

COVID-19 REMOTE PARTICIPATION HEARINGS – EXTERNAL PARTIES

Court registry officer in court, judge and all parties remote – Quick Reference Guide

8 April 2020

We are continuing essential court hearings during the COVID-19 Alert Level 4 lockdown. Physical distancing (limiting in-person contact) is in place to protect the health and safety of the public and our staff.

This guide outlines how a remote participation hearing is run and explains how multiple parties are connected. To understand more about what remote participation is please refer to the *Remote Participation Hearing Quick Reference Guide – Why remote participation is important for all parties*.

The court registry officer may be the only person in the court room, unless the judge decides otherwise. The judge and all case parties will normally appear from their home, from custody or from another remote location via videoconference. This guide is for people who are external (the public, other agencies, lawyers) to the Ministry. **Note:** Different connection methods are in place for New Zealand Police and for defendants in Corrections custody.

Quick overview

- Remote participation hearings will use the videoconferencing equipment currently in court rooms.
- Each hearing will use two virtual meetings rooms (VMR) and, for criminal hearings, an audio-visual link (AVL) connection to a custodial booth. If the defendant is appearing from a location without a custodial booth, a third VMR will be used.
- The judge and the defendant each have a dedicated VMR/AVL to ensure their visual presence in the hearing.
- All other parties will share a VMR. Some parties, such as victim advisors, will have audio-only access on the VMR.
- Parties will be connected in the following order:

Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
• Judge connected via VMR (2 pax)	• Counsel & other parties connected via VMR 2 (multi-pax)	• Defendant connected via AVL from custodial booth or VMR 3 (2 pax)

Note: The videoconferencing set up outlined in this guide is only available for the hearing. Counsel need to make

their own arrangements for pre- and post-hearing conferences with their clients.

Connecting to the videoconference

You can join the videoconference from a desk top computer (PC), laptop, tablet or smart phone. Your device will need a web browser and a camera.

The court will forward a calendar invitation that includes a link and a PIN to join the videoconference. Call the Ministry of Justice Contact Centre 0800 COURTS (0800 268 787) to discuss how to make an application for a third party (support person, victim etc) to attend a VMR hearing. VMR details will only be distributed by the court after an application has been approved.

- If you are on a PC or a laptop, you may be prompted to install a plug-in the first time you click on a VMR link.
- If you are on a tablet or smart phone, you will need to install the Jabber Guest app on your device before you click on the link.
- You can test access to Jabber Guest prior to the hearing by copying this URL into the address bar of your web browser:
<https://meet.rcvideo.net/index.html?id=8113366>.
You will not need a password or PIN to make a test call.

See the *Jabber Guest Quick Reference Guide* for full instructions on how to get ready for a videoconference.

Screen view

The courtroom AVL system will be 'Hosting' the hearing, which allows the court registry officer to connect and disconnect VMRs and custodial booths as required. Each of the remote participants should be able to see each of the other participants on their own screen.

Changing parties in a list hearing

The court registry officer can disconnect one defendant and connect a different one, while the other VMR connections stay active. This means that counsel can stay on the videoconference while different defendants are brought on. Likewise, parties on the multi-party VMR can join and leave the hearing, much as they would in a physical court room

Tips and tricks

- Find somewhere quiet to videoconference from. Any background noise will be heard by others on the call.
- Be mindful of your surroundings.
- Check the strength of your Wi-Fi or mobile data signal before you connect:
 - If at home, you may need to ask other household members to avoid going online

- If you're in a large building, move closer to a Wi-Fi point, or if on mobile data, move closer to a window.
- Avoid using public (free) Wi-Fi as this often has speed and data limits.
- If at home, ask other members of your household not to use the microwave as it can interfere with your Wi-Fi signal.
- Where possible, you must use a headset to minimise background noise and reduce feedback. This may also improve audio quality. If you're not able to use a headset, stay on mute unless you are addressing the court.
- Ensure your device is stationary to avoid your screen moving in other participants' view.

The main controls for the call will



appear if you hover

at the bottom centre of the screen.

Click on the microphone icon to mute and unmute yourself. When muted, the microphone will be red.



- **Do not** use the meeting controls on the right-hand side of the screen. These control the audio and video of everyone on the videoconference and will disrupt the hearing.



The diagram below illustrates how the different remote participants connect to the hearing.

