



# Coroners Court of Victoria

## Practice Note 1 of 2024

### Pronunciation of Names and Forms of Address in Coronial Proceedings

#### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Coroners Court of Victoria (**Court**) recognises that the correct pronunciation of names and forms of address during court proceedings is a matter of respect and is an important component of ensuring public confidence in the proper administration of justice.
- 1.2 The State Coroner of Victoria has authorised the issue of the following Practice Note to:
  - (a) provide guidance on expectations for the correct pronunciation of names and forms of address in coronial proceedings; and
  - (b) facilitate a simple process by which families, interested parties and legal representatives can provide, and the Court can seek, clarification on correct pronunciation of names and appropriate forms of address.

#### 2. Commencement

- 2.1 This Practice Note was issued on 17 June 2024 and, to the extent practicable, applies to investigations under the *Coroners Act 2008* (Vic) (**the Act**) whether commenced before or after that date.

#### 3. Pronunciation of names and forms of address

- 3.1 The Court is committed to treating all Court participants with equal dignity, respect and courtesy.
- 3.2 The Court recognises that a person's name, and how they are addressed, is integral to their sense of identity. The correct pronunciation of names and use of appropriate forms of address is a sign of respect and is consistent with the objectives of the Act, including:
  - (a) that different cultures have different beliefs and practices surrounding death that should, where appropriate, be respected.
  - (b) that a Coroner must conduct an inquest with as little formality and technicality as the interests of justice permit, and in a way that as far as practicable makes the inquest comprehensible to interested parties and family members who are present.
- 3.3 The Court will provide the opportunity for families, parties, or their legal representatives to provide guidance and clarification of names and preferred forms of address for use in a coronial proceeding. This includes but is not limited to references to the deceased, family members, witnesses, interested parties, counsel, solicitors, and interpreters.

#### 4. **How to refer to the deceased**

- 4.1 Different cultures and communities have different beliefs and practices surrounding death, including preferences for how the deceased is referred to after death.
- 4.2 Where reasonably practicable, the Court will consult with the family of the deceased to clarify the correct pronunciation of the deceased's name and ascertain the family's preference in referring to the deceased in court proceedings and coronial findings. The Court will endeavour to accommodate the preferences of families where appropriate, subject to legal requirements when making findings as to the identity of the deceased.
- 4.3 The Court will inform interested parties and their legal representatives of the correct pronunciation and appropriate form of address for the deceased, including pronouns, at the commencement of the proceeding.

#### 5. **Responsibility of interested parties and legal representatives**

- 5.1 The Court invites interested parties and their legal representatives to provide the Court with guidance or clarification on pronunciation of names and appropriate form of address and pronouns of any party, witness, counsel or other participant in the hearing who wants that information provided.
- 5.2 Guidance may be provided as to the correct pronunciation of names by inserting the phonetic spelling of the name in square brackets directly after the name. For example:

*Mr Nguyen [New-wen]*

- 5.3 Parties may consider utilising the Macquarie Dictionary Pronunciation Key<sup>1</sup> for assistance on phonetic spelling.
- 5.4 Parties may also provide guidance as to forms of address (e.g. Mx, Mr, Ms, Mrs, Dr, Prof) and pronouns (i.e. she/her, he/him, they/them) for any person associated with the proceeding. For example:

*Counsel for Interested Party X uses the pronouns 'they/them'*

*The witness's form of address is Mx Smith [they/them].*

- 5.5 Guidance may be provided to the Court:
  - (a) by email to the Coroner's team;
  - (b) on the Court's appearance form by inserting the information in square brackets directly after a name;

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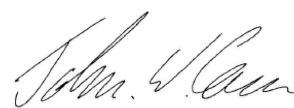
<sup>1</sup> Macquarie Dictionary, '[Pronunciation Key](#)'.

(c) when announcing an appearance at the commencement of a hearing, when calling a witness, or when mentioning a name relevant to the proceeding for the first time.

5.6 Legal representatives are expected to know and adopt the correct pronunciation of all names and appropriate forms of address (including pronouns) associated with the proceeding, and to assist the Court in meeting the objective set out in this Practice Note.

**6. Clarification by the Court**

6.1 Should the Court wish to clarify the correct pronunciation of any name or form of address to be used before or during the proceedings, an officer of the Court or Counsel Assisting the Coroner may contact the parties via their legal representatives, or directly if the party is self-represented. The Coroner may also seek clarification during the proceedings.



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**Judge John Cain**  
**State Coroner of Victoria**

**Dated: 17 June 2024**