



HIGH COURT OF AUSTRALIA

HCA Video Connection Hearings – PROTOCOL

The following notes are provided as a guide to practitioners participating in High Court Video Connection ("VC") Hearings (UPDATED August 2021)

Technical arrangements

The Court is using Cisco video conference technology to conduct VC Hearings routed through Courtroom 2 in the High Court Building in Canberra, which will act as the VC hearing hub. Courtroom 2 will be open to the public for all VC hearings.

The Justice(s) will sit in Court or in chambers (or at another location as required).

Participants will be expected to connect to the hearing from a device (laptop, iPad, tablet, smartphone) or a SIP enabled video conferencing endpoint with a suitable camera and microphone.

4G connections are not reliable and broadband/NBN connectivity is preferred. If video quality is not satisfactory participants may need to join the hearing by telephone (landline preferred).

VC hearings will be recorded by the High Court Reporting officers and transcripts will be produced and published in the usual way. Recording of a VC hearing other than by High Court staff is not permitted.

Participants should remain alert to any deterioration in picture and sound quality and inform the Justice/s immediately if this is impacting on their ability to participate fully in the hearing.

When a matter is listed for VC hearing, the Court will identify the HCA contact person for that hearing and provide their contact details. Participants with questions about the procedures to be adopted for the VC hearing *or* experiencing technical difficulties during a VC hearing, should first contact the nominated officer for their hearing.

Testing

Before the VC hearing commences, the Court will test the connections to be used by the participants to ensure compatibility of equipment and facilities at all proposed sites. Participants will be provided, in advance, with connection instructions for each hearing and the time appointed for the testing. (The timing of the test will depend on the type of hearing and the number of participants involved in the hearing.) It is important that the connection and devices used for the test are identical to those to be used during the hearing.

The typical things that will be covered during the test are:

- clarity of the video feed and audio quality;
- confirming the name, location and method of connection of each participant;
- confirming that users have a familiarity with the system;
- confirming that users have the protocol, have read it and understand it; and
- confirming the procedures to be followed and any directions issued by the Court.

Hearing protocol

The hearing will, as closely as possible, be conducted in accordance with the usual practice of the Court. However, some variations may be necessary to cater for limitations introduced by the technology that is being used, the changed environment created by that technology and the geographic separation of participants. The Justice/s will not normally enter the VC hearing until all participating sites have been connected, participants at each site are ready to proceed and participants have confirmed that they are able to see and hear all other sites.

When the Justice(s) is (are) online, the matter will be called for hearing. The Justice/presiding Justice will announce the appearances for all parties.

Unless appearing remotely from a remote court room, practitioners should remain seated for the entry and exit of the Justice(s) and when addressing the Court. Practitioners appearing from a remote court room rise for the entry and exit of Justice(s) and to address the Court, in the usual way.

Practical tips

Participants should speak directly into the microphone when addressing the court.

Participants should mute their microphone when they are not speaking.

Participants should also try to reduce their body movements as much as possible.

When positioning the camera on their device, participants should be mindful of camera angle, glare from windows, lighting and the background image.

Participants should attempt to find a remote site that is free from as much background noise as possible.

Ensure your volume is adjusted accordingly. If you have the volume turned up and the audio coming through the speaker of your device, it may be picked up by your microphone and echo.

Participants should avoid placing papers too close to a free standing microphone to avoid the shuffling of papers being picked up by the microphone.

Ensure devices are plugged into a power source. Video conferencing can drain the battery very quickly.

Do not have streaming video services running at your premises eg: Netflix, YouTube etc.

Ensure the application you have used (Webex, Firefox or Chrome) to connect to the VC System, has been granted access to use the webcam and microphone on your device. The request for access will generally pop up as you are entering the virtual meeting space. Not allowing access will result in no video or audio from your endpoint.

Ensure you have the latest drivers installed for your devices.

Recommended Hardware Specifications and Internet Connection Speeds

Hardware – minimum specification

CPU- Intel i7 or AMD multicore processor
Memory – 8GB
High quality webcam with built in microphone
Internet connection speed of 50MBs or higher

Software – minimum specification

Operation system – Windows 10 or MAC OS – Big Sur
Cisco Webex client – version 41 or higher (can be downloaded from www.webex.com/downloads.html) OR
Firefox - version 80 or higher
Google Chrome – version 80 or higher
