



## **Environment Court of New Zealand**

### **COVID-19 UPDATE**

**20 March 2020**

[1] The Environment Court and the Land Valuation Tribunal wish to update parties, counsel, witnesses and other participants in their processes, about current activity and planning for COVID-19 having regard to Government direction and Ministry of Health guidelines.

[2] The last two weeks have seen some disruption to large events, mainly mediations. Smaller mediations, conferencing of experts and hearings, have proceeded with suitable precautions taken.

[3] Together with the Ministry of Justice and other parties, plans have been developed to maintain currently scheduled activities as far as possible, but in some instances with important modifications.

[4] For instance, we are now restricting gatherings to no more than 100 persons, indeed, desirably much fewer. Our planning includes breaking down large mediations into smaller groups around topics within a case; ensuring that we operate in premises (whether in courthouses or elsewhere) where there is enough space for generous social distancing, and undertaking sanitary cleansing of relevant surfaces and equipment.

[5] We are assessing every scheduled event to ensure strict compliance with Government direction and Ministry of Health guidelines.

[6] Please cooperate fully with presiding judicial officers.

[7] Remote participation will be offered by various means to meet the needs of the participants where possible. For instance, some participants are affected by employer directions banning travel and meetings, while others will have preferences not to travel. We are bound by s5 of the Courts (Remote Participation) Act 2010 and must offer fairness and good access to justice for parties of all kinds. The larger the number of remote participants in

any case, the harder it may be to arrange fair and meaningful remote participation, so there could be some disruption of such events.

[8] Health is paramount. If you feel unwell before an event, contact the relevant registry by phone or email and stay home. If you become unwell during an event, advise the presiding officer and head home. The Judge or Commissioner will assess what is then to occur with the event. Adjournments may need to occur.

[9] Circumstances around Covid-19 are changing daily. Please watch for more communications from us, on websites and by direct means.

Laurie Newhook  
Principal Environment Judge.