



Supreme Court of Victoria

Practice Note SC Gen 4

Custom, Protocol and Communication with the Court

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Chief Justice has authorised the issue of this Practice Note.
- 1.2 The purpose of this Practice Note is to set out matters of protocol relating to the Supreme Court.

2. COMMENCEMENT

- 2.1 This Practice Note was issued and commences on 14 September 2026.

3. DEFINITIONS

- 3.1 In this Practice Note:

Court staff includes associates and Registry staff

Party includes the legal representative of a party

Senior Counsel includes a person appointed as Senior Counsel or King's Counsel

4. TITLES AND FORMS OF ADDRESS

- 4.1 In accordance with established custom and practice, and pursuant to determinations of the Chief Justice under ss 9B and 9C of the *Supreme Court Act 1986*, the following are the relevant titles and forms of address for members of the Supreme Court:

Chief Justice

Addressing verbally in court: Your Honour

Addressing verbally outside of court: Chief Justice

Addressing a letter: The Honourable Chief Justice...

Beginning a letter: Dear Chief Justice

Judgment citations: [Last name] CJ (e.g. Niall CJ)

President of the Court of Appeal

Addressing verbally in court: Your Honour

Addressing verbally outside of court: President

Addressing a letter: The Honourable Justice... President of the Court of Appeal

Beginning a letter: Dear Justice...

Judgment citations: [Last name] P (e.g. Emerton P)

Judge

Addressing verbally in court: Your Honour

Addressing verbally outside of court: Justice...

Addressing a letter: The Honourable Justice...

Beginning a letter: Dear Justice...

Judgment citations: [Last name] JA (for Judges of Appeal), J (for Judges of the Trial Division), or AJA (for Judges of the Trial Division sitting as an acting Judge of Appeal)

Associate Judge

Addressing verbally in court: Your Honour

Addressing verbally outside of court: Associate Justice...

Addressing a letter: The Honourable Associate Justice...

Beginning a letter: Dear Associate Justice...

Judgment citations: [Last name] AsJ (e.g. Ierodionou AsJ)

Judicial Registrar

Addressing verbally in court: Judicial Registrar

Addressing verbally outside of court: Judicial Registrar...

Addressing a letter: Judicial Registrar...

Beginning a letter: Dear Judicial Registrar...

Judgment citations: [Last name] JR (e.g. Freeman JR)

- 4.2 Reserve Judges are to be referred to in the same manner as other Judges.

5. INTERSTATE SENIOR COUNSEL

- 5.1 Senior Counsel appointed elsewhere in Australia will be accorded, in the courts of Victoria, the seniority and privileges of Senior Counsel.
- 5.2 Their seniority will be determined by reference to the date of their first appointment as Senior Counsel in any Australian jurisdiction.

6. COMMUNICATIONS

- 6.1 The principal means of communication by parties with the Court is through the filing of court documents as required by the Rules and submissions made in open court.
- 6.2 Communication outside of these avenues should occur only where necessary. Before making an enquiry of the Court, parties should consult information available on the Court's website, including relevant Rules and Practice Notes.

- 6.3 Where necessary, communications with the Court about a proceeding should occur via the Registry or through chambers via the relevant associate.
- 6.4 All communications must be undertaken with care so as not to undermine the impartiality or integrity of the Court. Parties must not involve Court staff in disputes between parties. Parties should not routinely copy the Court in to correspondence between them, or include the Court in correspondence involving negotiations between the parties.
- 6.5 Irrelevant or burdensome communications sent to the Court will not receive a response and the conduct of a party may be referred to a judicial officer.
- 6.6 All communications must be honest and respectful. Communications that are disrespectful, aggressive, abusive or threatening in tone or content will not be tolerated. Communications of this kind:
- in the case of a phone or in person conversation, may be ended;
 - in the case of written communications, will not receive a response; and
 - in any case, may be referred to the relevant authorities.
- 6.7 Court staff endeavour to respond to enquiries as soon as they are able. Follow-up enquiries from parties prior to a response reduce the capacity of Court staff to deal with enquiries efficiently and delay responses. It is not appropriate for parties to seek to impose timeframes for responses by Court staff, or to state consequences for any failure to meet those timeframes.
- 6.8 Communications between parties and Court staff must always be transparent and confined to uncontroversial matters. Except for purely routine administrative matters that involve no controversy, communications by telephone or in person should be avoided. Otherwise, email correspondence is preferred, with all parties copied in.
- 6.9 Each party is responsible for disclosing to all other parties the substance of any phone or in person conversation with Court staff.
- 6.10 Each party is responsible for ensuring that its email address for service is current and that any change is notified in accordance with the Rules. Requests to the Court for communications to be sent to other email addresses for parties or practitioners will generally not be accommodated.
- 6.11 Law firms must have internal arrangements to ensure that correspondence promptly reaches the appropriate lawyer.
- 6.12 Parties are expected to respond promptly to emails sent by the Court, and ordinarily within no more than two business days for non-urgent matters, unless a different deadline is specified.
- 6.13 A party seeking a time for a hearing or agreement to a course of action should, except in *ex parte* hearings or where otherwise unavoidable, first inform the other parties before contacting the Court. Where a party proposes a course of action in the conduct of the proceeding that is not agreed, or may be contested,

the formal processes available by summons and operation of the Rules should be used.

- 6.14 Court staff are not permitted to give legal advice and parties must not seek such advice. This includes advice about whether a proceeding should be commenced, what should be said in a document or submission, what the outcome of a proceeding may be, or explanations of orders or judgments.

7. COURT ATTIRE

- 7.1 Attire in court proceedings, whether the hearing is in-person or remote, should be appropriate to the decorum of the Court and the standing of the legal profession.
- 7.2 In accordance with the practice of the Bar, counsel are expected to follow the robing practice of the Bench.
- 7.3 Judges do not robe for interlocutory matters including directions hearings and counsel are therefore not required to appear robed for those matters.
- 7.4 Judges will generally robe for trial except where the trial is of an urgent application in the Practice Court.
- 7.5 Counsel are requested to robe for all ceremonial sittings of the Court, including welcomes, farewells, the appointment of Senior Counsel and admission ceremonies. Any person moving an admission at an admissions ceremony is to be fully robed.
- 7.6 Associate Judges robe in the same circumstances as Judges of the Court. Judicial Registrars do not robe.
- 7.7 Pursuant to s 9A of the *Supreme Court Act 1986*, the Chief Justice has resolved that Judges of the Court will not wear wigs. However, if a Judge presiding over a criminal jury trial considers that an exceptional case warrants the wearing of a judicial wig, the Judge may seek the express permission of the Chief Justice to do so.

AMENDMENT HISTORY

30 January 2017: This Practice Note was issued on 30 January 2017 and replaced aspects of Practice Notes No 6 of 1985; No 4 of 2002; 6 of 2008; 1 of 2011; and Notice to the Profession issued 26 May 2016.

22 December 2025: This Practice Note was reissued on 22 December 2025 and replaced the version issued on 30 January 2017.

14 September 2026: This Practice Note was reissued on 14 September 2026 and replaced the version issued on 22 December 2025.

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Executive Associate to the Chief Justice

14 September 2026