



JUDICIAL OFFICE FOR HIGHER COURTS
Te Tari Kaiwhakawā mo ngā Kōti Mātāmua

PRESS RELEASE

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New In-court Media Coverage Guidelines released

The Chief Justice, Dame Sian Elias, has approved new Guidelines for media covering court proceedings.

The Guidelines replace those issued in 2012 and apply to all Court of Appeal, High Court, and District Court proceedings as well as any other statutory Tribunal that chooses to adopt them.

Two application forms relating to in-court media access and access to court documents have also been updated.

The changes follow the Chief Justice' commissioning in August 2013 of Media In Courts Committee (MICC) chair Justice Raynor Asher, Justice Ronald Young and Judge Russell Collins to review, 20 years after New Zealand initiated in-court television coverage, practices relating to cameras and recording in court.

The final report delivered last year to the Chief Justice completed a process that involved a review of New Zealand's in-court media coverage history, a Judges' questionnaire, consultation paper and submissions, and a draft report followed by further submissions. The report also summarised relevant principles, concepts, and submissions, and considered in-court media coverage in other jurisdictions.

While the report did not find a need for fundamental alteration of current televising and recording court proceedings, some changes to existing practices were recommended including:

- clarification that only members of the media can make a record in court, whether notes, film, or recording, unless given permission by the Judge
- that only media are permitted to communicate electronically from inside a courtroom to outside
- that filming of a party, witness, counsel, or Judge is not permitted to involve a close-up showing less than the person's head and shoulders, or to focus on a particular feature such as their fingers, hands, mouth or eyes
- a new provision for pre-hearings with media
- a requirement for counsel to notify the Court that a witness understands witness protection regulations, and has chosen whether or not to be filmed
- a new section on media identification and courtroom etiquette
- a requirement all reporting be accurate, fair and balanced
- new provisions relating to communication during hearings between the Courts and media, including pre-trial conferences

- a provision that no-one under the age of 18 can be filmed, photographed or recorded
- a prohibition on filming or recording witnesses whose names are suppressed by statute or Court order, without leave of the Judge
- provision that the in-court camera can only operate when attended to by an operator. If not so attended, the camera must be turned off.

The new Guidelines and forms, which have also been reviewed by media representatives on the MICC, are available on www.courts.govt.nz and www.justice.govt.nz

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