

District Court Public Notice re COVID – 19

In response to the impact of COVID – 19 on the operations of the District Court of Western Australia, the following advice is given to users of the Court, including members of the public and the legal profession.

At the present time all trials and hearings remain listed. A decision as to whether jury trials shall proceed is currently under consideration.

All staff and judicial officers of the court have been advised that:

- (a) If they have COVID – 19 symptoms and have had possible exposure to the virus, they should not present for work until they have medical confirmation that they do not have the virus.
- (b) If they have recently travelled overseas OR have had contact with a confirmed case of COVID 19, they should not present themselves to work and they should place themselves in isolation for a period of no less than 14 days.

Similarly, if court users (including litigants, witnesses and legal practitioners) meet this criteria, and have upcoming court hearings, including mediations, they are advised to contact the associate of the relevant judicial officer hearing the matter (or otherwise enquire through the registry) as to whether it is appropriate to attend the court or whether alternative arrangements are necessary. Where possible arrangements will be made for attendance at hearings by telephone or video link.

While the Court remains open to the public, the Court recommends that only legal practitioners, parties, witnesses and media should attend court hearings. Other members of the public are requested not to attend.

Any person summoned for jury duty who meets the above criteria should contact the Sheriff's Office by telephone 9425 2481 with a view to seeking a postponement of their jury service.

Filing of documents

To reduce the risk of exposure to the COVID 19 virus for staff and judicial officers the following procedures will apply:

(a) Civil Jurisdiction

Currently the civil jurisdiction of the court operates as an E court with all documents electronically filed. The court will no longer scan documents for self-represented litigants to place on the electronic file. Self-represented litigants will be required to email any document they wish to lodge with the court. Please email to civildc@justice.wa.gov.au

(b) Criminal jurisdiction

The court will no longer accept documents filed in a hard copy form. All documents are to be filed by email either through the registry email address criminaldc@justice.wa.gov.au or through the judge's or registrar's associates email address.

At trial listing hearings, sentencing listing hearings, sentencing hearings and directions hearings hard copy documents will no longer be accepted. For example, listing certificates, notices of acting, submissions and references. All documents are to be filed by email. All documents filed (except for urgent cases) must be filed in strict compliance with time limitations contained in the Practice Directions of the court. Where no Practice Direction is applicable all documents are to be filed no later than two business days before any hearing. This will be strictly enforced so that court staff and judicial officers are not overwhelmed by late emails.

The court will continue to review its practices and procedures so as to appropriately respond to the rapidly changing situation and information available in relation to the COVID 19 virus. Litigants, legal practitioners and other users of the court should check the court website daily for updates.