



The COVID pandemic has led to an increased use of virtual courts and technology within the courtroom environment. This has enabled many victims of crime to view court proceedings remotely from a private location, such as their home.

In some cases, victims of crime have also been able to actively participate in sentencing proceedings by reading their victim impact statements aloud from remote locations instead of attending court in person to do so. If you are interested in attending virtual court proceedings there are some things you need to know.

Virtual courtroom etiquette

Courtrooms are formal environments and there are certain rules and expectations about how to behave whilst attending court.

Everyone who attends court, either in person or remotely, is expected to behave in an appropriate and respectful manner and observe normal court etiquette.

If you are viewing courtroom proceedings virtually you are expected to remain silent throughout the proceedings.

Things you should do:

- » **Ensure your microphone is turned off** – this will minimise the risk of interruptions/background noise interfering with the court proceedings
- » **Ensure your camera is turned off** – unless you are asked to turn it on by the judge/magistrate/court staff, for the purpose of reading out a Victim Impact Statement
- » It is recommended that you connect to the link five minutes before the proceedings start

Things you must not do:

- » **Do not make any audio or visual recording of the proceedings.**
- » **Do not take any photographs of the people or proceedings.**
- » **Do not broadcast the proceedings in any way.**
- » **Do not distribute the guest video-link to anyone else.**
- » **Do not turn your microphone on and speak to anyone in the court unless asked to do so.**

In some jurisdictions, such as New South Wales, the unauthorised transmission of court proceedings is against the law and penalties include a fine and/or a term of imprisonment.¹

Your privacy

If you are observing court proceedings via video-link you may be asked to identify yourself as part of the log in process.

You may be required to enter your name and/or initials as part of the log in process and these details are likely to be visible to others who are viewing/participating in the court proceedings including the defendant.

It is also worth noting that the judge/court may identify individuals who have linked into the proceedings virtually.

If you have any particular concerns about your privacy, please inform the prosecutor and/or Witness Assistance Officer prior to the court proceedings.

Reading a Victim Impact Statement to the court

A Victim Impact Statement (VIS) is a written statement that contains details about the impact that a crime has had on a victim. It is provided to the sentencing judge to assist them in determining a sentence for the offender.

If you expect to be reading a VIS to the court you should ensure that you are located in a quiet location in order to limit interference from background noise.

You may be required to have your camera turned on whilst reading out your statement enabling others to see what you are wearing and your environment.

Remove any hats or sunglasses and avoid eating, drinking and chewing gum whilst you are speaking to the court.

The CDPP Victims and Witnesses website contains information regarding [Victim Impact Statements](#).

Are all court proceedings able to be viewed virtually?

No. Not all courts will have the necessary technology to enable people to view proceedings virtually.

In some cases there may be legal reasons why people cannot view certain court proceedings.

In addition, the CDPP will need to seek permission from the court for victims of crime to view and/or participate in court proceedings from a private location.

In some virtual court proceedings the court may require attendees to spend time in a virtual waiting room.

Court Proceedings – Will they start on time? And how long will they take?

Court proceedings are usually listed to start at a certain time. In some situations a case is listed to be heard in a list along with many other cases. As a result it is not always possible to know exactly when an individual case will be heard and you may experience some delays.

The courts may estimate how long certain court proceedings are likely to go on for. However, it is important to understand that this is only a guide. In reality, the court proceedings may take less or more time than originally estimated.

Each case is unique

There are many different factors that can impact upon the virtual courtroom environment.

This document provides a general guide to common issues that may arise in relation to virtual court proceedings.

It is important to note that each case is different and other issues may impact upon the proceedings and the way in which they are conducted.

Who Can Help?

The nature of criminal court proceedings can be confronting and distressing. Please bear in mind that you may hear graphic details of offending behaviour that has occurred in relation to yourself, and in some cases other victims. You may also see the accused on screen.

Please consider your support needs in relation to any virtual court attendance and take steps to ensure that you have adequate supports in place to assist you through the process.

If there is a Witness Assistance Officer involved, please speak to them about any support needs you may have -they may also be able to attend these proceedings virtually and/or follow-up with you after they have occurred.

Prosecutors may also be able to speak with you following court proceedings to help you understand what occurred and answer any questions you may have.

If you would like to view court proceedings virtually or have any questions regarding virtual courtroom attendance, please contact the relevant prosecutor and/or Witness Assistance Officer involved.

The CDPP [Victims and Witnesses website](#) contains information regarding the prosecution process, courtrooms and a range of support services including the following 24 hour crisis counselling services:

Lifeline: 13 11 14

Kids Helpline: 1800 551 800

¹ Court Security Act, 2005 (NSW) s9A