



**CHIEF JUSTICE'S CHAMBERS**  
**FAMILY COURT OF AUSTRALIA**  
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4 June 2021

## **Family Court of Australia and Federal Circuit Court of Australia - National COVID-19 List**

As you may be aware, in April 2020 the Family Court of Australia and the Federal Circuit Court of Australia (“the Courts”) established a court list dedicated to dealing exclusively with urgent family law disputes that have arisen as a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The COVID-19 list received wide-spread support and praise from community legal and support services, advocates for victims of domestic violence, and the legal profession. However, the Courts are keen to ensure that the legal profession remain aware that the COVID-19 List continues to be available to family law litigants. In particular, on 20 January 2021, COVID-19 List expanded its operation to provide for a broader range of circumstances to be included in the criteria for the List.

The continuation and expansion of the COVID-19 list provides families that are experiencing family law disputes that relate to the pandemic, with an avenue to have that specific issue heard and resolved quickly.

Applications that meet the expanded COVID-19 criteria will be given a first return date before a National Registrar, Senior Registrar or a Judge within 3 business days of being considered by the National Registrar if assessed as urgent, or otherwise within 7 business days if priority but not urgent. Government funding has enabled the continuation of this initiative. The funding provides for Senior Registrar resources (that were not previously available) dedicated to hear interim contested issues in a more-timely manner. The operation of the COVID-19 list is set out in [Joint Practice Direction 1 of 2021](#).

The COVID-19 list would be particularly beneficial to clients or litigants affected by COVID-19 in circumstances where: there has been an increase in risk of family violence; there are concerns in relation to existing or proposed parenting orders; there is a dispute regarding vaccinations against COVID-19; medical issues have arisen; there are concerns in relation to

travel arrangements or border restrictions; there are concerns in relation to supervised contact; there are urgent or priority financial and maintenance issues.

The Courts would appreciate any assistance you may be able to provide in ensuring the legal profession is aware of the continued availability of the National COVID-19 List and its expanded operation. The Courts are keen to ensure that families in need receive the benefit of this initiative.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'A. Alstergren', is positioned below the text 'Yours sincerely'.

The Honourable Justice Alstergren  
Chief Justice, Family Court of Australia  
Chief Judge, Federal Circuit Court of Australia