

# Queensland CHAPTER EVENT



## CLINICAL FORUM - PRESENTATION OVERVIEW

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### *Don't Be Caught Out! Health Professionals in the Courtroom*

Dr Catherine Skellern

Forensic Paediatrician, Child Advocacy Service, Royal Children's Hospital, Brisbane

This presentation will discuss the legal justice system and the experience of health professionals who may find themselves being asked to give evidence or attend court in relation to proceedings that relate to their professional functions. The presentation will summarise the legal justice system in Queensland, and discuss how specific courts undertake legal decision-making tasks in matters relating to allegations of harm in children. Specific focus will be on the professionals involved in trial processes and evidential processes that apply in trial proceedings that may be used to test evidence. The role of the medical expert witness will be discussed and will include an explanation of how standards and principles are applied to formulation of expert opinion in relation to the medical evaluation of suspicious childhood injury. This will include definitions of conclusions regarding suspicious childhood injury events that differentiate medical decision making from the legal decision-making tasks which rests with other professionals who are involved in the assessment, investigation and legal conclusions that follow allegations of harm.

Dr Catherine Skellern is a forensic paediatrician who works in the Child Advocacy Service at the Royal Children's Hospital in Brisbane. She has dual qualifications in forensic medicine and paediatrics and regularly provides expert evidence to the legal justice system on cases that involve allegations of harm to children. In addition to other research interests, she has undertaken research in the field of child protection and forensic paediatrics which has included the development of standards for medico-legal opinions that arise in the forensic evaluation of suspicious childhood injuries.