



Family Court of Australia and Federal Circuit Court of Australia prioritise urgent and critical cases as impact of COVID-19 escalates

The Family Court of Australia and the Federal Circuit Court of Australia (the Courts) have responded to the evolving impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and have made immediate and significant changes to court operations.

The aim of the new arrangements is to ensure that all urgent and priority matters are able to be dealt with safely by the courts, whilst at the same time, ensuring appropriate social distancing is adhered to.

A summary of the new arrangements for family law and general federal law (GFL) cases is as follows:

- Due to the nature of family law work, including child related and family violence aspects, urgent and priority trials and contested hearings will remain listed and will be conducted in the safest manner possible.
- Non-urgent property only trials may be adjourned for an appropriate period of time, and non-urgent parenting trials will be given similar consideration but this is at the discretion of the Judge.
- Trials or hearings that can appropriately be done by telephone will be.
- High volume lists that are required to be conducted in person will be staggered to reduce the number of people in attendance.
- The number of people to attend a courtroom at any one time (other than the judge and their support staff) will be limited to 8 people ('8 person in-court cap').
- Additional people involved in matters must remain outside the courtroom.
- The balance of the Sydney Federal Circuit Court callovers will be vacated immediately and adjourned to a date to be fixed.
- Callovers in the Federal Circuit Court in Brisbane, Parramatta and Adelaide will be postponed until further notice.
- Regional circuits conducted by the Federal Circuit Court (scheduled for the next two months) are under review and some matters may be adjourned or conducted by telephone.
- Migration matters currently listed in the Federal Circuit Court which can be conducted appropriately by telephone or videoconference should proceed. If the matter requires a hearing in person, it may be postponed subject to the urgency of the case.
- In regard to other GFL matters (such as industrial law, human rights and consumer law) if the matter can proceed safely in person, and subject to the 8 person in-court cap, the matter may proceed at the judge's discretion.
- All court based events, or attendances of the judiciary or court representatives at external events, will be cancelled or postponed, or conducted by telephone or videoconference if possible.
- The work conducted by Registrars and the Courts' Child Dispute Service's staff is currently under review.
- It is noted that Registrar migration lists have been suspended until July 2020 by the Federal Court, effective immediately.

More information on these measures are available from the Courts' websites:

<http://www.federalcircuitcourt.gov.au>

<http://www.familycourt.gov.au>

More information about how to self-assess for your personal risk for coronavirus (COVID-19) is available from the website of the [Commonwealth Department of Health](#).

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