



CHIEF JUSTICE'S CHAMBERS  
FEDERAL COURT OF AUSTRALIA  
Law Courts Building  
Queens Square, Sydney NSW 2000  
Telephone: +6129230 8438

1 April 2020

Dear Presidents

**Federal Court of Australia – Coronavirus (COVID-19) – Update 14**

I will restrict today's communication to one subject, s 91X.

I informed you yesterday that the Court had “shut down indefinitely the public search facility on migration in the Commonwealth Courts Portal”. The method that was employed to effect this was designed so as not to interfere with other Federal Law searches such as Admiralty Registers, Bankruptcy Registers and Native Title Registers. Unfortunately, seeking to tailor this restriction to avoid interference with access to those registers meant that there were potential weaknesses in the blockage of the public migration search. This was discovered late last night. The Court has attempted urgently today to assess the extent of the existing risk. This has been complex and time-consuming. A decision has been taken to cease this tailoring of the blockage and to close the public Federal Law search portal, leaving open, however, the secure portal for registered users.

This will mean that there will be some disruption to Admiralty, Bankruptcy and Native Title searches of relevant registers.

It is hoped that this interference will last no more than a few days, perhaps a week.

The Court is, as a matter of urgency, examining how it can move those registers so that they are not blocked, or otherwise provide equivalent search services to specific files to avoid inconvenience to litigants in those areas.

There will be a notice on the Court's website of these steps this evening.

This notice will include an address for inquiries for persons interested in the registers and in searching non-migration areas, in particular admiralty, bankruptcy and native title.

I will communicate with you tomorrow with any update on these matters.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Allsop'.

**The Hon James Allsop**  
Chief Justice