



FEDERAL CIRCUIT
AND FAMILY COURT
OF AUSTRALIA

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Media Release: Enhanced use of technology to improve access to justice for people living regional Tasmania

The Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia is working closely with Tasmania Legal Aid (TLA) and the Law Society of Tasmania (LST) to undertake a pilot project in Tasmania to provide access to court proceedings via electronic means to parties from remote and regional areas in Tasmania.

Chair of the working group for the Remote Access Pilot project, Judge Sandra Taglieri, said the pilot aims to reduce the stress and cost that can be associated with travelling to Hobart or Launceston to attend and participate in family law and other court proceedings.

“There are many benefits to attending court proceedings electronically. It is particularly appropriate in circumstances where there are environmental, socio-economic, or other reasons preventing parties from being able to attend physically at the Court registry, or to meaningfully participate through electronic means,” Judge Taglieri said.

Chief Justice of the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia, the Hon Will Alstergren said the Court has successfully been utilising MS Teams software nationally to facilitate the large majority of hearings and other Court events during the Covid-19 pandemic.

“The Court is committed to continuing the use of such technology in appropriate circumstances, noting the benefits that can be realised using technology in a strategic and flexible way to facilitate access to justice. The Court is grateful to Judge Taglieri for her work and that of the working group which includes representatives from the TLA and LST which demonstrates a positive collaboration towards improving access to justice for the Tasmanian community,” Chief Justice Alstergren added.

The first stage of the pilot project has identified three specific cases from the Hobart registry where a final hearing is taking place by the end of February 2022. These matters each include parties who live a number of hours from the Court registry, have no access to appropriate technology or internet connectivity, and have no access to public or personal transport to and from Court.

In each of these matters, the Court is receiving the support of a service provider, such as a community online access centre, or public library to provide the necessary technology and an appropriate space for the parties to engage meaningfully in the Court proceedings.

At the conclusion of this initial trial phase, feedback will be sought from participants and stakeholders, and a review will be undertaken in mid to late 2022 to determine whether the model could be applied more widely across Tasmania, or in other rural and remote areas of Australia.

Practitioners with matters in Tasmania seeking further information about possible inclusion in the pilot should contact: Associate.JudgeTaglieri@fcfcoa.gov.au