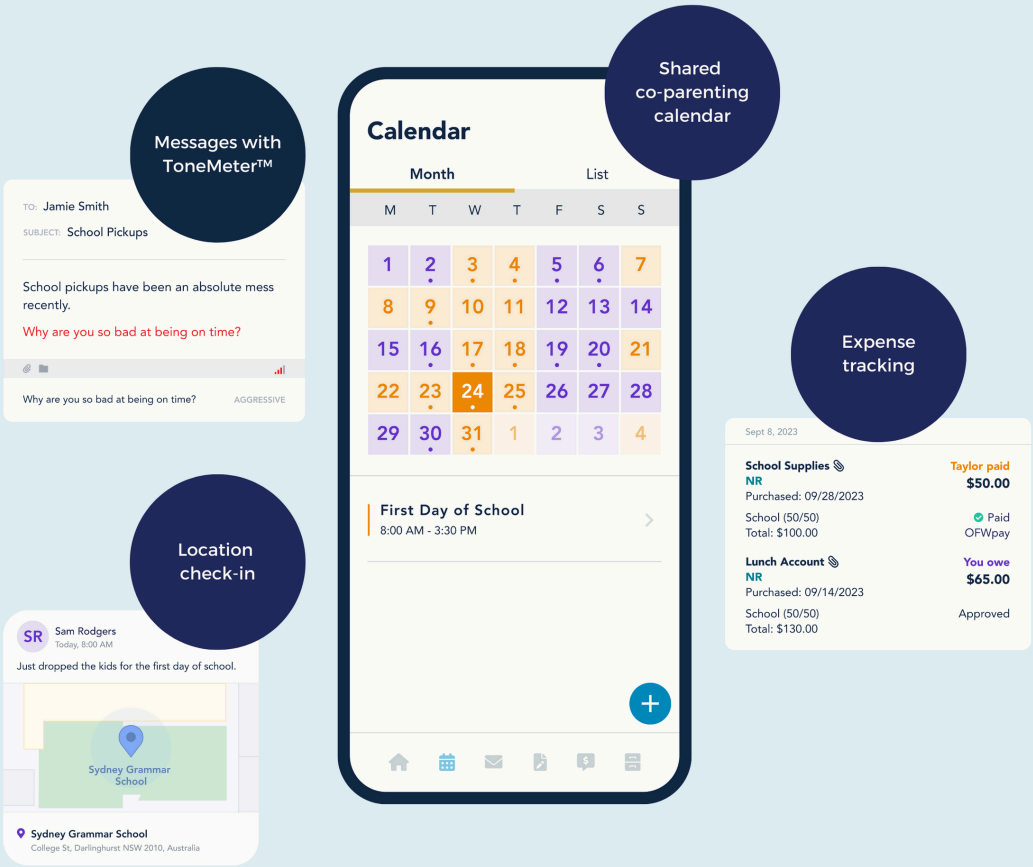
What will 2026 bring to the practice of family law on an international level? The Asia-Pacific Chapter AP Hour is an excellent and exciting opportunity for us as family lawyers in the Asia-Pacific region to meet and continue to learn and grow from one another.

If you have an article or a news item for publication in AsPacEd, please contact one of our editors:
Ivan Cheong, Tomoko Takase, Keturah Sageman, Prawidha Murti (Wida) **or** *Stuart Barr*.

If you would like to suggest topics or speakers for a future AP Hour, please contact one of our Coordinators:
Caroline McNally, Shu Mei Hoon, Jacky Campbell ***or*** *Saudamini Sharma*.

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