

# Online Magistrates' Court – media guidelines

September 2020

The Magistrates' Court of Victoria (MCV) has announced a number of operational changes in response to COVID-19, including establishment of an Online Magistrates' Court (OMC). To reduce the need for people to enter our court buildings, the court is listing most matters online. OMC hearings use a WebEx platform and involve the magistrate, parties, clerk and media joining proceedings from different locations via video-link.

## **Making a request to attend an OMC hearing (and applying for documents)**

- For media wishing to attend an OMC hearing, they will need to request a link by emailing [mcvmedia@courts.vic.gov.au](mailto:mcvmedia@courts.vic.gov.au) in advance of the hearing and (ideally) **no later than the day before**.
- When making a request, media must ensure they cite the case name and, ideally, the case number.
- Requests by media to attend an OMC hearing **MUST** only be made via the MCV media team and **NOT** through the MCV registry or OMC team.
- For media wishing to apply for documents, they will need to make the request in advance of the hearing and **no later than the day before**, by emailing [mcvmedia@courts.vic.gov.au](mailto:mcvmedia@courts.vic.gov.au). Requests using forms may be signed using an electronic signature.

**Nb.** The media team is experiencing a high-volume of statewide requests to access online hearings, with the majority being received between 8am and 10.30am each morning. Requests received within a half hour of a hearing being listed are unlikely to be successful.

## **Accessing an OMC hearing**

- For requests made in advance of a hearing (and ideally no later than the day before), the MCV media team will process the request and email a direct link to the hearing. Most matters heard via OMC are allocated a specific time and duration.
- Media can add the WebEx invite to their calendar and select **Join meeting** when it is due to start.
- When the WebEx program launches, microphones and cameras will be off.
- If the links says the matter hasn't started yet, please be patient.

**Nb.** The committal mention list and committal case conference list at the Melbourne Magistrates' Court are heard through open links and operate as they would in court with matters called to proceed as the parties are ready.

## **Guidance for media attending an OMC hearing**

- Even though you are not physically in the courtroom, OMC is an extension of a traditional court hearing and the same guidelines and conventions apply for parties and the media.
- It is an offence to record, broadcast or photograph OMC hearings without permission of the court.
- Please ensure your dress is appropriate for the courtroom setting and don't eat or drink on camera.
- All media must obey any direction given by the presiding judicial officer with regard to the conduct of the hearing, including whether media are to have their cameras on or off.
- WebEx allows participants to blur their background or upload a background image.
- To upload a background image: In self-view window, select the **Video options** icon, select **Change Virtual Background** to Blur or use a default virtual background. To use your own background, select the **+** icon.
- Media requests for the Children's Court (sitting at any venue) should be made to [melissa.coade@courts.vic.gov.au](mailto:melissa.coade@courts.vic.gov.au) in advance of the hearing and (ideally) **no later than the day before**.

If you have any queries about the operation of the Online Magistrates' Court, please contact the MCV Media Team on 9032 0919, 0419 727 752 or [mcv.media@courts.vic.gov.au](mailto:mcv.media@courts.vic.gov.au).