



CORONERS COURT
Te Kōti Kaitirotiro Mātewhahatī



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Masjidain Attack coronial inquiry First Phase inquest adjourned to later date.

The First Phase coronial inquest hearing into the 2019 Christchurch Masjidain Attack has been adjourned amid concerns about the volume of work Counsel face in preparing for it, and the need to ensure the integrity of the coronial process.

The hearing was due to run from 15 May to 9 June. The Ministry of Justice is working to confirm a date for a six-week hearing later in the year.

In a decision released yesterday, Coroner Brigitte Windley said she was mindful of the impact of the delay on those seeking closure, but was also concerned to ensure fairness to all those involved, and to preserve the integrity of the coronial process.

“The First Phase inquest is critically important to all Interested Parties. For immediate whānau, it offers the hope of access to previously unavailable information... I hope it may also offer a measure of closure.

“Those involved in responding to the attack also have an interest in ensuring their conduct on that day is fully understood and contextualised. We all share a common goal of establishing the facts and seeking to identify recommendations or comments which may reduce the chances of similar deaths in the future.”

While all Counsel had been working diligently and productively, increasing pressure to keep the May hearing on track had become apparent. The volume of information disclosure was a particular issue.

Given these concerns, the Coroner invited Counsel submissions on the viability of the May fixture, whether the concerns could be addressed without an adjournment, and the Interested Parties’ position on an adjournment. Most agencies involved expressed a willingness to proceed, albeit with some concerns, while other submissions strongly favoured adjournment.

“Some counsel went as far as saying that the fixture was ‘no longer viable’ or would breach natural justice requirements, while others simply expressed concern about the level of work still required. Many of the Interested Parties expressed dismay and frustration about the possibility of further delay, but ultimately supported an adjournment if it was necessary to ensure that the Inquiry could properly and fully explore the issues.

“The magnitude of the 15 March 2019 tragedy demands an appropriately thorough coronial response and it is vitally important that this Inquiry is conducted in a manner that retains its integrity and maintains trust and confidence in the process.

“.... Regrettably... I am now in a position of having to choose between further delay and a risk the Inquiry may proceed without doing justice to those who lost their lives and, perhaps, without learning all the lessons for saving lives in the future which this tragedy may hold.

“While it may be of little comfort, I reiterate my firm commitment to a fair and robust process that involves a full and proper exploration of all the important issues for Inquiry”.

By the numbers:

- 12 in scope issues for the Inquiry. The First Phase inquest will address nine, related to the events of the day of the attack.
- 74 Minutes or decisions since the decision on the Scope of the Inquiry in April 2022.
- There are more than 120 Interested Parties to the Inquiry, a number which is still increasing.
- There have been 19 separate information disclosures, including five sensitive information disclosures.
- The Inquiry has reviewed over 7,500 documents from the Police IMT file alone.
- Information from other agencies includes 737 radio communications, 32 emergency calls and 100 audio recordings from the Emergency Operations Centre.
- Just one tranche of digital exhibits required review of about 20,000 photographs, some 180 emergency calls, more than 2300 radio communications, and CCTV from more than 120 CCTV cameras, totalling more than 145 hours of footage. More than 7,300 social media pages, 750 images, 250 videos and more than 580 emails also needed review.

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