

## Police Responses to Sexual Violence

If you want the perpetrator to face criminal charges, you will need to make a statement to police. Police processes can be confusing or take a long time, and the results of making a statement can be very different depending on the circumstance. Remember that you can always speak to your local sexual violence service for more information.

### What is a statement?

A statement is a formal police record regarding a crime. A victim (or someone who witnessed the crime or its effects) makes a statement by attending an interview with police, where they give a lot of information and the police officer writes down details relevant to the crime being considered. Statements are crucial for investigating sexual violence and making arrests.

### What would I have to do to make a statement?

- Have a long conversation at a police station or, occasionally, with the police visiting you in a safe place. This involves answering a lot of questions.
- Read what the officer has written and tell the officer about anything that is incorrect.
- Sign the statement when you are satisfied that it is all accurate.

### What will the police do after taking my statement?

Police use statements and other evidence to decide whether they can justify charging an **alleged offender** with a specific crime. After you make your statement, the police may:

- Decide that they will charge the alleged offender. They will need to gather as much evidence as they can and present this to the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (usually called the 'DPP').
- Put off deciding whether to charge the alleged offender while they gather more information.
- Decide that there is not enough information or other evidence to bring a criminal charge.

### Ok, I want to make a statement. What should I do now?

Call your local station or a general police information line; you will find the right number to call on the police website for your state/territory. It can be a good idea to arrange to have a **support person** with you when you make your statement. If the person you want to have supporting you is going to be interviewed by police or give evidence in court (if the matter goes to court), they may not be allowed to be with you while you make your statement, so check this with the police ahead of time.

Many police services now have **sexual violence liaison officers**. You can also request a female officer, although some small stations will not necessarily have a female officer available.

### Key People

**Victim:** The person affected by a criminal act. In cases of sexual violence, we often call this person a victim/survivor of sexual violence.

**Witness:** A person who has information that is relevant to the police or the court.

**Sexual violence liaison officer:** A police officer who oversees SV cases to ensure they are handled appropriately.

**Support person:** A person you trust who can be with you while you speak to police. A support person might be a trusted friend, a family member, a person in your community, or a support worker

**Alleged offender, defendant, or accused:** Person charged with a crime.

**Offender:** Person convicted of a crime.

### What happens next?

After making a statement, the police officers involved should keep you updated about what they decide and the actions they take. If you think you should have an update but haven't been contacted by police, you can call the officers (they should have given you their contact details) or ask a support person to do this for you.