

WITNESS ASSISTANCE SERVICE



Attending a 'Proofing' Meeting for your Court case

As a witness in a criminal case you may be asked to attend one or more meetings with the Prosecutor or a Witness Assistance Service (WAS) Officer prior to attending Court.

If you have any further questions or would like more information, please contact the Witness Assistance Service on Freecall 1800 659 449 or email us on AGDDPPWitness.AssistanceService@nt.gov.au

What is a 'Proofing' meeting about and why do I need to attend?

As a witness in a criminal case you may be asked to attend one or more meetings with the Prosecutor or a Witness Assistance Service (WAS) Officer prior to attending Court.

The legal term for this meeting is called a 'proofing'.

There are a number of reasons why a proofing meeting might be required. This includes:

- To provide you with information about the court process and being a witness;
- To introduce you to the prosecutor handling the matter;
- To ensure that the information provided in your witness statement/s is true and correct;
- To clarify anything that is unclear in the statement;
- To assess whether you are capable of recounting the allegation/s to the Court or might need to be considered a Vulnerable Witness;
- To discuss any proposal to resolve the matter;
- To prepare you to give your evidence in Court.

The meeting is an opportunity for you to ask questions about anything that you are unsure of, find out how things will happen on the day and what to expect as a witness in the case.

At the proofing session, the prosecutor will explain his/her role to you and the process for what will happen when you are called in to take the stand and provide your evidence. They may go through your statement with you or ask you to tell them what happened when the offence being alleged occurred.

It is important to tell the prosecutor what you recall of the incident as this helps them in preparing the case. While the statement you gave the police is important, talking about the matter can sometimes help to make things clearer for the prosecutor or provide information that is relevant to the case. Answering questions about the incident will also help you to recall what happened and be able to give that information at Court.

Who will be at the proofing meeting?

The prosecutor and a WAS Officer normally attend the proofing session with you. You can ask to have another support person present also if you want however any person who is also a witness in the same case can not be a support person for this. Witnesses are not permitted to discuss their evidence with each other. A family member, friend or counsellor can attend with you if you want.



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Where will the proofing meeting be held?

Generally proofing meetings will be held either at the local Director for Public Prosecutions office or at the Court House.

If you are living at a different location from the Court, then arrangements may be made to either transport you to where the prosecutor is; conduct the meeting over a video link or telephone or, if you are in a remote community, the prosecutor may travel out to see you.

How long will the proofing meeting take?

This depends on the information in your statement and the type of court hearing in which you will be giving evidence. Sometimes proofing meetings can be fairly short where the prosecutor simply wants to check your statement with you and give you information

about the process. This is more likely in matters that are going to a hearing or a committal in the lower court and will usually take anywhere up to an hour.

However, if it is a matter going to trial then sometimes it will take 2 – 3 hours, usually with a short rest break, or you will be asked to attend for more than one meeting. Although this might seem lengthy it will help you to be prepared for Court.

What if i have difficulty with speaking English?

If English is not your first language and you need an Interpreter, please let the WAS Officer or prosecutor know this when they first contact you. We will arrange for an interpreter to be present at any meetings and for Court so that you are fully able to understand what you are being asked to talk about.

