

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to any questions. Please find the following response to Senator Patrick's question:

Senator PATRICK: If I may, on that point. We've heard evidence that just because you get a listing doesn't mean that a matter will get heard on that day. Are your clients or First Nations people treated differently in respect of having to travel a long way to sit with a lawyer to do a phone hearing to find out that it has been vacated?

Our submission sets out the difficulties faced by clients in remote and regional areas:

Repeated trips for mentions and family reports place an enormous burden on parties, distance, difficulty and expense of travel and other responsibilities (such as the care of other children) make participation in the court process very difficult unless permission to attend by phone is granted. Even where phone attendances are allowed for, our clients often have to travel significant distances to attend to where their lawyer is, however there is no prioritisation of phone appearances, leading to clients waiting for a considerable portion of the day on the end of a phone line.

As regards listing of matters our experience has been:

If a matter is listed for mention it will be taken up. Dates are not vacated without notice. However, if any one of the parties seeks an urgent interim hearing there is no guarantee this can take place on the day due to the lengthy duty lists before each judge.