



Access to coronial documents

When a coroner investigates a death or fire, the Coroners Court of Victoria (the Court) gathers a range of documents. At the end of an investigation the coroner writes a finding/determination. These come to be known as “coronial documents”. Documents within a court file are not always available to the public however you can apply to the coroner to either view or receive a copy of those coronial documents. The Court receives on average 5,000+ applications for coronial documentation each year.

Prior to applying for documents, you should consider that it may be upsetting to read details about a loved one’s death. Some information may be distressing or graphic in nature.

What type of documents does the Court have?

A court file can contain many different documents. This will depend on how complex the investigation is. Some common and most sought-after documents are:

- Medical examiner’s report;
- Toxicology report;
- Coronial brief (this includes witness statements and other important relevant information for the investigation); and,
- Coroner’s finding/determination.

Who can apply for documents?

Anyone can apply to the Court for coronial documents for any matter. Every application goes before the coroner for consideration prior to releasing the coronial documents. The most common applicants are family members and friends, medical/other healthcare professionals and legal practitioners.

A coroner may also release documents to:

- A statutory body for a statutory function;
- A member of the police force for law enforcement;
- Researchers, for research approved by an ethics committee; and/or,
- Anyone who can satisfy the coroner that it is in the public interest.



How do I apply for coronial documents?

To apply for coronial documents, parties must complete a Form 45 – ‘Application for access to coronial documents/inquest transcript’.

The Form 45 is available on the Court’s website [here](#) or contact the Court on 1300 309 519 to speak to a court staff member for assistance.

The form must be completed **in full** and returned either by email or post via the details below:

E: courtadmin@coronerscourt.vic.gov.au

P: 65 Kavanagh Street, Southbank VIC 3006

The Court will contact you in writing once the coroner has reviewed the application and provided their response.

Who decides whether to approve my application?

If the investigation was completed *after* 1 June 1986, the coroner will decide whether to approve the application.

The coroner in most cases will impose a condition of release of a document. Penalties may apply if you break these conditions.

If the investigation was completed *before* 1 June 1986, you may contact the Public Records Office of Victoria on **1800 657 452**.

Can my application be refused?

Yes. A coroner may refuse an application, for example if a criminal prosecution is in progress or if the person who has applied has insufficient interest in the matter.

How long will it take to receive the documents?

Every coronial matter is different, and so is the application received. The time may vary depending on a few things such as (but not limited to);

- How complex the matter is;
- If the documents are available;
- The coroner’s availability/workload; and/or,
- If the ‘Senior Next of Kin’ needs to be contacted prior to release.

Additionally, the Court generally releases documentation via the post (unless specified otherwise on your application) so you must allow for postage timeframes.

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Coroners Court
of Victoria

Are there any fees?

You may have to pay for copies of documents. The Court may waive or reduce these charges if it is appropriate.