



CDPP

Australia's Federal Prosecution Service

THE WITNESS ASSISTANCE SERVICE

Who are we?

The Office of the **Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions (CDPP)** is a national prosecution service, responsible for prosecuting offences against Commonwealth law. The **Witness Assistance Service (WAS)** is part of the CDPP and is staffed by qualified social workers with current Working with Children Checks.

What is the role of the WAS?

The CDPP understands that becoming involved in a prosecution process as a victim of crime and/or witness may be a difficult and unfamiliar experience. Our WAS staff work together with prosecutors (lawyers) to help ensure that victims of crime and vulnerable witnesses have access to the following:

- » general updates concerning the prosecution case
- » information/explanations concerning the legal process and court procedures
- » information concerning the CDPP's obligations to victims of crime and avenues for review or complaint
- » information concerning the role of a witness
- » a consistent point of contact within the CDPP for the duration of the prosecution process
- » support during meetings with prosecutors
- » court familiarisation tours
- » support at court and during the trial
- » referrals to counselling and other services in the community
- » information about Victim Impact Statements and reparation orders

Victims of Crime Policy

The work carried out by the WAS and other prosecution staff is carried out in accord with CDPP's Prosecution and Victims of Crime Policies.

The CDPP's Victims of Crime policy states that we will treat victims with courtesy, compassion, cultural sensitivity and respect for their dignity and entitlements.

The Victims of Crime policy sets out the type of information that victims of crime are entitled to receive upon request including the charges laid and the outcome of any bail proceedings.

The Victims of Crime policy also identifies the types of decisions where the views of victims of crime may be considered and taken into account, including decisions to: commence or discontinue a prosecution; agree to a plea negotiation; or discontinue a prosecution after a committal; and any right of review that may apply.

How does the WAS become involved and who do we work with?

Prosecutors refer people to the WAS in accord with the CDPP's WAS Referral Guidelines (available via our website www.cdpp.gov.au) and we give priority to:

- » matters involving children or young people (under 18 years of age)
- » victims of slavery, servitude and forced marriage offences
- » family members of persons who have died as a result of alleged offences
- » persons who have suffered serious physical or psychological harm

The WAS also works with parents and caregivers of children/young people involved in prosecutions.

As a national service, the WAS provides information and support to witnesses and victims located all around Australia and in some cases overseas.



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Contact Details

If you have requested to be kept informed of the prosecution process and consulted in relation to certain prosecution decisions it is important that you provide us with your preferred contact details and advise us of any changes to them as soon as possible.

Things you should be aware of

WAS staff perform a different role to prosecutors and will not discuss the content of your evidence with you. If you disclose this type of information to WAS staff they will share it with the prosecutor. The prosecutor will assess any new information received and decide upon any required course of action. Possible courses of action may include seeking a further witness statement from you and disclosing this information to the lawyer representing the accused.

Please note, that there may be times when the prosecutor needs to meet with you in order to discuss your evidence and other prosecution-related issues. Witness Assistance Officers will generally attend these meetings with victims to provide support.

How do I contact the WAS?

The WAS is available **9am to 5pm Monday to Friday** (AEST).

If you have an allocated Witness Assistance Officer they will provide you with their direct contact details including an email address and their direct phone numbers.

WAS staff are located in the CDPP offices in **Sydney** and **Melbourne** and may be contacted via reception on the following numbers: Sydney (02 9321 1100) and Melbourne (03 9605 4333) – when your call is answered by reception please ask to speak with someone from the Witness Assistance Service.

Please let us know if you require the assistance of an interpreter and this may be arranged.

For more information regarding the CDPP and information and support services available to victims of crime please visit our website www.cdpp.gov.au.

After Hours Support

The following services provide after-hours telephone counselling support:

Lifeline: 13 11 14

Kids Helpline: 1800 55 1800

Feedback and Complaints

We value all feedback and complaints and use what we learn to improve processes and practices.

If you wish to provide feedback or make a complaint you may do so by emailing: FeedbackandComplaints@cdpp.gov.au.