

**Joint Statement
Victorian Courts and VCAT
Easing of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Restrictions**

Monday, 7 September, 2020

Joint jurisdictional statement on the easing of Coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions, from the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Victoria, Anne Ferguson.

Victoria's courts and the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) will begin working with the legal profession and justice stakeholders on a coordinated response to the foreshadowed gradual easing of COVID-19 restrictions.

All of our courts and VCAT have closely followed public health advice as we rapidly adapted to the COVID-19 environment.

Each jurisdiction is now largely managing matters online, with limited physical attendance in our buildings.

In light of the announcement from the Premier of Victoria yesterday, we will carefully consider what changes we can make practically, safely and steadily in line with the easing of each level of restrictions.

As Courts Council Chair, I have asked my fellow Council member, State Coroner, His Honour Judge Cain, to work through the next steps with the criminal courts, the legal profession and criminal justice stakeholders.

As Chief Justice, I will consult with the civil courts, the legal profession and civil justice stakeholders. The focus of this consultation will be on changes that can be made in common law, commercial, family violence, child protection and other civil matters as restrictions ease.

We have been extremely grateful for the co-operation and perseverance of everyone who has worked so hard with us to keep our virtual doors open.

We understand the importance of doing everything possible to slow the spread of COVID-19, while still delivering justice for the community.

Each jurisdiction has made a number of significant procedural and practical changes since March this year.

We now look forward to working with Victoria's legal sector and justice stakeholders to develop a sustainable, coordinated response to the latest public health developments.

Once again, we thank all of our court users and staff for their patience and understanding.

**The Honourable Chief Justice Anne Ferguson, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court
The Honourable Chief Judge Peter Kidd, Chief Judge of the County Court
The Honourable Justice Michelle Quigley, President of VCAT
Her Honour Judge Lisa Hannan, Chief Magistrate
Her Honour Judge Amanda Chambers, President of the Children's Court
His Honour Judge John Cain, State Coroner**