

### What will happen when I give evidence?

Depending on the prosecution's strategy, any victims or witnesses may be called to **give evidence** by the prosecution and **cross-examined** by the defence (this means answering the defence lawyer's questions). When victims of crime give evidence at court, they are not considered victims but witnesses, which can be confusing and frustrating.

If you are called to give evidence, the DPP will help you prepare, working with you to understand your responsibilities (e.g., telling the truth) and what you can expect during the trial. If you have vulnerable witness protections, this *may* mean you do not have to give evidence in the courtroom where the trial is happening. Usually, a witness will need to give evidence in the court room, where the accused will also be present.

If you do have to give evidence in the courtroom, you will be called by an official and guided to stand in the **witness box**. In the witness box, you will give an **oath** or **affirmation**, committing to telling the truth, before giving evidence. Giving evidence can be a long, stressful process and the courts understand this. If you don't understand a question or need to take a break, just say so.

It is important to know that you can also have a support person with you at court, provided they are not also being called to give evidence. If they are, then they will not be able to be with you at court while you give evidence.

### What will change if I am considered a vulnerable witness?

In Queensland, people considered vulnerable witnesses, including victims in sexual assault cases, can be granted special supports. These supports are not automatically granted, so it is important to ask for particular supports you think are important. Supports the court consider include:

- Allowing a support person to be with you.
- Permission to give evidence from another location or by recording it in advance and having it played to the court, rather than having to give evidence in the courtroom.
- Having a screen placed in the courtroom so that you do not have to see the accused.
- Barring the public and media, who are usually able to observe trials, from the court room.

Talk to the prosecutor or your advocate about supports you may receive.

The legal system is a confusing place and its processes take a very long time in cases of sexual violence. This can be very stressful, so it is important to have good supports. There are services that can help you during this process.

Victims Assist Queensland (1300 546 587) provides information and assistance to people who have experienced a range of crimes.

The DPP has a Victim Liaison Officer (1800 673 428) who can support victims during investigation and court processes.

PACT provide information and support at court (1800 449 632).

Your local sexual violence service has workers experienced in assisting people through investigation and court processes.

When sexual violence has happened within an intimate or family relationship, the local domestic violence service may also be able to help.

If you have particular needs, such as needing an interpreter to help you communicate with police or lawyers, or you need help to get to appointments or around the courthouse, you can ask one of these services for help.