



SERVICE CHARTER

**Court Network
2022**

Court Network





This **Service Charter sets out the level of service that the community can expect from Court Network.**

It provides information about the role and responsibilities of Court Networkers in delivering support, information and referrals, and in empowering and increasing the confidence of court users attending court. The Service Charter outlines how key elements of Court Network's delivery model contributes to the provision of high-quality services.

Acknowledgment to Country

Court Network proudly acknowledges the traditional owners and custodians of country throughout Australia and their continuing connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures, and to Elders of past, present and future generations.

Court Network is a frontline community organisation that enables court users to better understand and navigate the court system in Victoria and Queensland.

Our Mission

To provide the community with volunteers who stand beside, empower and instil confidence in all court users.

Our Vision

To be a nationally recognised organisation, providing the community with volunteers to support all court users and enhance access to justice.

Our Values



INCLUSION & EMPOWERMENT

We respect, support and value diversity of experience and diversity of thought.



CURIOSITY & COURAGE

We have courage to inquire and are prepared to take on new challenges. We are committed to continuous learning, innovation & growth.



EXCELLENCE

We strive to be our best and meet the highest standards.



COLLABORATION

We work collaboratively to achieve shared goals and greater impact.



EMPATHY & COMPASSION

We support each other and people we serve with kindness, empathy and compassion and without judgment.



INTEGRITY

We act ethically, honestly, with fairness and impartiality

Our service philosophy is based in human rights principles that recognise the right of every court user to be treated with dignity and respect.

1. WHO WE ARE

Court Network supports **all court/tribunal users**. This includes victims, accused, witnesses, and family members and friends.

We may also support people working within the courts, including lawyers, police, court staff, or other professionals after we have reached out to all primary court users.

Court Network services are provided by highly trained community volunteers known as Court Networkers. Networkers provide non-legal information, referral and support as they stand beside and empower court users before, during and after court.

Court Network **does not**:

- Provide legal services or advice
- Allow an individual Court Networker to support both parties in a legal matter
- Perform the role of childcare.





2. OUR SERVICES

Court Network's core services are grounded in three key service elements – support, information and referral - delivered before, during and after court.

WHAT WE DO



Support for court/tribunal users which is active and empathetic, includes:

- Building rapport and creating a safe space to connect and access assistance
- Responding to the individual and diverse needs of all court users
- Enhancing the dignity of all court users by responding in a non-judgmental and respectful manner
- Recognising that court users often have particular needs and vulnerabilities
- Ensuring courts users are listened to and their needs are identified, prioritised and responded to
- Providing scribe assistance for court paperwork, when court users experience access barriers or difficulties (e.g. financial assistance or intervention order application forms)
- Promoting the safety of court users
- Respecting and advocating for the decisions made by court users.

Practical **information** provided by Networkers assists court users to:

- Understand courts and legal systems and the processes they use

- Navigate 'the system' and find out where to go and who to speak to
- Understand court etiquette – the behaviour expected at court
- Respond to safety concerns before, at and after court
- Contact courts and tribunals
- Understand the next steps
- Understand various hearing arrangements (e.g. online hearings, remote witness, security)

Referrals are provided by using accurate and up to date knowledge of services, responsive to identified and prioritized court user needs, and include referrals to:

- Court-based services such as duty lawyers, family violence applicant and respondent workers, Koori support workers, and interpreters
- Community-based agencies such as legal, homelessness, housing, family violence, health, financial, youth, older people, multicultural, disability, LGBTIQ+ and other support services.

Networkers may also provide a range of valuable administrative activities that support the operation and functioning of our services.

WHEN WE DO IT



- **Before court**, Networkers support court users to build their confidence to attend court and fully participate in the process by:
 - o Providing a supportive and impartial human connection
 - o Providing assistance to understand court processes, procedures and documentation.
 - o Linking court users to legal information and legal services
 - o Supporting court users to understand their rights and responsibilities prior to their court appearance
 - o Assisting court users to navigate their court needs and requirements (e.g. interpreters, disability liaison support)
 - o Linking court users to specialist services responsive to their identified and prioritised needs
 - o Linking court users to future support from Court Network volunteers as required
 - o Ensuring court users feel empowered, informed and connected prior to their court appearance.
- **At court**, Networkers will:
 - o Provide a welcoming, kind and supportive human connection
 - o Provide support and information about the court and explain how the courts and legal systems operate
 - o Be with court users in person at their hearing, staying present and connected during their court appearance
 - o Assist court users to connect with the court staff and services
 - o Assist court users to navigate their court needs and requirements (e.g. interpreters, disability liaison support)
 - o Assist court users to navigate the court/tribunal buildings so they can find where they have to go and who they need to see/speak to
 - o Provide court users with a safe place in court
 - o Assist court users to navigate their court needs and requirements (e.g. interpreters, disability liaison support)
 - o Link court users to specialist services responsive to their identified and prioritised needs
 - o Support court users to have a say
 - o Help explain decisions that affect court users.

- **After court**, Networkers will:

- o Provide a supportive, connected and impartial human connection
- o Provide a check-in for court users post their court appearance
- o Provide assistance to understand court processes, procedures and documentation
- o Assist court users to understand the next steps they may need to take
- o Provide support and assistance between court appearances
- o Link court users to specialist services responsive to their identified and prioritised needs.

HOW WE DO IT



Services are provided by Networkers in person, remotely (telephone or video hearings) and via telephone helpline across all stages in which court users engage with court processes.

Our services are delivered in an integrated way so that court users can access the type of services they need, when and where they need them. We also offer a call-back service to court users providing follow up information, support and referral.

ENHANCED FAMILY VIOLENCE SUPPORT



We are committed to providing support for court users facing family violence matters in a manner that recognises and supports the safety of the people involved. Networkers play a key role in alleviating tensions and distress in cases involving family violence. In Victoria, we hold Responsibilities of Practice under the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management (MARAM) Framework. The Family Violence Practice Guide for Court Network Volunteers provides detailed practice guidelines that align with the identified MARAM responsibilities.



Networkers support court users to build their confidence to attend court and fully participate in the process

3. OUR APPROACH

Court Network **responds flexibly**, creating new service offerings in response to court needs, external factors, and the dynamic environment of courts.

Within this flexible approach are core aspects underpinned by our values, that lie at the heart of Court Networkers' approach.

- Our suite of services and range of delivery modes, enables us to **offer choice** for court users in the level and type of support that might suit them best. We create a safe space for court users to consider their specific individual needs such as their safety concerns, their need for an interpreter or culturally appropriate support, and their level of anxiety or confusion.

- Networkers provide **non-judgemental**, active listening to court users which can reduce stigma, discrimination and provides a sense of hope. Networkers are skilled in reaching out to court users who are likely to be marginalised or disadvantaged. This can include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people with disability, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and LGBTIQ+ communities.

- Networkers **advocate** for the needs of court users. By proactively supporting court/tribunal users, Networkers can assist them to be more aware of their own rights and to feel empowered to speak up for themselves. Networkers' positive relationships with other professionals within the court can also assist to advocate on behalf of court users, for example working with court staff to respond to the individual safety needs of a court user.

- At court, Networkers often use an **active outreach style** to help identify court users most in need. Networkers work respectfully and effectively to reach out to court users.

- Networkers consider the individual circumstances and needs of the court user and have a clear understanding about the services available. Networkers frequently **collaborate** with people in the court and legal systems, and community sectors to provide the most appropriate supports for court users.

- Networkers are clear about the **boundaries of their role** and use their knowledge and expertise to link to the most relevant services and supports that best meet the needs of individual court users.

- Networkers participate in extensive **training, reflective practice** and ongoing professional development and are supported by professional highly skilled paid staff.

Court Network's approach is aligned with the core principles of **trauma-informed practice**:

- Building safety
- Developing trusted and collaborative relationships
- Supporting a sense of empowerment and choice
- Providing responsive non-judgemental services.

THE VALUE OF VOLUNTEERS



Court Networkers take **great pride** in being volunteers.

Court Network volunteers come from all walks of life and bring a vast range of personal and professional experience to their role. They have a deep sense of empathy, willingness to learn, and a desire to work in partnership with others.

Networkers improve the court experience for people in an environment that can cause fear, anxiety and frustration. Networkers are familiar with the environment and can explain the court landscape, processes, system and language in terms that a court user will understand, making them feel more confident. They take the time needed to provide support for court users without rushing and offer a calming presence.

By quickly building trust and engagement with court users, our volunteers also provide direct benefit to the administration of justice by reducing the demands on other services inside and outside the courtroom, thereby bringing economies to the courts' operations.

Networkers improve people's perception of the court system. Making the court process easier to navigate and more manageable for court users and providing information on how the justice system operates, is likely to leave court users with a more positive view of the court.

Networkers are of greatest value to unrepresented litigants who do not have the information or support that they would otherwise receive from a lawyer.

Networkers **are volunteers** accountable to Court Network. Court Networkers are not employees of the court, and do not act as legal professionals.



4. ENSURING QUALITY

Court Network aims to meet or exceed quality and safety standards and seeks continual systems and service improvement to ensure we provide the best information, support and advice to court users. This endeavor is supported by rigorous systems and standards.

Court Network has strong **leadership and governance processes**.

As an **accredited organisation**, we comply with a variety of governing industry standards as part of our commitment to best practice, quality, systems and processes and continuous improvement.

Our **quality improvement and risk management systems** form the basis for continuous improvement and organisational excellence and support us to deliver strategic priorities and service charter promises.

We support our **workforce** of both employees and volunteers to have the appropriate skills and knowledge to effectively fulfil their roles and responsibilities. We provide robust recruitment processes, professional development opportunities and a recognised sector-leading volunteer education and training program.

We encourage and welcome **feedback** from court users, stakeholders, employees and volunteers. Feedback is essential to improving what we do and how we do it.

We regularly **measure and monitor** our activity, value-add and performance.

Our **partnerships** enable us to improve the court user experience and outcomes, and to design services that meet's court users' needs.



5. ACCESSING COURT

COURT USERS CAN:



Self refer via phone or our website



Call our Telephone Service



Be referred by specialist and community agencies including police, victim and witness support services



Be referred by Magistrates/ Judges and court staff



Be referred by legal representatives on the day of court appearances



Approach Networkers for support at court



Engage with volunteers through the Networkers proactive outreach at court

CONTACT DETAILS:

TELEPHONE HELPLINE 1800 571 239

Website Referral Form: <https://courtnetwork.com.au/get-support/online-referral/>

Contact us

Telephone Help Line 1800 571 239

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