

EAGP Mandatory Case Conference bookings - now available at Legal Aid offices

General

Under the Early Appropriate Guilty Plea reform, a case conference is a formal, structured meeting allowing for meaningful discussions about the case, maximising opportunity for early appropriate guilty pleas and narrowing contested issues early in the process.

The EAGP case conference requires lawyers for the prosecution and defence with carriage of the case, to participate in these discussions. Under s 71(1) of the *Criminal Procedure Act 1986* (NSW), the initial case conference must be held in person or by audio visual link (AVL).

The defence lawyer is responsible for organising the EAGP case conference within the first six weeks of the adjourned period after the filing of the charge certificate (see Local Court Practice Note Committals 2 (third step), pp 3-4, Children's Court Practice Note 12 para 9.4).

All Legal Aid offices have meeting rooms with AVL facilities for EAGP case conferencing. Whether or not your client is legally aided, you can book Legal Aid's AVL facilities to conduct an EAGP case conference with your client and the prosecution lawyer. There will also be separate areas where your client can wait when not providing instructions for the case conference.

If you are a lawyer in a regional area where there is no Legal Aid office, you may be able to use Local Court meeting rooms to conduct a case conference. Depending on your location, some of these meeting rooms will have AVL facilities. You will have to contact the Local Court Registrar to enquire about their facilities and availability.

Participating in an EAGP case conference

In general, the NSW ODPP prosecutors will participate in the Case Conference by AVL, while the defence lawyer can choose between attending a conference at a Legal Aid office or by AVL from their own device (this option requires having JUST Connect access and compatible equipment). The accused must be available (depending on custody status and available facilities) either in person, by AVL or by telephone, to give instructions during the case conference. Where required, the defence lawyer can arrange for a support person or an interpreter to provide assistance or support during the case conference.

Booking an EAGP case conference

Case conferences are booked through JUST Connect, which is a web-based system, used to book AVL studios at Correctional and Juvenile Justice Centres and Legal Aid offices.

If you are a defence lawyer without access to JUST Connect, wishing to use Legal Aid facilities to participate in a case conference, please contact the Central Sydney Case Conferencing Hub or your nearest Legal Aid office, by submitting an electronic booking request form for a [client in custody](#) or for a [client not in custody](#). Legal Aid will endeavour to book the case conference in accordance with the booking request. You will need a VIN number – if you do not have one you can apply for one [here](#).

If you are a defence lawyer with access to JUST Connect, you can make your own case conference bookings, provided you conduct them from your own location (rather than attending a Legal Aid office).

After the case conference is booked, JUST Connect will send an email to all professional participants notifying them of the date, location and time of the case conference.

More information on booking and attending EAGP case conferences can be found in the FAQs and in the Best Practice Guide, all of which are available at our [EAGP page](#).