

## **Coroners Court of Victoria**

### **Practice Direction 1 of 2020 COVID-19 Pandemic Response**

#### **Background**

1. This practice direction is issued as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic that our community is currently facing, and the impact this has on the health and safety of those participating in proceedings at the Coroners Court of Victoria (Coroners Court). The Coroners Court is committed to remaining open during the pandemic, and to continuing the independent investigation of reportable deaths and fires in accordance with its statutory duties. However, the Coroners Court recognises that, in accordance with the action taken by other courts and tribunals across Victoria, and in light of the current health advice given by State and Federal Governments, it is necessary to reduce the number of people in our building and to implement different ways of conducting court business.

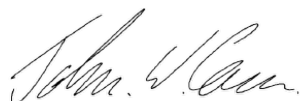
#### **Inquest Findings, Summary Inquests, Direction Hearings and Mention Hearings**

2. No hearing which requires the physical attendance of any person at the Coroners Court will proceed.
3. Only those hearings which can be facilitated through technology, such as the delivery of Inquest Findings, Summary Inquests, Direction Hearings and Mention Hearings, will proceed.
4. Interested Parties, Counsel, Witnesses and Family (Participants) can attend the hearing via telephone or audio-visual link.
5. Participants will be consulted and notified by Coroners Court staff as to the relevant means by which such hearings will take place. A schedule of upcoming hearings will be maintained on the Coroners Court website. If any Participant is of the view that a matter cannot proceed except by way of physical attendance, their views will be considered in determining whether an adjournment may be appropriate in the circumstances.

#### **Inquests**

6. Inquests will not proceed at this stage. Given the uncertainty presented by the COVID-19 pandemic and accompanying restrictions, Inquests will be adjourned to a date to be fixed. Once clarity is obtained in respect of the duration of these restrictions, adjourned Inquests will be rescheduled, but in any event not before 31 May 2020.
7. Participants will be advised in respect of these adjournments, and will be updated as information becomes available. Participants will continue to be consulted in relation to the future scheduling of Inquests.

8. The Coroners Court remains open. Coroners and staff are working in accordance with the restrictions imposed as a result of COVID-19, and remain committed to the timely and efficient conduct of proceedings and to serving the community at this difficult time.
9. This Practice Direction is made pursuant to section 107 of the *Coroners Act* 2008 and takes effect on **27 March 2020**.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Cain', written in a cursive style.

**Judge John Cain**  
State Coroner  
27 March 2020