



Trusted and authoritative voice on regional social issues, influencing better justice outcomes

Standing up for fairness in the Children's Court

For years, ARC Justice has seen how difficult the Child Protection system can be for families in regional Victoria.

In late 2024, when the Children's Court of Victoria removed Conciliation Conferences from Family Division proceedings, we saw the impact immediately: delays, confusion and most of all, a loss of voice for parents – especially First Nations families and those already facing systemic disadvantage.

ARC Justice's Managing Lawyer (Families), Nicole Day, an Accredited Specialist in Children's Law, has led our response on this issue and the Court's more recent consultation about proposed changes to Judicial Resolution Conferences (JRCs) and Case Readiness Events (CREs).

Drawing on nearly a decade of practice experience and working closely with the Bendigo and District Aboriginal Co-operative and other legal services, Nicole helped shape ARC's formal submission to the Court's consultation on JRCs and CREs.

Nicole's work is grounded in what ARC sees every day in court: regional families losing trust in a system that feels rushed, remote and adversarial. By capturing these lived experiences and translating them into practical, evidence-based recommendations, ARC Justice has become a trusted regional voice in the reform conversation.

With real case examples, Nicole outlined how JRCs, unlike Readiness Hearings, offer a meaningful chance for families to be heard and for decisions to be made with their voice in the room.

The submission doesn't just argue for reform – it demonstrates the consequences of current policy settings and proposes workable solutions informed by on-the-ground experience. It highlights how regional disadvantage compounds legal complexity, why in-person, informal hearings matter and how removing funded, structured alternatives to litigation risks deepening injustice.

This work reflects Outcome 6 in action – ARC Justice influencing better justice outcomes by combining local insight, legal expertise and collaboration to shape policy and system reform.

Nicole's leadership shows how ARC Justice speaks with authority on regional legal issues, not just by identifying problems but by advocating for reforms that make the justice system fairer and more accessible for regional Victorians.

