



Separating from your spouse – important information and documents to collate

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When a relationship ends, it can be a very emotional time, and it can be difficult to think clearly about what you should be doing to prepare yourself for separation. There are a number of documents and other vital information you should consider collating at the time of separation.

Having access to copies of documents or information will greatly assist in achieving a fair and just negotiated settlement with your former spouse. Further, if your separation becomes complicated, it may be very difficult to obtain copies in the future, particularly if your former partner becomes uncooperative.

For more detailed information about all the things you need to consider during separation, see our blog [“Top 10 things to consider after separating from your partner”](#).

What documents or information will help me after separation?

The following are examples of the types of documents and information that will be relevant and helpful to you:

bank and credit card statements for individual and joint accounts;

mortgage, loan or lease agreements;

correspondence from professional advisors, i.e. lawyers, accountants and financial advisors;

payslips and superannuation statements – including Self Managed Super Funds (SMSF) financial records;

employment contracts;

share certificates or share portfolio statements;

trust deeds and minutes of trust meetings;

receipts for major expenses – for example, school fees and house renovation invoices.

Ideally, you should make copies of these documents or take the original copy and keep them in a safe place.

Photos of houses and precious items

During the emotional strain a separation can bring, it can be difficult to remember specific details of assets. You may not clearly recollect how a property was maintained or the existence of a particular painting or an antique piece of furniture, [particularly if a property settlement occurs some months or years after separation](#).

It can be a worthwhile exercise to take photos of the inside and outside of your house, including the gardens, to verify the state the property was in at the time of separation. We also suggest taking photos of furniture, paintings and any other valuable items in the house.

A good tip is to date stamp a photo, or to take a photo with the front page of that day's newspaper in the background!

You may consider a certain document or piece of information has little relevance or not understand its contents at the time of separation, however, it is better to have too much information than very little information!

Your separation is unique

The above is a suggested list of the types of documents or information that will likely be relevant and helpful in a property settlement following separation. However, no two family law matters are the same.

You should always consider the individual circumstances of your relationship, including any business or commercial activities you and your former partner were involved with.

At Meillon & Bright, we have extensive experience working on property settlements, including complex company and trust arrangements. If you are considering separation or are recently separated, we can provide you with advice for your particular circumstance.

The information contained in this article is of general nature and should not be construed as legal advice. If you require further information, advice or assistance for your specific circumstances, please contact us.