



NEW SOUTH WALES

## CHIEF MAGISTRATE'S MEMORANDUM

16 March 2020

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Local Court is something that all magistrates need to be concerned about. It is clear from official announcements by state and federal governments that the challenges of meeting the pandemic are complex.

The Local Court is the largest and most geographically spread jurisdiction in the Commonwealth. The breadth of its jurisdiction and the sheer numbers of people who are engaged in proceedings before the Court whether they be victims, persons in need of protection, witnesses, police, the legal profession or the general population means that the risks posed by the possibility of exposure to the virus are magnified over many locations.

In order to meet the challenge of managing the risk of contamination every endeavour should be made to reduce the levels of attendance at Court Houses.

**NO MAGISTRATE IS TO BE CONCERNED ABOUT THE INCREASE IN DELAYS AT THEIR COURT. THIS WILL BE A LOGICAL CONSEQUENCE OF THE IMPACT OF THE CURRENT ENVIRONMENT. I HAVE NO CONCERNS ABOUT THE IMPACT AND AM CONFIDENT THAT WHEN THIS PERIOD PASSES, AS IT WILL, THAT THE COURT WILL BE ABLE TO RESTORE ITS CURRENT POSITION WITH SOME SIMPLE LISTING STRATEGIES.**

**I DO ASK EVERY MAGISTRATE RESPONSIBLE FOR LISTING MATTERS AT THEIR COURT HOWEVER TO NOT LIST ANY DEFENDED HEARINGS IN OCTOBER 2020. IT MAY BE NECESSARY TO USE THAT MONTH TO CATCH UP ON THE DELAYS CREATED BY OTHER ARRANGEMENTS NECESSARY TO MITIGATE RISK AT COURT PREMISES.**

Later today I will be meeting with the many stakeholders who interact with the Court on a daily basis. The purpose of that meeting will be to gain insight into the things they are doing within their respective organisations and to consider how it may affect the operations of the Local Court. At the same time advice will be given regarding the proposals of the Local Court some of which will be relatively simple to implement, some of which will be more complex.

I will advise the court of the outcome either later today or tomorrow morning. In the meantime I am sure all magistrates will act with common sense and compassion and will ensure they operate in unison with Court staff to bring calm to the current environment.

  
Judge Graeme Henson AM  
Chief Magistrate

