

# Medical Assessment Tribunals and COVID-19

Stakeholder Update 21 April 2020

The Office of Industrial Relations is committed to supporting the ongoing delivery of dispute resolution services for the Queensland workers' compensation scheme as Queensland responds to COVID-19.

In achieving this outcome for the Medical Assessment Tribunals, the health, safety and wellbeing of workers, tribunal members and our staff is of paramount importance.

In addition to consulting extensively with Tribunal Chairs, we have been working closely with Queensland Health to ensure our Medical Assessment Tribunal service adheres to Queensland Government recommendations and guidelines for COVID-19 and risks are minimised.

Depending on a worker's individual circumstances, a range of options are now available to ensure the timely resolution of matters while respecting the safety and choice of workers, support persons, representatives, tribunal members and staff.

1. A worker can attend a virtual tribunal hearing using Microsoft Teams, where a Medical Assessment Tribunal referral is deemed appropriate for videoconferencing, the worker consents and has suitable access to technology.
2. If a virtual hearing is not suitable, either due to the individual circumstances of a worker's referral (for example, a referral may require a physical examination), accessibility of technology, or the worker chooses to exercise their right to attend the tribunal hearing in person, then:
  - 2.1. Where a worker's referral is determined by a tribunal to require a physical examination, a hybrid virtual hearing may be conducted. Under a hybrid virtual hearing a worker attends with one tribunal member who undertakes a physical examination using appropriate safety measures and the other members of the tribunal attend via by videoconference.
  - 2.2. Where a worker with a psychological injury elects to attend a face to face tribunal hearing:
    - screening of all workers and visitors will occur before attendance and upon arrival at the tribunal;
    - the tribunal's physical environment has been adapted to facilitate required social distancing and reduce contact, including a significant reduction in the number of staff in the office through remote working; and
    - there are increased sanitization practices including alcohol-based products.
  - 2.3. If these alternate arrangements are not suitable due to the worker's individual circumstances, the referral will be postponed until a face to face hearing is able to be conducted.

We are committed to a rapid transition to alternative methods of service delivery and appreciate your assistance in supporting Queensland's workers throughout this process.

If you have any questions regarding Medical Assessment Tribunals or seek information in relation to the alternate options available in response to the COVID-19 situation, please contact Rachel Hawkins, Director – Engagement, Insurer and Tribunal Services, [rachel.hawkins@oir.qld.gov.au](mailto:rachel.hawkins@oir.qld.gov.au) or (07) 3020 6347.