



CHIEF JUSTICE'S CHAMBERS  
FEDERAL COURT OF AUSTRALIA  
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27 March 2020

Dear Presidents

**Federal Court of Australia – Coronavirus (COVID-19) – Update 12**

First, I will be circulating either today or Monday a revised Special Measures Information and Practice Note. There has been very helpful assistance from the profession in this regard for which the Court is grateful.

Secondly, the Court continues to hear matters on Teams. Many judges are now experimenting with it and becoming familiar with it. By and large the experience is good. Hearings are of course slower and require a significant degree of technical and practical co-operation. But the work of the Court looks like being able to continue by this method. We await the development of our own technical capacity in the next few weeks which will supplement to a significant degree the use of Microsoft Teams.

To the extent that there are other platforms available we will, in the coming weeks, consider introducing flexibility of approach.

Thirdly, you may know there has been a data breach in relation to s 91X of the *Migration Act*. The Court is urgently seeking to identify the extent of and to remedy that breach. At least until that is finalised there is a restriction on the public search facility in the Commonwealth Courts broadly in relation to migration. I will report to you separately on that breach on Monday.

Fourthly, we have had significant co-operation from the Victorian Bar Association in assistance with migration work. I encourage other professional associations to contact Simon Hagg our Migration Registrar to the extent that they wish to participate in pro bono work for migration applicants and appellants. In particular we are dealing with matters where there is someone in immigration detention. Where these applicants or appellants need interpretation and are not represented there are significant hurdles to hear their cases. In relation to assistance in this area the Bar Associations and Law Societies should contact [Simon.hagg@fedcourt.gov.au](mailto:Simon.hagg@fedcourt.gov.au).

Fifthly, I have finalised the May Full Court List. It is a heavily truncated list. This is to maximise the flexibility of the Court in being able to deal with its workload. Over the next few weeks we may be able to increase the number of appeals that can be heard, if not in May, then shortly thereafter. I am conscious of allowing the Court, the judges and the profession enough time to become familiar with remote hearings before putting too much work load into the pipeline. When I am confident that the remote hearing mechanism is well socialised and being effectively utilised I will consider the level of workflow that we can be doing.

Yours sincerely



The Hon James Allsop  
Chief Justice