



FAMILY COURT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA
UPDATED PUBLIC NOTICE (3) – COVID-19
AS AT 25 MARCH 2020

This Public Notice replaces all previous notices issued in relation to COVID-19.

The following directions in relation to the business of the Family Court of Western Australia are effective immediately.

Attendance at the Court Building

Any person proposing to attend the Court who has flu-like symptoms or who has travelled overseas in the last 14 days must not enter the Court precincts including courtrooms, conference rooms, the Registry and all waiting areas. This direction applies to legal practitioners, parties, their support person (if applicable), witnesses, and members of the public.

While the Court remains open to the public, the Court recommends that only legal practitioners, parties, their support person (if applicable) and witnesses should attend court hearings. Other members of the public are requested not to attend.

Hearings

All hearings and conferences will continue to be listed as normal. However, these arrangements are under regular review, as circumstances continue to develop.

Save in exceptional circumstances, documents (other than exhibits) should not be handed up in open court. Additional documents to be provided by counsel or parties should be provided, electronically, in advance of the hearing.

Wherever practicable, directions hearings, status hearings, interim hearings and conferences conducted by Family Consultants will be conducted by telephone. Personal attendance at conciliation conferences, pre-trial conferences, directions conferences and judicial conferences is at the discretion of individual judicial officers.

Parties can seek to attend by telephone (on the basis that the consent of the other party(s) is not required) by emailing the Court at: family.court@justice.wa.gov.au and providing the following information:

- Their full name and Court file number;
- The date and time of the hearing or conference;
- Their contact telephone number.

Registry services

The Registry will continue to offer its usual services, including the lodgement of court documents, inspection of subpoenaed documents and providing procedural advice.

However, the Court is changing the way in which it delivers some of its Registry services. As from Monday 23 March 2020 all **front counter services** will be temporarily suspended as a precautionary response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The action has been taken to limit the close social contact between persons at the front counter and in the waiting area. A decision will be made prior to 1 May 2020 as to whether it is necessary for the suspension to continue after that date.

Lodging documents for filing

Where ever possible, parties should lodge those documents that are able to be lodged electronically via the Commonwealth Courts Portal (“CCP”).

Further information regarding how to set up an account to use the CCP , and a list of documents that can be accepted for lodgement via the CCP is available on the Court’s website at: https://www.familycourt.wa.gov.au/C/comcourts_portal.aspx.

If a party cannot access the CCP to lodge documents or the documents are unable to be lodged via the CCP, then the documents can be lodged (in order of preference) by:

- Post to: GPO Box 9991, PERTH 6848
- Email to: family.court@justice.wa.gov.au
- Placing the documents in the secure Drop Box located near the Registry front counter on Level 1

All payments required for the filing of documents must be made by credit or debit card by using the credit card authority form which is available on the Court’s website.

Bookings to inspect subpoenaed documents

Legal practitioners and parties are still able to make a booking to inspect subpoenaed documents by contacting the Court’s Subpoena Office on **(08) 9224 8304**.

Procedural advice

Legal practitioners and parties are still able to obtain procedural advice by contacting the Court’s Call Centre on **(08) 9224 8222** any business day between 9am and 4pm (**Country Free call 1800 199 228**).

Social distancing within the Court precincts

The Court is adopting a number of measures to facilitate social distancing within the Court's precincts.

- The Court recommends that only legal practitioners, parties, their support person (if applicable) and witnesses should attend at court hearings. Other members of the public are requested not to attend.
- The Court is currently implementing a number of steps to stagger the start times of matters in multiple lists, including CRP Lists and General Lists.

Circuits

Given the evolving responses by the Commonwealth and Western Australian Governments to the COVID-19 pandemic, until further notice, judicial officers and court staff will no longer travel to regional areas to conduct circuits. Instead, effective immediately, all circuits will be conducted from a court room in the Perth registry.

In relation to the Albany judicial circuit and the Bunbury Magistrates' circuit, which are both due to commence on Monday 30 March 2020, arrangements are being made directly by the court for all parties and legal representatives to attend by electronic means.

Attendances at future circuits are on the basis that:

- Magistrates' circuits: all parties and legal representatives are permitted to attend by telephone. As a consequence, there may be some reduction in the numbers of available listings.
- Judicial circuits: specific arrangements for the conduct of each trial will be dealt with by the presiding judge at the status hearing prior to the trial.

25 March 2020



Gail Sutherland

Chief Judge

Family Court of Western Australia