



NOTICE TO ALL COURT USERS OF PARRAMATTA LOCAL COURT

Dear Court Users,

Re: RESUMPTION OF IN PERSON HEARINGS AT PARRAMATTA LOCAL COURT FROM 1st NOVEMBER, 2021.

In recognition of the fact that:

1. The NSW Government has devised a Road Map out of the present Covid 19 lockdown that will see significant easing of restrictions once the State has reached Stage II at 80% double vaccination of the community toward the end of October;
2. The hearing of most defended proceedings in the Local Court have now been suspended for well over 3 months;
3. The allocation of hearing dates at this Court is now occurring in April 2022 which represents an unacceptable delay for accused and victims and adversely impacts on the timely and effective administration of justice;
4. During the present lockdown this Court has continued to administer list work and seen large numbers of offenders appearing in person at Court on a daily basis. The return of in person defended hearings will not significantly increase the numbers of persons appearing at Court on a daily basis. The Court has been able to effectively manage the risks associated with the Covid-19 virus with strategies such as mask wearing and social distancing that will continue with the resumption of in person hearings;
5. The latest Covid-19 Memo #23 ends on the 31st October, 2021 and even if extended the Chief Magistrate has advised that the Memo is not prescriptive but a guide only,

I have made the decision in consultation with my colleagues here at Parramatta and the Court Staff to recommence in person hearings at this Court as and from Monday the **1st November, 2021**. I am satisfied that the risks associated with the pandemic can be properly managed from that time onwards at this Court. To that end the following restrictions will continue to apply:

- (a) The proper wearing of face masks will be mandatory;
- (b) Social distancing of 4 square metres will be maintained in each of the Courts;
- (c) The Court Security Act provisions dealing with those who will be granted access to the Court will continue to apply.

Any applications to vacate a hearing on and from the 1st November, 2021 for Covid or other reasons should be made to the Court using the prescribed form and I will consider such applications on a case by case basis.

While I appreciate that there are some sensibilities to the Court resuming normal operations the backlog of defended cases caused by the lockdown is becoming unacceptable and with appropriate safeguards in place there is no reason why accused and victims should not have their 'day in court'. It is often and properly said that 'justice delayed is justice denied'. I am satisfied that resuming in person hearings on the 1st November, 2021 strikes the right balance between stakeholder protection and ensuring the proper administration of justice.

Magistrate Peter G Feather

8/10/21