



# Magistrates' Court of Victoria

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### Video Conference project commences

The Magistrates' Court of Victoria, in partnership with Corrections Victoria, has commenced a trial of the use of modern, internet based video conference technology at selected Magistrates' and Children's Court venues and prisons. The project will consist of two stages.

The Victorian prison population increased from a daily average of 4,586 prisoners in 2010-11 to a daily average of 5,800 in 2013-14. This growth has placed increased demand on courts and prison services. This has led to pressures in the Victorian custodial system and a need to proactively increase the justice services provided to those in custody. The current demand for hearings involving accused in custody exceeds the capacity of the Court's existing video conference technology.

The first stage of the project is to improve and expand the capacity of the selected courts and Corrections Victoria locations to use video conference technology. Eleven court venues and four prisons are involved in stage one and new equipment has been installed at each of these locations.

The new technology is also being trialled in family violence hearings listed at the Magistrates' Courts at Melbourne and Heidelberg. Affected family members will be given the option of appearing before the court via a video link from a remote location with access to legal and support services.

Stage one became operational on 20 April 2015.

The second stage of the project will provide an opportunity for legal practitioners and other agencies to securely dial into courts and prisons using a range of devices such as a laptops, tablets and smart phones and will commence in the second half of 2015.

The Chief Magistrate of Victoria, Mr Peter Lauritsen, said there were many benefits to expanding the use of video conference technology.

"The project will allow the Court to increase the number and types of hearings suitable to be heard by video conference," Chief Magistrate Lauritsen said.

"Expanding the use of video conferencing to also include communication between prisoners and the legal profession provides an opportunity to reduce further the need for prisoner movements across the system, and will reduce the administrative burden associated with legal practitioners attending prisons." he said.

**End**

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