

The Friday Forum

On Teams

3.30pm–5.00pm AEDT, 25 November 2022

Cruelty, desertion and the family: **Converging histories of marriage and domestic violence**

In October, the Federal Government launched the next National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children (2022-2032). While headlines focussed on the ambitious goal of ending violence against women and children within a generation, others noted that the plan makes little mention of the challenges of the family law system, or the widespread poverty endured by single mothers who have experienced domestic violence. In our history of domestic violence in Australia from 1850-present, family and marriage law have emerged as key sites for tracing what options were available for women and children fleeing violence, and what obstacles and repercussions they faced in doing so. We focus on three time periods: **Ann Curthoys** investigates colonial petitions for marriage separation on the grounds of cruelty; **Catherine Kevin** draws on petitions for constructive desertion from 1918-1970; and **Zora Simic** considers the Family Law system, inaugurated by the Family Law Act 1975.



[Mary Leunig \(1992\). \[Domestic violence\].](#)

Chair: Dr Ellen Warne, ACU.

Speakers:

- **Professor Ann Curthoys** is a historian who has worked in many field of Australian history, and on questions of history, theory, and historical writing.
- **Associate Professor Catherine Kevin** teaches and researches in the fields of Australian history and feminist history, particularly Indigenous-settler relations, the politics and experience of the reproductive body and gendered violence, at Flinders University.
- **Dr Zora Simic** is a Senior Lecturer in History and Gender Studies at UNSW, where she teaches and researches histories of sexuality, gender, migration and feminism.