



# Supreme Court of Victoria

## Practice Note SC CL 1

### Civil Circuit List

#### 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Chief Justice has authorised the issue of the following Practice Note.
- 1.2 The purpose of this Practice Note is to describe the procedures to be followed in the Civil Circuit List. The List is a case management list within the Common Law Division of the Court.
- 1.3 To provide parties residing in regional Victoria with greater access to the Court, civil trials may be heard in Ballarat, Bendigo, Geelong, Hamilton, Horsham, Mildura, Morwell, Sale, Shepparton, Wangaratta, Warrnambool and Wodonga. The purpose of the List is to co-ordinate the hearing of civil trials in these locations.

#### 2 DEFINITIONS

- 2.1 In this Practice Note:  
*List* means the Civil Circuit List.

#### 3 COMMENCEMENT

- 3.1 This Practice Note commenced on 1 March 2018 and applies to all proceedings in the List whenever commenced.

#### 4 PROCEEDINGS SUITABLE FOR INCLUSION IN THE LIST

- 4.1 A proceeding should be initiated in the List where the cause of action arose in regional Victoria, or where the majority of parties or witnesses reside in regional Victoria.
- 4.2 The fact that the legal representatives and/or expert witnesses for each of the parties is based in Melbourne is not sufficient reason for a proceeding of the nature set out in paragraph 4.1 to be heard in Melbourne, rather than in the relevant regional location.
- 4.3 Notwithstanding paragraph 4.1, all proceedings in which a Plaintiff alleges that he or she is suffering from a dust disease (as defined in Practice Note SC CL 2 Dust Diseases List) should be initiated in the Dust Diseases List. Such proceedings will nevertheless normally be fixed for trial in an appropriate

circuit sitting and managed as a Regional Proceeding in accordance with Practice Note SC CL 2.

## **5 PROCEDURE FOR ENTRY INTO THE LIST**

- 5.1 Proceedings should be initiated in the List by endorsing the heading of the originating process with the name of the relevant circuit (e.g. “Supreme Court of Victoria at Bendigo”) and “Civil Circuit List”. The heading of all subsequent documents filed in the proceeding should also be endorsed with the name of the relevant circuit and “Civil Circuit List”. Originating process and other documents in a proceeding in the List may be filed either in the Principal Registry at Melbourne or in a regional registry of the Court.
- 5.2 No additional fees will be payable for the inclusion of a proceeding in the List.
- 5.3 If at any time after the initiation of a proceeding it appears to the Court that it is appropriate to have the trial heard in a regional location, the proceeding may be transferred into the List on the Court’s own motion.
- 5.4 Conversely, a proceeding initiated in the List may be transferred out of the List on the Court’s own motion if it appears to the Court that it is appropriate to have the trial heard in Melbourne.
- 5.5 Since the Court shares jurisdiction with the County Court of Victoria in respect of numerous types of claims, the Court may initiate a transfer of a proceeding in accordance with the *Courts (Case Transfer) Act 1991* (Vic) if it appears that it may be more appropriate for the proceeding to be heard and determined by the County Court.

## **6 COURT APPEARANCES**

- 6.1 Where at least one of the parties and/or their legal representative is located in regional Victoria, directions hearings will normally be conducted by teleconference.
- 6.2 Where the parties and/or their legal representatives are all Melbourne based, directions hearings will be conducted in court in Melbourne.
- 6.3 Non-admitted persons may appear at directions hearings but must seek leave of the Court at least one day beforehand by emailing [civil.circuits@supcourt.vic.gov.au](mailto:civil.circuits@supcourt.vic.gov.au).
- 6.4 All persons appearing at directions hearings must be fully briefed on all relevant aspects of the matter so as to be in a position to assist the Court.
- 6.5 Parties are required to appear at directions hearings unless otherwise advised by the Court. This includes matters in which minutes of proposed consent orders have been submitted.

## **7 FIRST DIRECTIONS HEARING**

- 7.1 The Court will generally notify the parties of the date and time of the first directions hearing within seven days of the filing of the first defence and will give directions for the management of the proceeding at that first directions hearing.
- 7.2 At or shortly after the first directions hearing, the proceeding will usually be set down for trial in the relevant circuit sitting although a specific trial date will

not be fixed at this point. Circuit sittings are published on the List webpage of the Court's website. Alternatively, parties may request a special fixture outside the scheduled sitting periods subject to judicial officer and courtroom availability.

- 7.3 The parties are encouraged to seek agreement concerning proposed consent orders in advance of the first directions hearing, with a view to obtaining orders 'on the papers' and avoid the need for an appearance.
- 7.4 Standard forms of order for proceedings involving claims for damages for personal injury can be found on the List webpage on the Court's website. While parties may dispense with unnecessary directions or add additional directions they are requested not to alter the wording of standard clauses without good reason.
- 7.5 Parties should email minutes of proposed consent orders in both Word and signed PDF format to [civil.circuits@supcourt.vic.gov.au](mailto:civil.circuits@supcourt.vic.gov.au) (cc. [orders@supcourt.vic.gov.au](mailto:orders@supcourt.vic.gov.au)) **by 4.00pm two days prior to the hearing.** Requests received after that time may not be considered in time for the Court to excuse parties from attendance.

## 8 INTERLOCUTORY APPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Interlocutory applications should be made on summons and will generally be heard in Melbourne on Fridays in the Court sitting terms.
- 8.2 Where an application is expected to exceed two hours, it may be listed as a special fixture or for directions.
- 8.3 In order to obtain a hearing date, a party intending to make an application should complete the "Interlocutory Application Information Form - Civil Circuit List" available on the List webpage and forward it to [civil.circuits@supcourt.vic.gov.au](mailto:civil.circuits@supcourt.vic.gov.au).
- 8.4 The Court will advise the hearing date of the application via email. In order to maintain the hearing date the applicant should file the summons and supporting affidavit/s with Principal Registry within 48 hours of receipt of the Court's advice of hearing date email. This email should be provided to Principal Registry upon the filing of the summons and should also be served on all parties together with the application materials.
- 8.5 Exhibits should be filed with an affidavit but should not be stapled to it.
- 8.6 Any written outlines of submissions should be no more than five pages and should be filed no later than the day before the application is to be heard.
- 8.7 To facilitate the Court's preparation, hearing and determination of applications, parties are requested to email:
  - soft copies of filed documents relating to the application and submissions; and
  - a hyperlinked list of authorities upon which they intend to rely
- 8.8 to [civil.circuits@supcourt.vic.gov.au](mailto:civil.circuits@supcourt.vic.gov.au).

## **9 INTERROGATORIES**

- 9.1 The number of interrogatories served in proceedings in the List should be limited to 30 (including sub-parts).
- 9.2 In motor vehicle and industrial accident cases, interrogatories should be confined to questions of liability and contributory negligence.

## **10 POST-MEDIATION DIRECTIONS**

- 10.1 Interlocutory timetables will usually include an order that the parties attend a directions hearing approximately 2-3 weeks after the date by which they have been ordered to attend mediation.
- 10.2 Attendance at the post-mediation directions hearing is compulsory and the parties must provide the Court with a provisional list of witnesses and advise:
- whether the Court ordered timetable has been complied with;
  - what issues remain in dispute;
  - whether it is proposed to seek leave to amend any pleadings or join further parties; and
  - whether the initial estimate of the length of the trial requires adjustment.

## **11 CALLOVER**

- 11.1 Approximately two weeks prior to the commencement of a circuit sitting, the trial judge will conduct a callover in Melbourne of all cases listed in that circuit. Parties may be able to appear by video link at the relevant regional court.
- 11.2 The solicitor with conduct of the proceeding (or counsel, if briefed) should appear at the callover.
- 11.3 At the callover, parties will be expected to:
- confirm that the proceeding is ready for trial;
  - confirm the estimated number of sitting days;
  - confirm whether the proceeding is to be heard by judge alone, or by judge and jury;
  - confirm the name and contact details of the practitioner with conduct of the proceeding and advise whether counsel has been briefed for trial;
  - confirm payment of the trial fee and jury fee (if the trial is to be heard before a jury);
  - provide a list of proposed expert and lay witnesses to be called at trial;
  - advise whether any witnesses will require an interpreter or will need to give evidence via video-link;
  - advise whether a view is likely to be required during the trial;
  - advise whether any witnesses have special needs;
  - identify any outstanding interlocutory issues; and
  - identify the main issues in dispute.

The parties will have an opportunity at the callover to address the trial judge on issues relevant to determining the order in which cases will proceed during the circuit.

- 11.4 At the callover, the trial judge may order that the parties file, prior to trial, a joint memorandum signed by counsel and/or the solicitor who has the primary conduct of the matter, and a key documents folder. Both the joint memorandum and the key documents folder are to be prepared jointly by the parties.

*Joint memorandum*

- 11.5 The purpose of the joint memorandum is to provide the trial judge with an overview of the case to be presented at trial by each party. It should not simply recite the pleadings, nor is it a substitute for proper pleadings. Rather, it should concisely set out:

- an overview of the claim and defences;
- any relevant procedural history, including settlements reached with other parties;
- the basic facts of the case, noting significant points of agreement and disagreement;
- the major issues that remain in dispute; and
- a short outline of the evidence each party intends to call. The outline should include the names of the witnesses, whether they are lay or expert and, in the case of experts, the witness's occupation/area of expertise.

- 11.6 As a guide, the joint memorandum should be no more than three to four A4 pages (with at least 1.5 line spacing); have numbered paragraphs; and contain subject matter headings.

*Key documents folder*

- 11.7 The key documents folder should contain a bare minimum of documents that are likely to be of assistance to the trial judge prior to the commencement of the trial. It should not resemble a traditional voluminous Court Book.

- 11.8 As a guide, the folder might include copies of:

- the current pleadings;
- the joint memorandum;
- relevant submissions;
- significant orders or rulings that have a direct bearing on the trial; and
- critical documents.

- 11.9 The key documents folder should not, as a matter of course, include overarching obligations certificates, affidavits of service, medical records, or tax documents.

- 11.10 The inclusion of a document in the key documents folder does not mean that the document must be tendered. Similarly, non-inclusion does not prevent a

document from being tendered. If a document is to be tendered, this will need to be done in the usual way and subject to the rules of evidence.

11.11 The plaintiff should prepare the folder as agreed between the parties and deliver one copy to the trial judge's associate and one copy to all other parties within the time ordered. Unless the trial is to proceed as an eTrial, the folder should be in the following format:

- loose-leaf (lever arch folder);
- double-side printed, (where practicable); and
- paginated.

11.12 The trial judge may be content for parties to provide an empty folder at the commencement of the trial with relevant material being handed up as necessary during the course of the trial. If parties prefer to adopt this approach, they should contact the trial judge's associate to ascertain the trial judge's preference.

## **12 APPLICATIONS FOR COSTS FROM A WORKER**

12.1 Practitioners who require the leave of the Court to recover costs pursuant to either s134AB(30) *Accident Compensation Act 1985* (Vic) or s344(7) *Workplace Injury Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2013* (Vic) should ensure that they reserve liberty to make such an application at the time of any orders finalising the plaintiff's claim against the defendant/s.

12.2 Such applications should be made by filing the following material with the Principal Registry:

- a covering letter;
- an affidavit by the plaintiff's solicitor; and
- an affidavit by the plaintiff.

12.3 The affidavit by the plaintiff's solicitor should:

- set out the amount of the judgment/settlement;
- set out details of costs and disbursements assessed on an indemnity basis (formerly solicitor/client basis);
- set out details of costs and disbursements assessed on a standard basis (formerly party/party basis);
- set out the net amount sought to be recovered by the plaintiff's solicitors from the plaintiff;
- state whether all the costs disclosure obligations of Division 3 of Part 3.4 of the *Legal Profession Act 2004* (Vic) (**LPA**) or Division 3 of Part 4.3 of the *Legal Profession Uniform Law* found within Schedule 1 of the *Legal Profession Uniform Law Application Act 2014* (Vic) (**the Uniform Law**) (whichever is applicable), have been complied with;
- state whether any part of the costs and disbursements are claimed pursuant to a costs agreement as referred to in Division 3 of Part 3.4 of the LPA or Division 3 of Part 4.3 of the Uniform Law (whichever is applicable);

- exhibit a copy of all Costs Agreements and Costs Disclosures that the solicitor relies upon;
- state whether an ‘uplift fee’ being additional legal costs payable under a costs agreement on the successful outcome of a proceeding is claimed;
- set out any amount estimated or recovered as costs and disbursements from the defendant or pursuant to the *WorkCover (Pre-Litigated Claims) Legal Costs Order 2010*; *WorkCover (Litigated Claims) Legal Costs Order 2010*; *WorkCover (Pre-Litigated Claims) Legal Costs Order 2016* and/or *WorkCover (Litigated Claims) Legal Costs Order 2016*;
- include a brief summary of the work undertaken, for example the stage at which the proceeding was resolved or whether the matter proceeded to judgment;
- confirm that an account for costs and disbursements was provided to the plaintiff;
- confirm that the work described in the account given to the plaintiff was duly and properly undertaken;
- confirm that each disbursement was properly incurred;
- confirm that the solicitor has explained the plaintiff’s rights to the plaintiff and that the plaintiff:
  - has indicated that they do not wish to challenge the affidavit;
  - has been advised of their right to obtain independent legal advice and has obtained such advice or does not wish to obtain such advice; and
  - consents to the making of the award.

12.4 The plaintiff’s affidavit should:

- confirm receipt of the account for costs and disbursements; and
- confirm that the plaintiff:
  - has not requested an itemised bill;
  - does not wish to have the account for costs and disbursements reviewed pursuant to Division 7 of Part 4.3 of the Uniform Law;
  - understands their rights;
  - has been advised of the right to seek independent legal advice and has obtained such advice or does not wish to obtain such advice; and
  - consents to the making of the award in the sum referred to.

12.5 On receipt of the above, a judicial registrar will consider whether the material supports the making of the orders ‘on the papers’ and the plaintiff’s solicitor will be advised accordingly.

### 13 COMPLIANCE WITH ORDERS & ADJOURNMENTS OF TRIAL

13.1 If at any time the parties are unable to comply with time limits in Court orders, they must notify [civil.circuits@supcourt.vic.gov.au](mailto:civil.circuits@supcourt.vic.gov.au) and request an extension of time.

13.2 Applications to adjourn trial dates should be made as soon as it is known that a matter is not ready to proceed as listed and should not be left until the

callover. Such applications should be made on summons supported by affidavit material in accordance with section 8 of this Practice Note.

## **14 USE OF TECHNOLOGY**

- 14.1 The provisions of Practice Note SC Gen 5 Guidelines for the Use of Technology apply to proceedings in the List.
- 14.2 For the purposes of paragraph 9.11 of that Practice Note, documentary evidence in excess of 1500 pages is to be considered a large amount of documentary evidence.

## **15 COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE COURT**

- 15.1 Practitioners should consult Practice Note SC GEN 4 Custom and Protocol which sets out the general protocol for communications with the Court.
- 15.2 Email is the preferred form of communication in relation to proceedings in the List, but the following protocols should be observed:
- Prior to the callover, emails are to be sent to [civil.circuits@supcourt.vic.gov.au](mailto:civil.circuits@supcourt.vic.gov.au). After the callover, communications should be directed to the trial judge's associate/s. Contact details for all associates are on the Court website.
  - Emails should maintain the same level of formality expected of all communications with the Court.
  - Unless the communication concerns an application to be made without notice, all parties must be copied in.
  - Emails, like any other correspondence with the Court, are not the appropriate forum for raising contentious issues, unless the Court has invited written submissions via email.
- 15.3 Under the Rules of Court, lawyers are required to provide the name and email address of an individual to whom reference can be made in respect of the proceeding on all court documents. Lawyers are expected to monitor email addresses provided and advise of any change of address in the same way as they would a mailing address.

## **16 FURTHER INFORMATION**

- 16.1 The Court's website includes a page dedicated to the List with up to date information about its operation including:
- a) judicial officers managing the List;
  - b) this Practice Note in Word and PDF formats;
  - c) Form for Request for Consent Orders - First Directions - Circuit Personal Injury Claim
  - d) Interlocutory Application Information Form - Civil Circuit List
  - e) calendar of civil circuit sitting dates.



## AMENDMENT HISTORY

22 March 2018: This Practice Note was reissued on 22 March 2018 with effect from 1 March 2018 and replaced former Practice Note SC CL 1 which was issued on 30 January 2017.

30 January 2017: This Practice Note was first issued on 30 January 2017 and replaced Practice Note No 1 of 2015, Notice to the Profession “Interrogatories in proceedings in the Civil Circuit List” issued on 20 February 2015, and Notice to the Profession “Post-mediation Directions Hearings in the Civil Circuit List” issued on 9 June 2016.

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22 March 2018