

GUIDEBOOK

FOR ADULT VICTIMS OF CRIME



This resource is designed to help you understand more about journeying through the criminal justice system in Queensland.



PACT acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First peoples, Traditional Owners and Custodians of lands across Queensland. We pay respect to Elders past and present and thank all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who help us develop these resources. Your important contributions to promoting a safe and fair criminal justice system for Queensland are valued and appreciated.

PACT wishes to thank the Queensland Government for funding this initiative under the Victim Services Building Capacity Funding Program 2022-23. We are also thankful to the Queensland Police Service for their donation towards PACT resources. PACT is an independent not-for-profit organisation that supports, educates, and empowers children and vulnerable victims and witnesses of any age, helping them understand the legal system and being by their side as they give their best evidence.

PACT proudly acknowledges Dr Jeannette Young AC PSM, Governor of Queensland, who became PACT's Patron in November 2025. Dr Young's distinguished career in public service and her enduring commitment to the wellbeing and safety of Queenslanders strongly align with PACT's mission to support and protect children and vulnerable people. We are honoured by her support and advocacy.

Person supported by PACT:

Pact Support Volunteers:

A non-profit with over 40 years of experience, PACT is committed to impartially supporting victims and witnesses who have to give evidence in the Queensland criminal justice system.

Every victim and witness that needs support is assisted through the stressful process of giving evidence, empowered as they navigate the justice journey.



We uphold the rights of victims and witnesses to be heard without fear or compromise. With compassion and honesty we help them realise their strength to journey through the court system, and the stage beyond.

UNDERSTANDING THE COURT PROCESS

The court process can be unpredictable and lengthy. The entire process from the initial arrest until the matter goes to trial can take from six months to more than two years, and along the way there may often be unexpected delays.

Our legal process is designed to ensure fairness and is essential to our country's justice system and identity. This doesn't make it any less frustrating or at times traumatic to be participating in this process.

PACT has an important role to play through each step of the court process to support adult victims and witnesses, as well as those interacting with the court system to support a victim or witness.

This resource is designed to help you understand more about journeying through the criminal justice system in Queensland. At the end of this document you will find information about the different levels of court and also definitions of the terms used throughout.

YOUR JOURNEY

STEP 1

REPORT TO POLICE

You make a report and give a statement. Police begin their investigation and give you a QP number as your case reference.

STEP 2

ARREST

If police have enough evidence, they will arrest and charge the defendant. Your Arresting Officer (AO) will be your main point of contact.

STEP 3

MENTIONS (COMMITTAL MENTIONS)

Short court dates where lawyers update the court on the case. You usually don't attend unless told by your AO or Victim Liaison Officer (VLO).

STEP 4

COMMITTAL HEARING

The Department of Public Prosecutors (DPP) or Queensland Police Service (QPS) usually communicate when a committal hearing is listed. A committal hearing is where the Magistrate decides whether there is enough evidence for the matter to proceed to trial in a higher court. Sometimes, witnesses may also be called to give evidence at this stage.

There are different types of committal processes:

- Registry Committal - By far the most common. This is an administrative process, and no witnesses are required to attend court.
- Full Hand-Up Committal - This involves the evidence being handed up in full. It may occur with or without cross-examination of selected witnesses. Even if the defence concedes there is sufficient evidence

to commit the matter to trial, they may still request to question a few specific witnesses before it is formally committed.

- Committal Hearing with Cross Examination of Witness - some or all of the witnesses may be required to give evidence and be cross-examined.

The DPP or AO may not advise in advance whether a matter may proceed by way of a registry committal or a full hand-up committal.

STEP 5

INDICTMENT

If the case progresses to the Higher Courts, a formal list of charges (called an indictment) is prepared by the DPP for the District or Supreme Court.

STEP 6

TRIAL NOTIFICATION

You'll be told if there is a trial date (if the defendant pleads not guilty) or a sentencing date (if they plead guilty).

STEP 7

REVIEW YOUR POLICE STATEMENT

Read over your original statement carefully before trial. Ask your AO or VLO if you need a copy of your statement.

STEP 8

PROSECUTOR'S CONFERENCE

A meeting with the Prosecutor before the trial to talk about your evidence, questions you may be asked, and any concerns.

STEP 9

GIVING EVIDENCE

At trial, you may give evidence in different ways — in court, by video link, or in some cases by pre-recording. You may be allowed a support person, a screen, or a closed courtroom. Your VLO should explain what options are available.

- If you don't remember something it's okay to say "I don't remember" or ask for a question to be repeated.
- Speak clearly and use words, not gestures.
- You can ask for a break if you need one.



STEP 10

VERDICT

At the end of the trial, the Judge or Jury decides if the defendant is guilty or not guilty. Ask the Prosecutor if you'd like the decision explained.

STEP 11

SENTENCING

If the defendant is found guilty, the Judge decides the penalty. You may choose to provide a Victim Impact Statement explaining how the crime has affected you.

UNDERSTANDING THE COURTS

MAGISTRATES COURT: first level, hears simple and serious offences in the initial stages cases, no jury.

DISTRICT COURT: more serious offences (e.g. armed robbery, rape), usually with a jury.

SUPREME COURT: most serious offences (e.g. murder), or appeals from lower courts.

If the defendant goes to prison, you can register with the Queensland Corrective Services Victims Register (<https://pbq.qld.gov.au>) to receive updates about parole or release.

COURTROOM PROTOCOLS:

- Stand when the Judge or Magistrate enters or leaves.
- Call them "Your Honour."
- Switch off phones, no hats, no sunglasses, no food or gum.
- Don't approach jury members.

YOUR **RIGHTS** AS A VICTIM OF CRIME

If you are a victim of violent crime in Queensland, you have rights under the **Charter of Victims' Rights**. If these rights are not respected, you can make a complaint.

WHEN YOU CAN COMPLAIN

You may have a Charter complaint if you were not:

- Treated with respect, dignity, and compassion
- Given clear and timely information about your case or services
- Informed about court dates, outcomes, bail, or release conditions that affect your safety
- Supported as a witness (for example, kept safe from the defendant in court)
- Given the chance to make a Victim Impact Statement
- Informed about the victims register or prisoner/parole updates
- Able to have your property returned after investigation

WHO IS A VICTIM?

You are considered a victim if you:

- Were harmed by a violent crime
- Lost a family member, dependent, or unborn baby due to a violent crime
- Were harmed while helping someone during a violent crime

WHAT COUNTS AS HARM?

- Physical injury (temporary or permanent)
- Emotional or mental harm (fear, anxiety, sadness, anger)
- Feeling unsafe or distressed

HOW TO MAKE A COMPLAINT

You can make a complaint if your rights were not upheld:

- To the agency involved, or
- To the Victims Commissioner:

<https://victimscommissioner.qld.gov.au/make-a-complaint>

A friend, family member, or support person can also lodge a complaint on your behalf with your permission.

WHAT IS A VICTIM IMPACT STATEMENT?

A Victim Impact Statement (VIS) is a written statement from a person who has been affected by an offence and where there has been a guilty plea or guilty verdict against the defendant. It allows the victim to explain, in their own words, how the offence has impacted them emotionally, physically, socially, and financially. The VIS is read by the judge and may be taken into account at sentencing.

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SUPPORT

APPLICATION FOR **FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE** FROM VICTIM ASSIST QUEENSLAND

The process of applying for financial assistance is a crucial step in the journey towards healing and recovery for victims, witnesses, and their families.

Victims of violent crimes in Queensland can seek financial support through this program if:

1. There has been an act of violent crime committed.
2. It was committed in QLD.
3. It resulted in injury.
4. It was reported to QPS.

There are two key components to this application designed to aid in the rehabilitation of victims:

- Reimbursement of specific costs.
- A recognition payment.

For comprehensive information and guidance for victims of crime, including details about available support services, victims' rights, and instructions on how to apply for financial assistance, talk to your PACT volunteer who will assist you in completing the form or please visit:

[www.qld.gov.au/law/crime-and-police/
victim-assist-queensland](http://www.qld.gov.au/law/crime-and-police/victim-assist-queensland)



CENTRAL RESOURCES

Office of the Victims' Commissioner

<https://www.victimscommissioner.qld.gov.au/>

All support types in Qld

<https://www.oneplace.org.au>

Police, Fire, Ambulance (Emergency):

000

Lifeline (24/7 crisis support):

13 11 14

Lifeline text message

0447 13 11 14

Child Safety QLD

1800 177 135

DVConnect Women's Line:

1800 811 811

DVConnect Men's Line:

1800 600 636

1800 RESPECT

(National sexual & domestic violence support)

1800 737 732

13YARN (First Nations crisis support)

13 92 76

Family & Child Connect

13 32 64

Beyond Blue (mental health)

1300 22 4636

Blue Knot Foundation (trauma support)

1300 657 380

Headspace (youth mental health)

1800 750 890

National DV & sexual violence support

<https://www.1800respect.org.au>

Qld-specific Government support

<https://www.qld.gov.au/domesticviolence>

Friendline (for social connection)

1800 424 287

Suicide Call Back Service

1300 659 467

Victim Assist Queensland

1300 546 587

ACT for Kids

07 3850 3200

54 Reasons

1800 874 996

Queensland Homicide

Victim Support Group

1800 774 744

Kids Helpline

1800 55 1800

Parentline (QLD & NT)

1300 30 1300

LGBTI Health

(07) 3017 1777

Diverse Voices

(LGBTI peer support and referral)

1800 184 527

Police Link

(non-emergency police contact)

131 444

IF PACT IS **UNABLE** TO PROVIDE SUPPORT!

CHOOSING A SUPPORT PERSON

When you go to court, you may be able to have a support person with you. This is someone who stays by your side to help you feel safe and supported.

WHO TO CHOOSE

It's natural to think of family or close friends, but sometimes they may not be the best fit. For example, they might also be a witness and can't be in the room, or they may find it too distressing.

A good support person is:

- Calm, reliable, and patient
- Respectful and trustworthy with private information
- Able to stay neutral (not letting personal opinions affect your evidence)
- A good listener who helps you feel reassured; and
- Must be over 18

ROLE OF A SUPPORT PERSON

They **can**:

- Sit with you in the waiting area
- Be present while you give evidence in the remote witness room (if approved)
- Walk with you in and out of court
- Provide quiet encouragement and emotional support

They **cannot**:

- Talk for you, or interfere with your evidence
- React or show their feelings while you are giving evidence

CONFIDENTIALITY

Anything you share with your support person must stay private. Breaching confidentiality can put you at risk and affect the case.

GUIDANCE

If you're unsure who to choose, your VLO can guide you in selecting the right support person.



A support person's role is to help you feel **stronger** and **safer**. Choosing the right person can make a real difference during your justice journey.

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GLOSSARY OF COMMON COURT TERMS

Accused / Defendant - The person charged with a crime. Also called the “alleged offender.”

Acquittal - When the court finds the defendant not guilty.

Adjournment - A break in the case — for part of a day or moved to another date.

Affidavit - A written statement sworn or affirmed to be true.

Affirmation - A promise to tell the truth in court without using a religious book.

Appeal - When a decision is challenged in a higher court.

Arraignment - When charges are read aloud and the defendant pleads guilty or not guilty.

Bail - When an arrested person is released from custody with conditions.

Bailiff - A court officer who manages the jury and helps keep order.

Barrister - A lawyer who specialises in presenting cases in court.

Beyond Reasonable Doubt - The level of proof needed before a Judge or Jury can find someone guilty.

Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) - Lets some witnesses give evidence from another room or location.

Committal Mention - A short court date in the Magistrates Court before a committal hearing is set.

Committal Hearing - When a Magistrate decides if there is enough evidence for the case to go to trial.

Complainant - The legal term for a victim of crime in court.

Conference - A meeting with your lawyer or Prosecutor to discuss your case.

Conviction - When someone is found guilty and it is recorded on their criminal history.

Counsel - A barrister acting for the Defence or the Prosecution.

Defence - The case presented by the defendant and their lawyers.

Defence Counsel - A barrister who represents the defendant in court.

Discontinue - When charges are dropped and the defendant no longer faces trial or sentencing.

Evidence - Information used in court to prove or disprove something.

Guilty / Not Guilty - A guilty plea means the defendant accepts responsibility. Not guilty means a trial is held.

Hearing - When evidence is presented in court after the defendant has pleaded not guilty.

Hung Jury - Where the jury is unable to reach a unanimous decision.

Indictable Offence - A serious criminal offence, usually heard in the District or Supreme Court.

Indictment - The formal written list of charges for a trial in a higher court.

Judge - The person in charge of the court. Decides the sentence if the defendant is found guilty.

Judge's Associate - A staff member who assists the Judge and manages documents.

Jury - A group of 12 people from the community who decide if the defendant is guilty or not guilty.

Matter - Another word for a case in court.

Mention - A short court appearance to update the case or set dates. Usually, you don't need to attend.

Oath - A promise to tell the truth in court by swearing on a religious book.

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The justice process can be challenging, but you don't have to do it alone. PACT is here to *support, educate, and empower* you every step of the way.

Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP)

- The government agency that prosecutes serious criminal cases.

Plea - When the defendant says whether they are guilty or not guilty.

Police Statement (also referred to as "Witness Statement")

- A written or recorded account given to police by a witness or victim, detailing what they know about an incident. This statement may be used as part of the police investigation and in court proceedings.

Pre-recording - The process of recording evidence in advance of a hearing or trial so it can be used later in court, helping to reduce the stress of giving live evidence. Pre-recording may also occur when evidence is given live at trial, so it can be relied upon if proceedings are disrupted (for example, in the event of a mistrial) and to minimise the need for the witness to give their evidence again.

Prosecutor - The lawyer who presents the case against the defendant.

Sentence - The punishment given by a Judge if the defendant is found guilty.

Summary Hearing - A hearing in the Magistrates Court where all evidence is presented, and the Magistrate decides the case.

Trial - A hearing in the District or Supreme Court, usually with a Jury, where evidence is presented, and a verdict is reached.

Verdict - The decision at the end of a trial: guilty or not guilty.

Victim - A person who has suffered harm because of a crime.

Victim Impact Statement (VIS)

- A statement explaining how a crime has affected you, presented at sentencing.

Victim Liaison Officer (VLO) - A staff member from the ODPP who supports victims and witnesses through the court process.

Witness - Anyone who gives evidence in court before a Magistrate, Judge, or Jury.





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