



CHIEF JUSTICE'S CHAMBERS  
SUPREME COURT  
MELBOURNE 3000

21 August 2020

Ms Wendy Harris QC  
President  
Victorian Bar  
Room 2313, Aickin Chambers  
200 Queen Street  
MELBOURNE VIC 3000

**BY EMAIL**

Dear President

I am writing to you on behalf of the Supreme, County, Magistrates' and Children's Courts.

Online hearings have enabled the Courts to progress the cases of many Victorians while limiting the movement of people in the interest of public health at this difficult time. I want to reiterate what was said by the Courts when Stage 4 restrictions were announced.

All jurisdictions are conscious that this new environment requires lawyers to operate largely from their homes. While many have adapted to this mode of working already, others will be making new arrangements and doing so in different household environments. The challenges this presents are acknowledged and the jurisdictions will be mindful of this.

Where there are difficulties that arise, whether for litigants, practitioners, or witnesses, due to the current restrictions, be that caring for children, caring for elderly relatives, difficulty accessing material, issues arising from a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 or some other circumstance, the Courts will take these matters into account.

The Courts encourage these matters to be raised with the relevant judicial officer. The appropriate course to take can then be considered.

In the Supreme Court, that may mean scheduling hearings at a different time, limiting hearing hours, scheduling breaks, adjourning the matter to allow more time for preparation or adjourning the matter until after restrictions have eased. Many have done this already as is appropriate. The Supreme Court will continue to consider matters on a case by case basis.

The County Court processes are set out in its protocols:

[https://www.countycourt.vic.gov.au/practice-notes?filters\[keyword\]=coronavirus&sort=Updated](https://www.countycourt.vic.gov.au/practice-notes?filters[keyword]=coronavirus&sort=Updated)

The processes of the Magistrates' Court and Children's Court are set out in their practice directions:

<https://mcv.vic.gov.au/practice-directions?combine=&year=2020>

<https://www.childrenscourt.vic.gov.au/legal/practice-directions>

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'A' followed by a horizontal line that curves upwards and ends in a small dot.

**ANNE FERGUSON**

*Chief Justice*

cc The Hon Justice Peter Kidd, Chief Judge, County Court of Victoria  
Her Honour Judge Lisa Hannan, Chief Magistrate, Magistrates' Court of Victoria  
Her Honour Judge Amanda Chambers, President, Children's Court of Victoria