



CASE STUDY

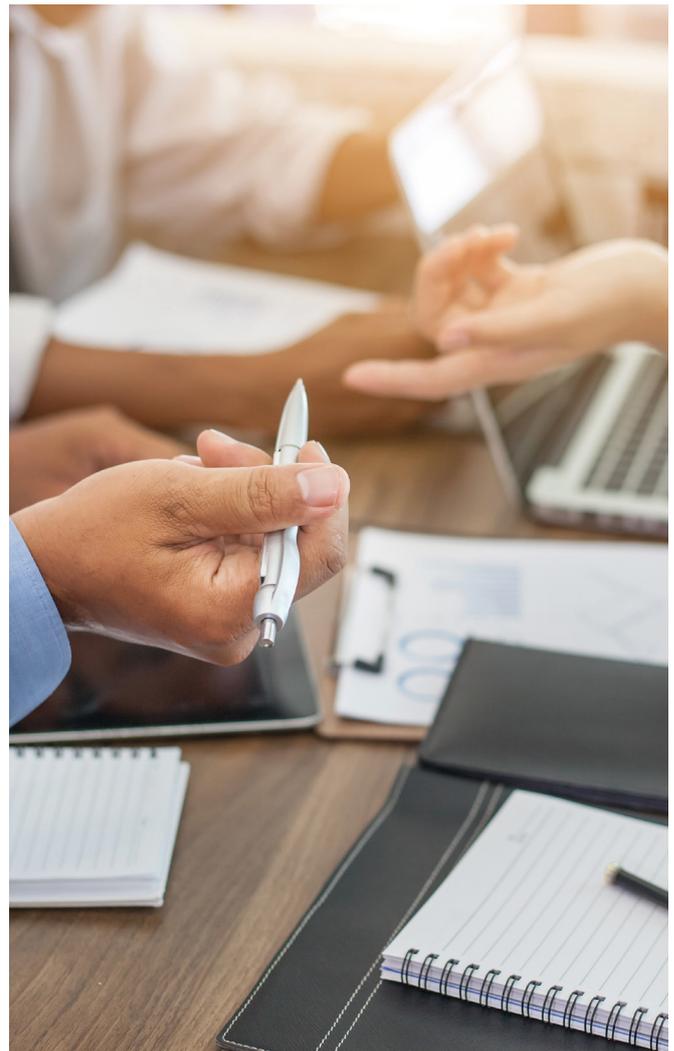
Hybrid Hearings for Disability Royal Commission



The Challenge

We were asked to transition the hearing format for Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability (DRC) into a virtual/hybrid environment to allow hearings to continue through COVID-19.

Each state and jurisdiction have different rules and COVID-19 related restrictions in place that can change significantly at any time. The necessity to transform the previous project plan for the DRC required a considerable transformation of most of the eHearings service offerings. Prior to COVID-19, the DRC had conducted numerous public hearings remotely while the Permanent Hearing room in Brisbane was still in development. The remote hearings included Townsville, Melbourne, Brisbane and Sydney. The DRC concluded that the earlier approach was inadequate for operating during COVID-19. Consequently, significant technological transformation was required to accommodate the new requirements.





Our Solution

We implemented various new strategies and solutions to accommodate the requirements for hybrid/virtual hearings, involving:

- Building a new permanent hybrid hearing room in Sydney for the Chair and other commissioners or counsel assisting as required.
- Developing the virtual hearing services in the Brisbane Hearings Room to accommodate the new hearing, with updates to existing infrastructure where required.
- Our expertise in videoconferencing technologies and cloud-based evidence solutions, and other web-based solutions was fundamental to employing new methodologies.
- Implementing hybrid innovations with virtual solutions to amalgamate our 'in-person' components with the virtual elements, to facilitate an integrated offering that would suit the evolving technology requirements imposed by COVID-19.
- Technical Support dedicated to Commissioners with a disability, to ensure safety and ease of participation from isolated locations.
- Update of our accessibility innovations designed for the DRC hearings to integrate with the virtual/hybrid hearings format. This includes captioning on the webstream, Auslan interpreters from various locations, dedicated Law In Order staff for isolated commissioners and witnesses to ensure optimal participation of isolated participants, among others.
- Novel remote and virtual innovations were implemented into our webstreaming workflow, to allow for video sources from various locations.

The Outcome

Hearings continued through COVID-19 in a variety of modes including public hybrid hearings, purely virtual hearings and remote hybrid public hearings. Since the inception of the virtual/hybrid transformation of the DRC, several hearings have been delivered, continuing the progress of the DRC. The DRC used the Sydney and Brisbane Hearings Rooms with virtual attendees for the majority of the hearings, as well as some purely virtual private hearings and two remote hybrid public hearings in Adelaide and Homebush.

The hearings ensured all accessibility innovations that were available to the public during the in-person hearings were preserved in the virtual/hybrid format. Maintaining ease of access and optimal participation for people with a disability, and optimal accessibility for viewers with a disability of the webstream broadcast.

The hearings have been successfully managed in this new environment and the DRC has continued despite the impact of COVID-19 and the various restrictions imposed.