Guide to Electronic Management of Documents

This guide is to assist parties when developing a document plan under Practice Direction 18 of 2018 at the start of a proceeding. It also provides non-technical instructions on how to prepare documents for use in an eTrial. The parties to an eTrial are required to provide the eTrials Team with the documents to be contained in the Resolution Bundle and to be relied on at trial at least ten business days prior to commencement of trial. These documents must be saved and identified according to certain requirements before they can be uploaded to the eTrial site in preparation for trial.

1. **Where to start?**

   1.1. Under Practice Direction 18 of 2018, the parties are required to address document management as early as possible in litigation, including by conferring and agreeing on a document plan (incorporating a document management protocol) before a notice of appearance and defence is filed. The document plan is to be revised and developed as the proceeding progresses, and the parties are required to consider the creation of a Resolution Bundle.

   1.2. The Practice Direction recognises that in most cases, the efficient and cost-effective management of documents at all stages of litigation may be enhanced by using the alternative UCPR Form 19 as the document protocol. A simple version of the schedule (known as the Document Management Spreadsheet) (the spreadsheet) is available on the Queensland Courts' website for downloading and use by litigants.

   1.3. The document plan, and use of the spreadsheet, in addition to assisting with document management as the matter progresses, also facilitates preparation for, and the conduct of, an eTrial.

2. **Where to next?**

   2.1. Generally, all documents to be relied on by the party should be:
   - **2.1.1.** In, or converted to, fully searchable electronic format - generally a multi-page text searchable PDF (with certain exceptions as discussed below or as agreed with the eTrials Team);
   - **2.1.2.** allocated a Document ID in accordance with the document protocol agreed by the parties.
   - **2.1.3.** renamed in accordance with the document's corresponding Document ID (after relevant metadata has been extracted and used to populate the spreadsheet).

   2.2. Any photographs can be scanned into PDF, but these should be scanned at no more than 300DPI and saved as reduced size non text searchable PDFs. Any document that is a picture can be saved as a JPG or in a similar format, as these files need not be text searchable.

   2.3. Audio files should be saved in mp3 format and video files should be saved in mp4 format.

2.4. It may be impractical to scan or produce some documents, such as large format plans or spreadsheets, as searchable PDFs. In addition, parties may wish to tender some documents in
their original format for forensic reasons (such as Microsoft Word documents with tracking). To the extent that such documents cannot be viewed in the eTrial system, these exhibits can be viewed in court using the document visualizer. In this case, the judge's associate will create a placeholder document and add this to the electronic exhibit list to ensure tracking of the document and continuity of exhibit numbering).

3.   What is a PDF?

3.1. Portable Document Format (PDF) is a file format used to represent documents in a manner independent of application software, hardware, and operating systems.

3.2. A **text searchable PDF** is a PDF file that allows the user to search for and locate specific text within a PDF document. The software used to create text searchable PDF files is called OCR (optical character recognition) software.

3.3. The proprietary Adobe software is flexible in its application and is a useful tool for creating documents in the necessary format. In addition, there are other programs available that can create text searchable PDF files from electronic and/or scanned documents.

Collating the documents

4.1. Identify the documents required to be disclosed in the proceeding, including those to be relied on in proving the party's case.

4.2. Ensure all items are in the correct format, that is:

4.2.1.   Text Documents - converted to text searchable PDF.
4.2.2.   Pictures – converted to PDF or JPG.
4.2.3.   Audio files – mp3 format.
4.2.4.   Video files – mp4 format.

4.3. Ensure every document has a unique filename. The filename is not used for sorting or searching for documents. The important thing is that every filename is different. Generally, and as envisaged by the spreadsheet referred to in the Practice Direction, files should be renamed with their corresponding Document ID after extraction of relevant metadata (as this enables the hyperlinking functionality in the spreadsheet and further enhances efficient document management during the course of the proceeding).

4.4. Any attachments to a document are to be treated as documents in their own right and each should have a separate filename. (See 6.6 below regarding allocation of Document ID numbers to these documents.)

4.5. Copy the files into a single, separate folder and check that there are no duplicate filenames. Again, the spreadsheet referred to in the Practice Direction envisages that documents have already been saved to a "Documents" folder stored in the same location as the spreadsheet.

Creating the spreadsheet

5.1. Create an index to the Resolution Bundle in spreadsheet format. The spreadsheet referred to in the Practice Direction is intended to be used for this purpose.

5.2. For each document, locate and record information in the spreadsheet (much of which may be efficiently obtained from metadata), including:

Information	Format	Content
Document ID	e.g., ABC0002	Unique identifier for each electronic file/document
Document Date	dd/mm/yyyy	Document date. This may be obtained from metadata or entered manually. Where only the month and year are known, use 01/MM/YYYY. Where only the year is known, use 01/01/YYYY. This cell can be left blank for undated documents.
Document Title	single line of text	Short description of document, which may be obtained from metadata
Document Type	word or phrase	Document type from metadata or a list agreed by parties
Host Document ID	e.g., ABC0001	Document ID of parent document (if the document is an attachment). Otherwise re-enter the Document ID
Author	name	Person who created the document, which may be obtained from metadata
Recipient	name	Person who received the document, which may be obtained from metadata. This field is optional in the spreadsheet
File Name	e.g., ABC0002.pdf	Electronic file name (generally the Document ID), including file extension

Note: The information in **bold** must be included in the index. The other categories may be included if the parties consider they will be useful in identifying, sorting, and searching for documents. The parties may also agree on other categories to suit their particular proceeding.

5.3. Documents provided in another electronic format, or in paper form, can be included in the index using a placeholder file containing relevant details. This is usually a single page bearing a typed description, for example: "DVD containing Images of … ".

5.4. Any cell in the spreadsheet must not contain more than 250 characters. Use abbreviations where necessary.

5.5. Document types must be consistent and used in accordance with the agreed document management protocol. For example, if a file contains more than one bank statement, the document type should still be given as 'bank statement' (if that is the agreed type), not 'bank statement**s**'. If necessary, the document description may be used to provide further information as to the document(s) contained in a particular file.

5.6. If the Document ID is not used for the filename (which would generally be the exception), do not use characters such as < > : / \ | ? * & for filenames, as this will interfere with the

function of the eCourtbook.

5.7. For the content of the spreadsheet, avoid:

    5.6.1. Carriage returns. All information in each row must be contained on one line.
    5.6.2. Cells containing more than 250 characters.

5.8. Save the spreadsheet as an .XLS or .XLSX file.

Allocating the Document ID

6.1. The parties should have agreed on the format for the Document ID at the commencement of the proceeding, in accordance with the Practice Direction.

6.2. Each file in the spreadsheet must be allocated a Document ID in accordance with the format agreed by the parties. This number must be entered in the spreadsheet in the designated column.

6.3. The file should generally be renamed using the Document ID after extracting the relevant metadata.

6.4. The Document ID is the number used to identify each document from commencement of the proceeding, for example in pleadings, statements or affidavits, expert reports, and submissions. At trial, it is used to locate documents in the eCourtbook and display them via the courtroom monitors. The parties must state the Document ID in full when calling for documents at trial. The Document ID should therefore be as simple as possible.

6.5. The simplest format for the Document ID is to use three letters to identify the party relying on the document, followed by a number to identify the document.

For example, the letters used in the Document ID could be as simple as PLA for plaintiff or DEF for defendant. Where there are a number of parties, the first three letters of the party's name could be used, for example ABC Developments Pty Ltd could be identified as ABC.

The three letters should be followed by a four-digit number to identify the particular document. Of course, if there are 10,000 or more documents to be disclosed, you will need to adopt a Document ID numbering system incorporating 5 digits.

It is important to use leading zeros in the Document ID to avoid confusion (for example, to avoid the possibility of having PLA11, PLA011, and PLA0011).

6.6. Attachments to parent/host documents are treated as documents in their own right, with each bearing a separate Document ID. It is important that the host document and the corresponding attachments are able to be identified both as a group and separately. This is achieved by entering the Document ID of the host document in the Host ID column for each of the attachments <u>and</u> for the host document (see PLA001 to PLA003 below). If the particular document does not have attachments, re-enter the Document ID as the Host Document ID (see PLA004). The example below shows the numbering of an investigation report with two attachments, being a photograph and plan.

Document ID	Document Date	Document Type	Host Document ID
PLA001	20/01/2021	Investigation Report	PLA001
PLA002	01/12/2020	Photograph	PLA001
PLA003	10/12/2020	Plan	PLA001
PLA004	21/1/2021	Outlook Item	PLA004

6.7. The Bundle should generally not contain any duplicate documents.

6.8. If parties wish to search for and view documents in the eCourtbook by reference to the witness who is to prove the document, or to whom the document is to be referred, they should add a filterable column entitled "Witness" to the spreadsheet and populate this column accordingly.

Document Management Training

7.1. On listing of an eTrial, the parties to the proceeding, or their legal representatives if they are represented, will be invited to a meeting with the eTrials Team for an overview of the eTrial process, to discuss how to effectively manage documents in an eTrial and for information about the preparation of documents in the Resolution Bundle for uploading to the eTrial site. Once uploaded, the Resolution Bundle is referred to as the eCourtbook.

Prior to the meeting the parties should provide the current document plan to the eTrials Team. Consistent with the Practice Direction and the spreadsheet, the document plan and protocol should deal with document formats and Document IDs, as well as the document types to be applied and used to facilitate sorting and searching for documents.

Checking and delivering the documents

8.1. Check the following**:**
    8.1.1. All files are saved in a single, separate folder (usually a "Documents" folder) in the required format, and generally with the filename being the Document ID (together with the relevant file extension – ie .pdf).
    8.1.2. There are no duplicate filenames.
    8.1.3. The number of items/rows in the index/spreadsheet is the same as the number of files in the folder where the files are stored.
    8.1.4. The filenames in the index are the same as the filenames in the folder.
    8.1.5. Each file has been allocated a Document ID.
    8.1.6. All the columns in the index contain the correct information.
    8.1.7. Document types are used consistently and in accordance with the agreed document management protocol.
    8.1.8. Any dates are in dd/mm/yyyy format.
    8.1.9. The Host Document ID is entered for all documents.
    8.1.10. There are no carriage returns.
    8.1.11. No text box contains more than 250 characters.
    8.1.12. The Spreadsheet is saved as an .XLS or .XLSX file.

8.2. Save the files and the index/spreadsheet to a clean, encrypted USB.

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8.3. Deliver the USB to the eTrials Team at least ten business days prior to the commencement of trial. Provide the password to the USB by separate email to the eTrials Team.

Disclaimer
The eTrials Team assists parties where possible, however it remains each party's responsibility to provide documents for an eTrial in the required format. Any software mentioned in this document is referred to for information only and is not provided, or otherwise endorsed, by Queensland Courts. Enquiries should be directed to the eTrials Team at eTrials@courts.qld.gov.au.