

# Telephone and Audio Visual Link Conferencing Protocol

## **General Information**

The protocols referred to in this announcement apply equally to all Court proceedings including mediations, listings and conciliations as well as hearings, other than the Monday regional call over which will continue to operate as usual by Telstra Telephone Conference.

### **1. Conferencing will comprise the Court Hearing**

All alternative arrangements for the conduct of hearings (either by Audio Link (Telephone Conferencing) or Audio Visual Link (AVL)) constitute a hearing of the Court. Parties and all participants are reminded that the usual Court etiquette and procedure will apply in these hearing methods. The usual standards of behaviour, respect and dress will apply.

### **2. Telephone Conferencing**

In most cases Telephone Conferencing can be arranged where a hearing is suited to the use of this form of communication.

Practitioners must consider whether the hearing is amenable to this form of communication. When the matter is called over the parties will be required to advise the Court whether the entire hearing is amenable to this form of hearing. If some other form (such as AVL or proceedings on the papers) is proposed the parties must be in a position to address the Court on these alternatives.

### **3. AVL**

At present the Court has one AVL available.

The Court will prioritise the use of the AVL to matters that are urgent and AVL is essential to the disposal of those proceedings.

If a party requires AVL to complete a hearing the parties will be required to advise the Court at call over whether the whole or only part of the hearing will require the use of AVL.

Where AVL is utilised the parties will be allocated a time period for AVL usage. This will facilitate the greatest availability of this facility to all Court users. A party will be allocated a fixed time period for the use of AVL and will be required to manage their case such that the AVL component is concluded within that time period. Extensions of time beyond that allocated are unlikely to be granted except in exceptional circumstances.

Due to the scarce availability of the AVL facility practitioners are requested to carefully consider whether AVL is in fact required or whether the hearing can be accommodated by other procedures.



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## 4. Where the proceedings are unsuited to telephone or AVL conferencing

The Court will use its best endeavours to continue to hear matters by the alternative measure outlined above. To accommodate these alternative measures the parties and the Court may have to adopt different approaches to conduct the hearings such as: the manner in which evidence is adduced; the use of alternative means of giving evidence (such as the use of photographs instead of physical inspections and the like); the use of detailed written submissions. The parties should consider whether the case is amenable to any alternative procedures.

The Court is also aware that the parties are entitled to conduct their case in a manner which is fair, and only adopting alternative hearing measures where it is in the interests of justice to do so. Should the parties consider that their case is not amenable to a hearing other than the usual face-to-face hearing this should be brought to the Court's attention and an application made to vacate any current hearing dates or to adjourn the proceedings.

### **Procedures for conferencing**

#### **Telephone Conferencing**

1. Dial the phone number and Meeting ID provided to you immediately prior to your listed appearance time.
2. You will be greeted by the following audio message:  
*"Welcome to NSW Communities and Justice"*.
3. You may be requested to enter a PIN, disregard and you will be connected shortly.
4. Please note that at this point, you are 'live' in the Conference, all parties, including the Judge/Registrar/Commissioner can hear you, so please remain silent until your matter is called.
5. Whilst waiting for your matter to be called, please ensure that the audio on your device is muted so that no background noise can interfere with Court proceedings.
6. End the call when your matter is finalised.

NOTE: Please review the Daily Court list published at 4pm the day before the listing for time, phone number and Meeting ID to call.



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## Video Conferencing using a 'Web Link'

(When this facility is available to practitioners it can be utilised with laptop devices, iPads or mobile phones).

1. Ensure your device has a working camera. Video conferencing requires a camera to be enabled.
2. Ensure that your device has reliable connectivity and coverage.
3. If you are using a web browser to connect via the Web Link, please ensure your browser meets the following standards: Google Chrome (min. v.73), Mozilla Firefox (min. v.66). Please note it is NOT recommended to use either Internet Explorer (IE) or Microsoft Edge as these browsers do not support this particular software.
4. Click the *Web Link* provided immediately prior to your listed appearance time.
5. You will be asked to enter your name and details. Please use the following naming convention: *Surname – Party description* (Example: *Doe – Plaintiff* = representative John Doe – plaintiff's representative).
6. Click "Join Meeting".

## **Tips/ General Rules/ Troubleshooting for Conference Courtroom experience**

- Be in a quiet and private location to limit interference from background noise.
- Ensure that there is sufficient internet coverage and connection on your device.
- Ensure all relevant materials to be relied upon have been made available to the Court beforehand.
- Ensure you have capacity to obtain instructions privately – as this will be unable to be accommodated on the telephone or AVL conferencing facility.
- Observe all normal Court etiquette and protocols in the Conferenced Courtroom environment.
- Refrain from speaking over each other as much as practical to assist with the court's transcribing process (further tips provided below to assist the transcription service).
- If you experience difficulties accessing the telephone or video conferencing facility, please note that the Court does not provide a technical support service.

## **Assistance with the transcription service**

- Court participants must announce and spell their appearances.
- Court participants must speak into microphones and speak one at a time so that they can be understood.



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- If Court participants are appearing via video or telephone link, they must announce their appearance each time they speak.
- Competing noises in courtrooms increases difficulty for monitors to hear and will impact the quality of the transcript such as typing near microphones or shuffling of papers and coughing into microphones. Try to keep those types of noises to a minimum.
- If you can't hear what is being said in Court, the court monitor cannot hear it either.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

*Can several participants use the same device to attend a Conferenced Courtroom (e.g. witnesses in the legal representative's office)?*

No. Legal representatives and supporting witnesses must use separate devices, and be in a different physical space when attending Conference Courtroom. If multiple participants want to connect to the Conference Courtroom at the same time, consider the use of a dedicated video conferencing suite.

*Can non-related parties (e.g. junior clerks) join the telephone/video conference to observe?*

The usual concept of open justice is applicable to the Conference Courtrooms. However, the Court discourages the wide sharing of Conference Courtroom contact information in order to minimise interruptions in the Conference Courtroom environment.

**In all cases, normal court protocols, etiquettes, procedures and restrictions apply. Any person participating in the conferencing who does not have leave to speak must put their calls on mute and silently observe so no background noise can interfere with court proceedings.**