

YOUR COURT JOURNEY

A Step-By-Step Guide To
Everything You Need To Know



WHAT'S THIS BOOKLET FOR?

Understanding your court journey will help you get through

Hi – it's good to meet you.

We're PACT. We've been around for a long time helping victims and witnesses of all ages who have to give evidence in court.

The Court process can be complicated, and it's normal to feel nervous about something you haven't experienced before.

The information within this booklet will help answer some of the questions you might have on your own journey, so keep it handy.



We know that you've been through a lot. Trauma is real and it's complicated, and it definitely isn't our job to tell you otherwise. We do our best to understand how you feel and help you get through this.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

PACT acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we live, work, and study. We pay our respects to local Indigenous Elders past, present, and emerging and recognize the strength, resilience, and capacity of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

PACT thanks the Queensland Government for funding this initiative under the Victim Services Building Capacity Funding Program 2022-23. We also thank the Queensland Police Service and The Donald and Joan Wilson Foundation for their donation towards PACT resources.

For more information, visit www.pact.org.au/your-court-journey



WHO IS PACT?

We'll stand with you on your journey

PACT is an independent not-for-profit organisation of volunteers that supports, educates, and empowers children and vulnerable victims and witnesses of any age, helping you understand the legal system and being by your side as you give your best evidence.

SUPPORT:

We support children and adults throughout their journey, helping them to give evidence, tell their story, and heal. PACT is at their side at every step.

EDUCATE:

We educate children and adults about the complex court process. We help to reduce their anxiety by explaining the process in a way they can understand.

EMPOWER:

We build confidence and self-belief so our clients discover their strength and resilience. We empower them to find their voice and support their right to be heard without fear.

A JOURNEY OF LITTLE STEPS

Did you realise every journey starts in the same way? Yep, with one small step forward! It's worth remembering that every journey is different though, and sometimes it won't happen as we think it may with some steps being skipped or missed.



GLOSSARY

Barrister: A lawyer who speaks in Court

Defendant: The person accused of a crime

Offender: If the Defendant is found guilty, they are called an Offender

Judge: The person in charge of the Court, who decides the sentence if the Defendant is found guilty

PACT support person: a volunteer who helps you through the Court process

Prosecutor: helps the Judge in the Court understand what you told the Police in your Police Statement

Sentencing: The punishment of the Offender, such as prison or fines

Statement: The evidence that you tell the Police. This is also called a 93A.

Victim: Someone who has been hurt as the result of a crime

Victim Impact Statement (VIS): A statement by the Victim that describes the harm they suffered due to the crime

You're reading this booklet because you have been a victim of crime, and now you have to go through the Court process.

The Court process can seem a little scary or confusing, but when you break it down and understand what the steps involved are, it can help you feel less unsure about things.

Going to Court or meeting the police can seem like a big raging river at first, but the more you know, the more it feels like you have stepping stones to help get across to the other side, step by little step.

With each step in the Court process you will meet someone new, but they're there to help you. You will also have a PACT Support Person with you to make sure you feel comfortable.

Remember, everyone's Court journey is different, you might do one step, or you might do them all. Whatever shape your journey takes, in this booklet you will find all you need to know just in case you're keen to learn more.

**YOU MAY WISH TO THINK ABOUT HOW YOU ARE FEELING TODAY.
WRITE SOME WORDS DOWN TO GET IT ALL OUT.**

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1 YARN WITH POLICE

**They're here
to help**

When you meet with the police, remember you're not in any trouble, they just want to hear your side of the story. Don't forget, it's really important that you tell the truth.

You will yarn with the police and give your statement. The police are ready to listen to your story and will keep you safe.

- 1 Your yarn with the police is called a statement and will be recorded by video
- 2 The only thing you have to do is tell the truth
- 3 It's okay to feel nervous

Remember – you're yarning with the police because they want to help you. You've done nothing wrong!

SUDOKU!

- Fill a 6x6 grid with numbers 1-6.
- No repeats in rows, columns, or 2x3 boxes.
- Use given numbers as clues.
- Use logic and trial/error.
- Have fun and be patient!

Game 1

2			1		4
		6		5	3
5		4	3		2
3	2	1		4	
	1	3	4	2	
4		2		3	1

Game 2

		6		3	
3	1	4		2	
		5	1	4	3
1	4	3	2		
	3		5	6	2
	6		3		



2 MEET YOUR PACT SUPPORT PERSON

They're here to make you
feel comfortable and
answer your questions

At each and every step on your Court journey, you will have someone with you to help you along the way – your PACT Support Person.

A PACT Support Person is a **volunteer** who gives their time to be with you in case you have any questions or just need someone to talk to.

They will be around to yarn or make you feel more comfortable, and if you have questions about the process, they will do their best to find the answers you need.

WHO IS YOUR PACT SUPPORT PERSON? WRITE DOWN THEIR NAME AND ANY THOUGHTS YOU HAVE THAT YOU MIGHT WANT TO SHARE WITH THEM.

3 WATCH YOUR STORY

This happens at
the Police Station or
Prosecutor's Office

Watching your story that you told the Police is an important step in the Court process. It will help both you and the Prosecutor remember what you said.

To feel more comfortable, you're allowed to bring headphones to listen to your statement so no one else can hear it. It's okay to be nervous as you will be revisiting something that is challenging for you and brings up negative emotions, but you will have a lot of positive support from people around you.

Your PACT Support Person will be beside you as you watch, and remember, it's okay to yarn with them about the emotions you are feeling. Anything you talk about with them is confidential and won't be discussed with anyone else.

WANT TO GET SOME THOUGHTS OUT BEFORE YOU YARN WITH THE PROSECUTOR? USE THIS SPACE.

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How are you going? There's a lot of info to take in here! It's okay though, you don't remember it all at once. You can always come back and check if there's something you want to understand better (or ask your PACT Support Person)!

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4 YARN WITH THE PROSECUTOR

**Understanding
the process**

In this step, you will be meeting with the Prosecutor for the first time. The Prosecutor will explain the Court Process again, and they might ask you more questions about your statement and story. They will also discuss the types of questions they might be asking you on your day in Court. You can also ask them any questions you might have too.

It's the Prosecutor's job to help the Judge in The Court understand what you told the Police in your original Police Statement or 93A.

FILL OUT THE SPEECH BUBBLES
WITH WHATEVER'S ON YOUR MIND

5 TIME TO GO TO COURT

This is step is where
you will tell your story
to the Judge in Court

When you go to Court, you will meet and speak with the Judge through a camera and TV screen. The Judge will be ready to listen to your story, and if they ask any questions, this will be used as evidence. You will also be speaking with the Prosecutor again, and the Defence Solicitor who works for the Defendant (the person accused of breaking the law).

The Defendant will be in the Courtroom but you will not see them on the screen. You will be brought in securely so you won't have to worry about running into them or their family. The Court will also be closed meaning that only essential people can come in to watch or take part in the case.

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If you have turned 17 when you have to give evidence, you may have to appear in the Courtroom at a trial with a Jury present to hear you. Speak to your Prosecutor about what you have to do. This can depend on different things, like what the charges are, and what kind of witness you are.

”

Like in the other steps, it's very important that you tell the truth. If you don't understand or remember, make sure you say this. You're allowed to take breaks too, so just ask if you need one.

You might feel a bit unsettled to be in a room you haven't been in before talking about things that bring up negative emotions, but you will have your PACT Support Person with you if you need them for anything.

After giving your evidence, you will be able to have a yarn to talk about anything with your PACT Support Person. The Prosecutor and your PACT Support Person are still here for you and can help you understand anything you missed during the process. You should be proud of what you have done. A lot of people heard your voice and believed you.

You have taken another step in your journey and everyone is proud of you.

6 AFTER COURT YARNS

You're nearly at the last step of your journey

7 YOUR JOURNEY'S OUTCOME

This is where your journey ends

And just like that, step by step, you've made it to the other side of your river.

The final step of your journey happens when the Judge provides an outcome. This decision will happen at the Courthouse, but you don't have to be there for it.

We can't predict what the outcome will be, and it may not be what you were expecting but remember your voice was heard.

Good work – it takes a brave and strong person to get through a journey like this, but by putting one foot in front of the other, you made it!

We're still here to help. You'll find a bunch of support contacts on the next page who will be able to continue to give you the assistance you need after this process is over. Yarn with your PACT Support Person to learn more!

VICTIM IMPACT STATEMENT

If the Defendant is found guilty or pleads guilty, you will have the opportunity to submit a Victim Impact Statement, which will be considered by the Judge when deciding the sentence. Preparing a Victim Impact Statement is your right and you are under no obligation to do one if you don't want to. If you do, here's what to expect:

- 1** A Victim Impact Statement can be both written or spoken. It can also be drawings or poems. Either way, it's still important that it's truthful.
- 2** Your statement should describe how the crime has impacted on you, such as losing friends, interest in exercise or hobbies, or even money. Describe the emotions you have felt as a result of this.
- 3** Some negative emotions that you might have felt could include feeling scared, angry, upset or anxious.
- 4** After you have finished your statement, it will be sent to the Judge before they sentence the person who made you feel this way.
- 5** The Victim Impact Statement is important not just for you, but for the Judge too because it helps them understand the personal impact the crime has had on you.
- 6** Telling your story in a Victim Impact Statement can be confronting and bring up feelings you might not want to experience again, but it's also an important thing to do as part of the Court Process.

LET'S HELP YOU START YOUR VICTIM IMPACT STATEMENT

1 The impact – What was your life before and after the crime?

2 What part of your life did it impact? (e.g. social, enjoyment, financial, physical, etc.)

3 How do you want to present your thoughts? (e.g. letter, poem, song, picture, etc.)

4 Have you included things that you shouldn't include? Chat to your PACT Support Person or go to [new website] to check. List anything you need to take out of your statement here:

5 Do you want your Victim Impact Statement presented in Court?
Write how you feel about it below:

6 Consider if you want to read it out yourself in Court. This happens at sentencing and you have to read it out exactly as it's written.
How do you feel about doing or not doing this?

SUPPORT CONTACTS

☀ Police, Fire, and Ambulance **000**

☀ Lifeline **13 11 14**

☀ Child Safety **1800 177 135**

☀ DVConnect Womensline
1800 811 811

☀ DVConnect Mensline
1800 600 636

☀ 1800 RESPECT **1800 737 732**

☀ 13YARN **13 92 76**

☀ Family and Child Connect
13 32 64

☀ Beyond Blue **1300 22 4636**

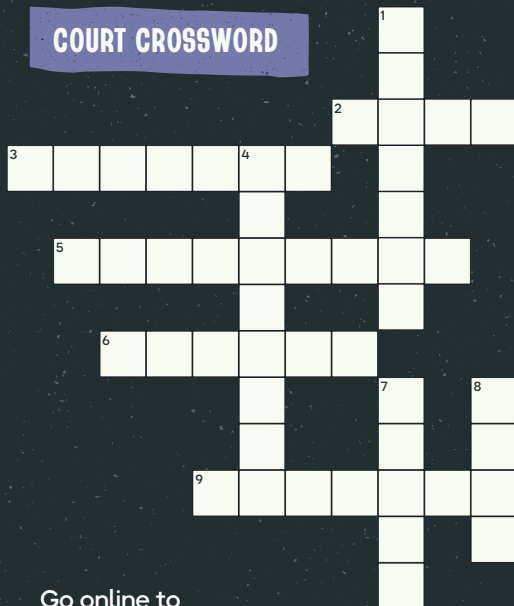
☀ Blue Knot Foundation Helpline
1300 657 380

☀ Headspace **1800 650 890**

☀ Friendline **1800 424 287**

☀ Suicide Call Back Service
1300 659 467

COURT CROSSWORD



DOWN

- 1 An act of going from one point to another
- 4 Information provided to the court that is used to prove or disprove a fact in issue in court proceedings
- 7 A hearing before a Judge and jury in the District or Supreme Court
- 8 A promise to tell the truth in court by swearing on a religious book

ACROSS

- 2 A group of people from the community who listen to all of the evidence in a Trial
- 3 An act of going from one point to another
- 5 A lawyer who specialises in court presentation, usually in the higher courts
- 6 To take a case to a higher court in order to challenge a decision
- 9 The decision of a jury in a criminal trial as to whether an accused is guilty or not guilty of an offence

Go online to
pact.org.au/your-court-journey
for the answers

CHARTER OF VICTIMS' RIGHTS

All government and government-funded services that work with victims should:

- Treat you with respect, courtesy, compassion, and dignity.
- Take your needs into account and protect your privacy.
- Provide information about who can help you.

You have rights in the criminal justice system and should be informed about:

- The police investigation, prosecution, warrants, and who is charged.
- Court processes, hearing dates, attending court, the trial process, and your role as a witness.
- The results of the court case, including the sentence and outcomes of any appearances.
- Bail applications, outcomes, release arrangements, and any special conditions impacting your safety or welfare.

You should be protected at court from unnecessary contact with the accused person and their associates.

You can make a Victim Impact Statement at sentencing, explaining how the crime has harmed you.

You may have rights when an offender goes to prison if you register with a Victims' Register.

- You may be informed about the offender's imprisonment duration, any escape, and how to contact the parole board.

You have the right to make a complaint if your rights are not met.

Making a Charter of Victims' Rights Complaint:

- Complain directly to the agency you feel treated you wrongly or unfairly.
- Contact Victim Assist for help at 1300 546 587 or victimassist@justice.qld.gov.au
- If you don't receive a response within 60 days, pass your complaint to Victim Assist Queensland.

