

Introducing *Court Network*

What is Court Network?

Established in 1980, Court Network is a unique, voluntary, non-legal, court support service operating throughout Victoria. Information, support and referral services are provided by approximately 300 trained volunteers supporting people accused of crime, families who have become secondary victims of crime, adults and children who have been violated or exploited by crime, and litigants who have little or no support.

Court Network assists members of the Victorian community who attend court

Court Network operates its services on-site in the Supreme, County, Coroner's, Family, Children's and Melbourne and district Magistrates' Courts. We are the only court based service explicitly and solely concerned with the needs of court users.

As a statewide service, Court Network also provides services in the regional courts of Gippsland, Geelong, Ballarat, Bendigo and Echuca. Plans are underway to establish new regional court support services at Wodonga, Warrnambool, Mildura and Shepparton.

How we help people going to court

Outcomes for court users include:

- A safer court environment
- Access to support, information and referral before, during and after a court appearance
- Access to a well managed and highly trained team of volunteer Networkers
- Provision of written and verbal information on relevant and appropriate community and legal services
- Emotional and practical support
- Assistance with arranging interpreters and disability access at the courts
- Pre-court tours for people to familiarise them with the courts
- Free access to services and a telephone helpline



Phone 1800 681 614



How we benefit the community

Court Network provides support and information services to both court applicants and victims of crime. Most people attending court are ill equipped and quite unprepared for the trauma they experience in court. Individuals attending court have described themselves as being overwhelmed, worried, anxious, upset, lonely, humiliated, bewildered and confused. To be situated in a witness box is for many people a very intense, isolating and terrifying experience.

Court Network holds a unique position of trust within the court environs because we are there to provide a non-aligned, non judgemental, personal and completely confidential support role to court users. On a daily basis our volunteers are intimately involved with the very critical life events played out in the public arena of the courtroom.

When a child who has been a victim of crime suddenly finds themselves re-traumatised by the court experience, or families torn apart by grief, loss and anger in family court matters, or a young man is required to stand before the court and confront their assailant of many years, or the accused is in fear of reprisal and retribution from aggrieved family members in court; we can be there for them as a buffer, a support and a confidant.

Court Network has contact with an extensive number of support services. Examples include Legal Aid, the Witness Assistance Service, Centres Against Sexual Assault, Mens line, community legal centres, Victorian Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders, Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation services, Bereavement Services, Family Counselling Services, Child Protection services.

Court Network volunteers and staff

Court Network provides extensive induction training to all volunteers who are known as “Networkers”. Ongoing professional development is provided through intensive one and two day workshops and seminars throughout the year, utilising industry experts as guest speakers. Volunteers are supervised and coordinated by a team of professional staff.

With the assistance of this skilled and dedicated workforce, Court Network provides assistance to approximately 60,000 people each year, either in court or via the telephone helpline.

The volunteers contribute at all levels of the agency’s operations. They play an important role on the Board and are actively involved in the decision-making processes of the service.

Funding and accountability

As a partially government funded organisation we are highly accountable. During the past four years Court Network has undertaken extensive self-evaluation programs and successfully participated in a formal external reviews which confirm the need for Court Network to continue in all current jurisdictions across the state.

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