

Coronavirus (COVID-19)

The coronavirus pandemic is creating new challenges for everyone, and at Women's Legal Service Tasmania, we are seeing an increase in callers seeking advice in relation to the pandemic's impact on parenting arrangements, family violence, and employment.

We appreciate that many women will be experiencing increased safety risks as a result of family violence, including limited access to phones and other technology to contact our services. Wherever possible, we aim to be flexible in the delivery of our advice and information. While our office is closed to face-to-face appointments, we can provide phone, email and video advice, and may also be able to provide information and limited advice through a nominated support person if this will assist. Phone interpreters will be made available wherever possible.

Keeping in mind that safety risks can extend to the monitoring of phone and internet access, you may find it useful to consider information on technology-facilitated abuse and online safety planning on the [eSafety Commissioner website](https://www.esafety.gov.au/women/domestic-family-violence) (esafety.gov.au/women/domestic-family-violence).

Parenting

The changing landscape in relation to how the coronavirus is impacting on travel and personal contact will have implications for parenting arrangements. In some cases, the restrictions may make it very difficult, if not impossible, for children to travel between parents' residences, and parents may disagree about the risks involved in children travelling, or attending school, for example.

For updates on the current travel restrictions, health risks, and other information, you can go to the [Australian Department of Health website](https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts) (health.gov.au/news/health-alerts) and the [Tasmanian Government Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) website](https://www.coronavirus.tas.gov.au) (coronavirus.tas.gov.au).

There will no doubt be a degree of flexibility required when adhering to parenting arrangements

– whether there are Parenting Orders in place, or otherwise – and as always, the primary consideration should be the safety of your child, and your family, while also considering the broader risk to the community.

You may need to consider alternative changeover locations, and/or times, and where travel is impossible, you may consider arranging alternative modes of contact or plans for future travel.

If you require advice about your particular parenting circumstances, you can call the Women's Legal Service advice line on 1800 682 468.

If phone contact is an issue, you can email us on admin@womenslegaltas.org.au for information or advice. We may also be able to arrange a virtual face-to-face appointment through Zoom (Zoom is preferred where safety or security is a concern).

Family Violence

Restrictions on travel, and the requirement that people remain in their homes, will place many women and children at a higher risk of family violence. This includes physical violence, emotional and verbal abuse, and other forms of control such as economic abuse and monitoring computer and phone use.

The Magistrates Court continues to receive and hear applications in relation to Family Violence Orders, prioritising those of an urgent nature. Where possible, the applications are to be filed electronically and heard via phone or video.

The law remains the same in relation to Family Violence, and in the case of an emergency, you should call the Police on 000.

For advice about your options, you can call the Women's Legal Service advice line on 1800 682 468.

If phone contact is an issue, you can email us on admin@womenslegaltas.org.au for information or advice. We may also be able to arrange a virtual face-to-face appointment through Zoom or Skype (Zoom is preferred where safety or security is a concern).

You may also find the following services useful:

- Legal Aid Safe at Home Lawyers – 1800 633 937
- Family Violence Counselling and Support Service – 1800 608 122
- Safe Choices – 1800 806 189
- Engender Equality – (03) 6278 9090
- Sexual Assault Support Service – (03) 6231 0044

If you are concerned about online abuse or unauthorised access to your phone and other online accounts, you may find some useful information on the [eSafety Commissioner website](http://esafety.gov.au) (esafety.gov.au).

Employment

The coronavirus has had a significant impact on people's employment, including the requirement to work from home, loss of jobs, and resulting personal and financial stress.

It is important to remember that where your position has become redundant as a result of the Coronavirus, your employer must still follow any consultation process outlined in your award or agreement, and pay out your entitlements. Your employer also continues to have health and safety obligations that include taking precautions against the spread of Coronavirus.

Some flexibility with regards to alternative work arrangements, pay, and leave during the coronavirus crisis is likely to be considered reasonable – on behalf of the employer and the employee.

For more information about employment relationships during the pandemic, you can go to the [Fair Work Ombudsman website](http://coronavirus.fairwork.gov.au) (coronavirus.fairwork.gov.au).

Contacts

Women's Legal Service Tasmania can be contacted on **1800 682 468**.

"Coronavirus (COVID-19)" is intended to give general information. While we have made every effort to ensure the contents of this publication are accurate at the time of publication the law and services do change. Legal and service exactness is not possible in a publication of this nature. This publication should not be used as a substitute for legal advice.

Women's Legal Service (Tasmania) does not accept any responsibility for any loss, damage or injury, financial or otherwise, suffered by any person acting on information contained in this publication or omitted from it.

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