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Dear Presidents

**Federal Court of Australia – Coronavirus (COVID-19) – Update 24**

It has been a little while since I last wrote. The Court has been continuing to hear matters at reasonably full capacity using remote technology.

Next week the Court will begin to hear some matters in-person in court. I have asked judges of the Court to identify matters in their dockets that are either essential or highly advisable to hear by in-person hearings. From next Monday there will be a limited number of in-person hearings in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane. The individual arrangements are being discussed by the judges with counsel and parties. Only limited numbers of people will be allowed to be within the courtroom for a whole day. The question of precautions is not limited to social distancing but also involves the possible infection load in the atmosphere by reference to the number of people in the room, air-conditioning and the size of the court rooms. The Court is still in the process of obtaining advice in relation to these matters. It is considered, however, that in the light of public health regulations around the country that the Court can prudently begin to hear cases in court.

I had intended to prioritise short (2 hours and under) unrepresented applications and appeals. In the light of the number of more complex cases requiring reasonably urgent attention I have given permission for these cases to be prioritised for in-person hearings.

The Court will be looking at a balanced and safe reintroduction of as many cases as are essential or appropriate to hear in person. Very relevant are the restrictions on the functional use of buildings, including in particular lift capacities, under current health requirements.

I enclose Special Measures information note for (SMIN-4) which was published earlier this week.

By all means feel free to make this memorandum available to your members.

Yours sincerely



**The Hon James Allsop**  
Chief Justice