



Media Release

STATEMENT FROM THE CHIEF JUSTICE OF VICTORIA

Monday, 16 March, 2020

The following statement is from the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Victoria and Chair of the Courts Council, Anne Ferguson.

The Victorian Courts Council considers the health and wellbeing of staff and court users as its highest priority. As the situation around coronavirus disease (COVID-19) rapidly evolves, Victoria's courts and the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) are looking at ways we can adapt how we work to reduce its spread.

A number of measures have already been implemented, including:

- increased cleaning,
- installation of hand sanitiser dispensers in common areas,
- cancelling non-essential meetings,
- suspending new civil and criminal jury trials,
- suspending Admissions Ceremonies for new lawyers,
- suspending the VCE Education Program,
- suspending work experience arrangements, and
- suspending all Judicial College of Victoria courses.

The courts and VCAT are investigating a range of options to manage daily operations in the event of reduced services, staffing and resources. This includes:

- staggering court times to prevent morning crowds at entrance points,
- increasing the capacity for video conferencing and hearings,
- evaluating and prioritising cases,
- remote working options for staff, where possible, and
- managing some matters without in-court appearances.

The Courts and VCAT are in regular communication and are closely following State and Commonwealth government advice.

We will continue to update the legal sector, parties involved and the community where changes occur and thank all court users and staff for their patience and understanding at this unprecedented time.

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