



NT COURTS AND TRIBUNALS

# MEDIA POLICIES AND PRACTICES

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## Introduction: Media Accreditation Scheme

This policy describes the process by which media personnel may be accredited and the general media policies and practices of Northern Territory courts and tribunals.

The manner in which the proceedings are conducted in court is a matter for the presiding judge or member. This policy in no way affects or displaces that principle.

Northern Territory courts are public institutions and hearings are generally open to the public to attend. It is understood that journalists will seek to cover some proceedings.

Working members of the media are given some allowances in courts not afforded to members of the general public, such as limited use of some electronic equipment (personal laptop computers, electronic tablets, voice recorders and mobile phones for electronic note-taking and text messaging), so need to be identifiable to court staff.

The media accreditation scheme allows members of the media to be identified by court staff, and all reporters given accreditation will be placed on media distribution lists to keep up with court news.

Journalists seeking accreditation will need to fill out an Application for Accreditation form, sign a Court Reporters Undertaking ('the Undertaking'), and be available to have a photograph taken.

Accreditation remains in place for a calendar year, or until the journalist ceases to be employed by a media organisation. Bloggers, freelance reporters and citizen journalists may apply for accreditation. Accredited media personnel are required to keep the public relations officer informed of any changes to contact information, including the media outlet for which they work.

Temporary accreditation can be arranged for journalists from interstate or overseas.

The accreditation may be withdrawn by court personnel for breaches of the Undertaking, court rules, practice directions or laws.

A person seeking to renew their media accreditation at the expiration of the year must follow the same process as outlined in this policy for initial accreditation.

This policy does not impinge on the right of a judge or member in a particular case to prohibit or prevent media from using electronic devices. The senior registrar of the court or tribunal concerned may also revoke a journalist's accreditation.

The public relations officer will maintain a list of accredited media.



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## Court media enquiries

Members of the media are welcome to contact public relations officer at any time. The current media officer is Xavier La Canna: 08 8999 1831 or 0447 286 342.

Media can also email any enquiries to [courtmedia.enquiries@nt.gov.au](mailto:courtmedia.enquiries@nt.gov.au)

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## Routine enquiries

Reporters generally ring the public relations officer:

- to determine their workload for the day – eg: which case to cover; or
- to ask for information about procedural matters, such as the progress of a matter.

Court reporters understand that information given in response to this type of query is not to be attributed to any person.

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## Sentencing

The media are often interested in court decisions and penalties. They may ring the public relations officer to seek this information. Reporters must report accurately and are encouraged to check judges' decisions if uncertain.

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## Personal details

It is necessary to be mindful of not including unnecessary personal details in reports of judgments and sentences, given accessibility via the internet. Unnecessary use of names, addresses, dates of birth, significant numbers (such as tax file numbers, bank account numbers or Medicare numbers) and other identifying information that can be misused, should be avoided wherever possible.

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## Open justice and limited restrictions on publication

We have an open justice system. Two features of this system are that proceedings are generally held in public and that accurate reporting of proceedings is required.

Nevertheless, in limited circumstances, orders are made that restrict who may enter the court and what can be published. The power to make such orders is both statutory and part of the inherent jurisdiction of the court.

A restriction on a publication of a report of the proceeding itself, or of information derived from the proceeding, is known generally as a suppression order (or non-publication order).

When a suppression order is made the public relations officer will alert members of the media who are on their contact list. To have your name added as a contact, email [courtmedia.enquiries@nt.gov.au](mailto:courtmedia.enquiries@nt.gov.au)

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## Grounds for making a suppression order

The circumstances in which a suppression order is made will include:

- if it is necessary for the furtherance of or in the interests of the administration of justice;
- if the publication of the evidence may offend against public decency;
- to prevent prejudice to the interests of the Commonwealth or a State or Territory in relation to national or international security;
- to protect the safety of any person;
- to avoid causing undue distress or embarrassment to a complainant or witness in any criminal proceeding involving a sexual offence or a family violence offence; or
- to avoid causing undue distress or embarrassment to a child who is a witness in any criminal proceeding.

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## Statutory suppression orders

Statutory suppression orders may exist in relation to matters such as sexual offences, children in care, persons subject to orders and applications under the mental health legislation, and adoption and guardianship matters.

It is up to a journalist or media organisation to obtain their own legal advice in relation to these matters.

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## Accessing audio of court matters

Courts are usually open to the public and as such members of the media who want to cover a particular case are encouraged to attend court in person.

Where that cannot happen but a journalist wishes to listen to audio after the fact they can apply to listen to the audio via the public relations officer, using the Application for Access to Audio form, located on the relevant court or tribunal's website.

The presiding judge or member will decide whether or not to allow access and, where the presiding judge or member is not available, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, the Chief Judge of the Local Court or the President of NTCAT will make the determination (depending on the court or tribunal involved).

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## Film and video broadcasting

The decision to permit filming is one that requires careful consideration and is rarely allowed. The decision whether to permit filming is a matter for the presiding judge or member.



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## Photography

Members of the media routinely photograph people entering the court building. When this occurs at the Local Court in Darwin media are asked to stand behind the bollards, to allow people to enter and leave the court building unencumbered. At other courts commonsense must be applied to allow people unobstructed access to the buildings.

If photographs are taken that include people who are not the intended subject of the image, photographers are encouraged to blur out the faces of those individuals.

Photography is not permitted in court buildings. On occasions some small part of the inside of the building may be inadvertently included in a photograph taken of someone who was outside. While this is understood, it is expected that the images of all court staff are blurred out when this occurs.

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## Court artists

Requests can be made to the judge for a court artist to be present during proceedings to sketch persons other than the jury, such as the accused or witnesses. Requests can be made by emailing [courtmedia.enquiries@nt.gov.au](mailto:courtmedia.enquiries@nt.gov.au)



## COURT REPORTER'S UNDERTAKING

Please email completed undertakings to [courtmedia.enquiries@nt.gov.au](mailto:courtmedia.enquiries@nt.gov.au) to be processed.

As a member of the media accredited by NT Courts and Tribunals I undertake that I will:

- Comply with the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance Journalist Code of Ethics.
- Obey court rules.
- Treat with respect and courtesy all court staff, witnesses, legal practitioners and members of the public attending court.
- Direct media enquiries through the public relations officer for NT Courts and Tribunals and not attempt to contact members of the judiciary or their staff directly.
- Wear a media accreditation lanyard (around the neck) while in court so that it can be seen by judges and court and tribunal staff.
- Keep the public relations officer informed of any changes to contact information.
- Comply with court and tribunal Practice Directions, including over the use of electronic devices in the courtroom.
- Comply with all directions and orders made by a court or tribunal about the media coverage and recording of any particular proceeding.
- Not photograph or record materials on the bar table or in the possession of legal practitioners or court staff without the consent of the relevant person.
- Not photograph or record exhibits without permission of the presiding judge or member.
- Not record conversations between legal practitioners, or between legal practitioners and their clients.
- When permitted, make all recordings unobtrusively and without interruption to proceedings.
- Retain a complete copy of all audio and/or visual recordings made in court and not edit or delete them for a minimum of three months following the making of the recording, or for such period as a judge or member of the court or tribunal may order.
- Any recording made in court is done to maintain accuracy and must not be broadcast, copied, downloaded or provided to any other person or organisation – other than legal advisors for the purposes of obtaining legal advice – in connection with the recording and the publication of its content.

I acknowledge that if I fail to adhere to the Practice Directions, or of this Undertaking, I will lose my accreditation and may be removed from the courthouse.

Full name ..... Email ..... Telephone  
..... Company (if any) .....  
Signature ..... Date .....



Payment Details: \$15.00 to cover the cost of ID Card and Administration and standard passport photo to be provided.					
Name					
Card number		EXP		CCV	
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OFFICE USE ONLY				Reference #	
Approved	Y / N	Accreditation Period		Name added to register	Y / N