



January 19, 2023

James Allsop AO
Chief Justice
Federal Court of Australia
Via email: EA.AllsopCJ@fedcourt.gov.au

Dear Justice Allsop,

Re: Changes to Federal Court Rules regarding journalist access to documents.

I am the Federal President of the Media Section of Media Entertainment & Arts Alliance (MEAA), the union for journalists, which represents over 5000 media workers in Australia. I write to express our members' deep concern about recent changes to Federal Court rules.

The decision to restrict journalist access to court documents - including statements of claim, originating applications, interlocutory applications and defences - until first or directions hearings contradicts the principles of open courts. Further, these changes impinge on crucial press freedoms. Without accurate and timely information about matters before the court, the public cannot have confidence in the judicial system.

As a former court reporter, I know the impact this will have. Our members across the industry rely on access to these documents to do their jobs, and to fulfil their obligations to report fairly, accurately and in the public interest. Open and transparent court proceedings and processes are essential components of our democracy. When documents are delayed or denied, such transparency and openness is threatened.

Accordingly, MEAA seeks the following:

1. Immediate reversal of these changes, to allow immediate journalist access to documents; and
2. A meeting between yourself and MEAA representatives to discuss how the court and media can best support fair and open processes.

Please respond to the above before 5pm on Friday 3 February 2023.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K Percy', with a stylized, flowing script.

Karen Percy
Federal Media Section President
Media Entertainment & Arts Alliance
media.president@meaa.org