



CORONERS COURT PROTOCOL

Coroners Court operations with COVID-19 in the community

Deputy Chief Coroner A J Tutton

Effective from Tuesday 13 September 2022

INTRODUCTION

1. Courts are an essential service. The Coroners Court will remain open despite the presence of COVID-19 in the community, to ensure access to justice.
2. This protocol sets out a framework for ensuring that everyone who needs to participate in proceedings is able to do so. The primary considerations that underpin this protocol, and decisions under it, are the interests of justice and the protection of the health and safety of everyone in the court building.
3. This protocol applies subject to any directions given by the presiding coroner in a particular case. The presiding coroner may direct that requirements set out in this protocol do not apply in a particular case if the coroner is satisfied that it is in the interests of justice to do so.

ENTRY TO COURT BUILDINGS

4. The following requirements apply to entry into court buildings:
 - (a) A person may not enter the court building if they are showing signs of illness;
 - (b) A person who has tested positive for COVID-19 within the last 7 days may not enter the court building.

5. An interested party or witness who is required to attend court, but who is unwell or has recently tested positive for COVID-19, should contact the court (in person or through their lawyer) as early as possible in advance of the date on which they are due to appear. The matter will be referred to the responsible coroner. The interested party or witness will then be advised by the registry whether they are required to attend court on that date, or on an alternative date.
6. The Courts remain open to the public, but for health and safety reasons there may be limits on the number of people who are not directly involved in proceedings who are permitted to be physically present in courtrooms and court buildings.

MASKS

7. All persons entering the court building may wear a surgical mask or a KN95 mask, and are encouraged to do so when moving around the court building (including courtrooms).¹ Masks will be provided at the entry to the court building for all those who do not have their own mask.
8. A surgical mask or KN95 mask must be worn by all persons present in a courtroom, or by specified persons in a courtroom, if the presiding coroner so directs.

CONDUCT OF HEARINGS

9. All Coroners Court matters listed for hearing will be conducted in person, unless a coroner directs otherwise. Directions may be given for some types of hearing to be conducted remotely.
10. An interested party may seek a direction that a matter should be conducted with all participants appearing remotely.² A request for a matter to be

¹ All references to KN95 masks include references to masks of an equivalent standard such as P2 masks.

² For relevant factors see the Courts (Remote Participation) Act 2010, ss 5 and 6.

conducted remotely should be made with as much notice as possible, and where practicable five working days in advance.

11. An interested party, counsel or other participant may apply to participate in a hearing by remote technology.³ A request for a participant to appear remotely should be made with as much notice as possible, and where practicable five working days in advance.

RAPID ANTIGEN TESTS (RATS)

12. A court participant who has any symptoms of COVID-19, however minor, must take a RAT before attending court.
 - (a) If they test negative, and the symptoms are very minor (e.g., a scratchy throat), they may attend court but must wear a mask at all times.
 - (b) If they test negative and the symptoms are more severe (e.g., runny nose, coughing) they must not attend court unless a coroner so directs. If they are permitted to attend court, they must wear a mask at all times.
 - (c) If they test positive, they must not attend court: see para 15 below.
13. The presiding coroner may require that some or all participants in a hearing longer than one day take a RAT in the morning before attending court, on such days as the coroner directs, if the coroner is satisfied that it is reasonably necessary to do so in the interests of justice and to protect health and safety in the courts.
14. The registry will advise counsel and any interested party who is not legally represented of the arrangements for obtaining RATs from the court.
15. If a court participant receives a positive COVID-19 test result, they must not attend court (and if present at court, must promptly leave). Whether and

³ For relevant factors see the Courts (Remote Participation) Act 2010, ss 5 and 6.

how the hearing may be able to continue will be a matter for the presiding coroner to determine on a case-by-case basis.

16. If a court participant is required to take a RAT, and declines to do so, the presiding coroner will determine whether and how the hearing will proceed.

GENERAL PROVISIONS

Media access

17. Accredited news media will have entry to the Court in order to report court proceedings, and to ensure continued open and transparent justice. Remote access for accredited news media will continue to be facilitated in accordance with current protocols.

Remote participation and viewing

18. The Protocol for Participation in Remote Hearings, with any necessary amendments to reflect the processes of the Coroners Court, will apply to any Coroners Court hearings involving remote participants:

[Protocol for Participation in Remote Hearings](#)

19. The Protocol for Remote Viewings of Hearings, with any necessary amendments to reflect the processes of the Coroners Court, governs media and public access to Coroners Court hearings:

[Protocol for Remote Viewing of Hearings](#)

Health and safety

20. The following health and safety measures can be expected in the court building:
 - (a) Cleaning products will be available on site to enable staff and lawyers to keep their immediate areas clean (including AVL suites);
 - (b) Hand sanitiser will be readily available within the courtroom;

- (c) Face masks will be readily available in court buildings;
 - (d) RAT kits will be available in court buildings.
21. Any concerns about health and safety in the Court should be raised with the Court Manager or the Manager Justice Services (Coronial) in the first instance.

Expectations of Counsel

22. Counsel are expected to assist the Court by:
- (a) Briefing clients and witnesses on the court building entry requirements and RAT testing requirements set out in paragraphs 4–8 and 12–16 above.
 - (b) Reducing unnecessary attendance in the court building by counsel, their clients and witnesses by reviewing each attendance in advance and:
 - (i) Seeking remote participation in appropriate cases;
 - (ii) Seeking excusals from appearances in procedural and/or administrative hearings; and
 - (iii) Advising the presiding coroner in advance of any agreed facts which may enable the limiting of the number of witnesses.
 - (c) Counsel should consider and endeavour to agree whether it is appropriate for any witness to participate remotely and advise the Court of any such proposals well in advance of the hearing date. Section 102A of the Coroners Act 2006 and the relevant provisions of the Courts (Remote Participation) Act 2010 will govern whether and how any witness may give evidence remotely.

ADDENDUM 1

Addresses for filing electronically and by mail

All electronic filing is to be to the following addresses:

Whangarei CSU:	csu.whangarei@justice.govt.nz
Auckland CSU:	csu.auckland@justice.govt.nz
Hamilton CSU:	csu.hamilton@justice.govt.nz
Rotorua CSU:	csu.rotorua@justice.govt.nz
Hastings CSU:	csu.hastings@justice.govt.nz
Palmerston North CSU:	csu.palmerstonnorth@justice.govt.nz
Wellington CSU:	csu.wellington@justice.govt.nz
Christchurch CSU:	csu.christchurch@justice.govt.nz
Dunedin CSU:	csu.dunedin@justice.govt.nz

If any party wishes to contact the Coroners Court regarding an urgent matter, use the above email addresses.

All filing by mail is to be to these addresses:

Whangarei CSU:	AX10041, Whangarei
Auckland CSU:	CX10079, Auckland
Hamilton CSU:	GX10014, Hamilton
Rotorua CSU:	JX10517, Rotorua
Hastings CSU:	MX10033 Hastings

Palmerston North CSU: PX10001, Palmerston North

Wellington CSU: SX10044, Wellington

Christchurch CSU: WZ10073, Christchurch

Dunedin CSU: YX10149, Dunedin

Any enquiries about a case should be made to the Case Manager of the coroner assigned to the case.

If any participants do not know which coroner is assigned to the case, they can contact their local Coronial Services Unit using the email addresses above.