

You have received a summons to attend an inquest hearing, and so you may have many questions. This information sheet may assist you.

Do I have to attend Court?

Careful consideration is made by the Court to issue a summons for a witness to attend to give evidence and there may be serious consequences if a person does not obey a summons.

If you are unable to attend court in person due to distance or personal circumstances, alternative arrangements may be able to be made for you to give your evidence. However, you must contact the court as soon as possible to discuss any options which may be available. The court cannot guarantee permission will be given for you to give your evidence via electronic means. You will find contact details for counsel assisting or other staff members at the bottom of your summons.

Is the date reflected on my summons the day I attend Court?

Your summons will state the first day of the commencement of the inquest hearing. However as there may be multiple days the inquest is listed, you will usually not be required to be present for the whole inquest. You should contact the court as soon as possible upon receiving your summons to ascertain the day and time you have been nominated to give your evidence. While the court does its best to keep to the schedule circumstances may change, and there could be an unexpected delay. If this is the case court staff will contact you to advise you of the new time.

How long will I be required in Court?

Unfortunately, the length of time you will be required is uncertain and while court staff may be able to give you an estimate, please be cautious when scheduling other commitments on that day.

What do I bring to Court?

Please bring a copy of your summons, and any documents or materials that have been requested of you. You may be asked to read so please bring any reading glasses if required.

What shall I wear to Court?

While you are not required to wear formal attire to Court, there is a minimum expectation that your attire should be neat and tidy.

Is there a particular time I should arrive to Court?

Your summons will contain the details of the court location where the inquest hearing is being held. You can also check the Coroners Court's website "Inquest List". Please arrive approximately 30 minutes prior to the scheduled commencement time as you may have delays at security points within the court facility you are attending.

What do I need to know when I arrive at Court?

Once you arrive at the courtroom please make your presence known to counsel assisting or the coroner's clerk. If the courtroom is not open you will find a waiting area adjacent to the courtroom please wait there until the courtroom is unlocked. If you arrive when court is in session you can enter the courtroom and wait for the court to rise at the earliest break before approaching counsel assisting or the coroner's clerk.

Please refrain from talking about the facts of the case or the evidence you are to give whilst in the public areas of the court building.

Will I be sworn to give evidence? And who will ask me questions?

When the counsel assisting calls your name, please make your way to the witness box. When you step into the witness box, you will be asked by the coroner's clerk whether you want to swear or affirm to tell the truth by swearing an oath (generally on the bible) by making an affirmation. You must choose one or the other. The court can also undertake to provide other methods of choosing to tell the truth such as the holy book of another religion.

Counsel assisting will ask questions designed to elicit your evidence, or have you tell your story. You through your evidence and you may be asked questions by other counsel appearing on behalf of interested parties. The presiding Coroner may also have questions. When responding directly to the Coroner you should refer to the Coroner as "Your Honour".

Am I required to answer questions?

The answer is yes you should answer each question is carefully and truthfully as you can and from your own recollection. Do not guess if you are not sure about an answer. If you do not understand any question, please ask for the question to be repeated. If you feel your answers may incriminate you should raise this immediately with the presiding Coroner.

Speak clearly so that your evidence can be understood. The microphone in front of you only records your voice, it does not amplify. If you become distressed and you need a break, please inform the presiding Coroner.

What happens after I have completed my evidence?

The presiding Coroner will formally advise you that you have completed your evidence and you are free to leave. The proceedings are an open to the public. Therefore should you wish to stay and hear the remainder of the evidence you are free to do so.

A copy of the coroner's findings will be published on the Coroner's Court website when the Coroner has completed their finding.