

**IN THE CORONER'S COURT
AT CHRISTCHURCH
(IN-CHAMBERS)**

**I TE KŌTI KAITIROTIRO MATEWHAWHATI
KI TE ŌTAUTAHI
[I TE TARI]**

**CSU-2019-CCH-000165 to
CSU-2019-CCH-000214;
CSU-2019-CCH-000326**

UNDER

THE CORONERS ACT 2006

AND

IN THE MATTER OF

**An inquiry into the deaths of 51
people in relation to the 15 March
2019 Christchurch Masjid Attacks**

Date of Minute: 1 February 2022

**MINUTE OF DECISION TO HOLD
SCOPE HEARING REMOTELY**

Scope Hearing

[1] The hearing on the scope of the coronial inquiry (the **Scope Hearing**) is currently set down to take place at the Law Courts in Christchurch between 22 and 24 February 2022, having previously been rescheduled from December 2021 at the request of a number of Interested Parties. In my Minute of 2 December 2021 I noted that I did not consider it to be in the interests of the timely progression of the inquiry to delay the scope hearing further into 2022.

Omicron implications

[2] The recent outbreak of Omicron in the community, increasing numbers of daily cases now circulating in the community, and peak infection rate modelling forecasts means that the work of the courts has and will continue to be impacted.

All courts have been actively assessing and reviewing options for conducting as much of the regular court business as possible while reducing the high risk of exposure to Omicron and its further transmission in the community.

- [3] The situation is fast developing. Modelling suggests that Omicron infection rate will rapidly escalate in coming weeks which will coincide with the Scope Hearing.

Remote participation

- [4] Due to the timing of the Scope Hearing, and the high risk of Omicron transmission with large gatherings, I have decided to hold the Scope Hearing remotely. This means that those Interested Parties (or their counsel) who wish to make oral submissions on scope will need to do so remotely by way of a Virtual Meeting Room (VMR). This will also mean those who indicated a wish to be present to observe the Scope Hearing will also need to do so remotely.
- [5] I acknowledge this is not an ideal mode by which to undertake the Scope Hearing and will necessarily inhibit the ability of the families of the deceased, and other Interested parties to physically gather together in the court and support one another during the Scope Hearing. I know the Ministry of Justice are working hard to ensure the technology will provide for a seamless hearing.
- [6] This is not a decision that has been taken lightly, but the safety of those attending is paramount. It would be unconscionable if a hearing related to the tragic loss of so many lives itself became a vehicle by which further harm was caused to those who have already suffered immeasurably. I consider the Scope Hearing, which provides a further forum to address me on submissions on scope can still be properly undertaken by remote participation. I do not consider it to be in the interests of progressing the inquiry to defer the hearing, especially given the unpredictability of COVID-19 and its variants.

Practical arrangements

- [7] The Ministry of Justice is currently working through the practical arrangements for facilitating the change to a remote hearing and will be in contact with further details once arrangements are finalised.



CORONER B WINDLEY