

District Court

Practice Directions - No. 1 of 2000

Taking Evidence by Telephone

Designating the following procedure is intended to streamline the taking of evidence by telephone, and in particular, to avoid delay and disruption and maintain the due solemnity of proceedings.

1. The party wishing to have the evidence taken by telephone should inform the other party accordingly, before the trial, to determine whether there is any objection. If there is objection an application may be made to the applications (chambers) list judge or to the trial judge if the identity of that judge is known.

2. The trial judge, when known, should in any event be apprised in advance of the wish to take evidence by telephone, and the judge's agreement obtained or any necessary order made.

3. In anticipation of the taking of the evidence by telephone, the legal representative of the party calling the witness must attend to the following matters:

(a) arrange for the witness to have immediate access to the telephone;

(b) ascertain from the witness the form of oath to be taken and ensure that the witness is equipped to comply with the formalities of the oath, or confirm that it is appropriate to affirm;

(c) explain to the witness that the evidence is being given in formal court proceedings, and being recorded, and that the witness may be cross-examined by counsel and questioned by the judge; and that the witness must be careful only to answer questions put.

4. It is most convenient if the witness telephones the court, rather than vice versa. The legal representative for the party calling the witness should in advance ascertain from the bailiff the telephone number of the trial courtroom, and inform the intended witness of that number, impressing upon the witness the need to telephone the courtroom precisely at the time designated by the judge, and preferably to be in possession of a bible if an oath is to be taken, and that it must be the witness (rather than someone on his or her behalf) who actually calls in.

5. In the unusual event that arrangements cannot be made to have the witness call into the court, the following paragraphs 6 and 7 apply.

6. This paragraph applies to proceedings being conducted in the District Court at Brisbane.

(a) Prior to the time the evidence is to be given, the bailiff will advise the Chief Bailiff or Deputy Chief Bailiff, or if necessary the staff at the Sheriff's Office, of the following matters:

(i) the number of the courtroom, the name of the judge, and the court phone number;

(ii) the name of the person required to give evidence;

(iii) the name of the organisation, if applicable, where that person is to be contacted;

(iv) the telephone number, including any STD area code;

(v) the time at which the court requires the evidence to be given.

(b) A couple of minutes prior to the time the evidence is to be given, the Chief Bailiff (or other court officer, as the case may require) will place the call with the long distance operator, with

a request for a "callback charge". When the call is connected, and it is clear the requisite witness is waiting on the line, the Chief Bailiff will switch the call through to the courtroom. The Chief Bailiff will then announce to the court that the required witness is on the line.

(c) The Chief Bailiff will ensure that a call cost is received and passed on to Court Administration for collection.

7. Where the court sits at centres outside Brisbane, comparable arrangements suited to the particular centre are to be made.

8. Legal representatives for the parties are obliged to ensure the taking of evidence in this way does not detract unduly from the proper formality and solemnity of the proceedings.

P.M. Wolfe
Chief Judge
21 February 2000