

# GOING TO THE MAGISTRATES' COURT

## Getting Legal Advice

It is very important to get legal help before you go to court. Legal advice will help you:

- decide if you will say that you are guilty or not guilty
- decide if you need a lawyer to speak for you in court or if you can represent yourself
- help you to prepare for your case

Getting legal advice early may also mean that you:

- only have to go to court once
- find out if you can get a grant of legal aid

You may not be able to adjourn your matter without a good reason so it is important that you are prepared.

You can get legal help from:

Victoria Legal Aid – for help with legal problems, call Legal Help on 1300 792 387.

Victoria Legal Aid Website: [http:// www.legalaid.vic.gov.au](http://www.legalaid.vic.gov.au) has information about going to court for a criminal charge

Law Institute of Victoria – referral to a private lawyer. Tel: 9607 9550

Your local Community Legal Centre (03) 9652 1500 Website: <http://www.communitylaw.org.au/>

Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service Tel: 1800 064 865 Website: <http://www.vals.org.au>

## At Court

You must go to court if you are charged with an indictable offence or on bail. If you do not go to court you may be arrested. It is important to be at court if you have been charged with a summary offence. If you do not go to court you may be arrested or the case might be heard without you.

Be at court 30 minutes before the time on your summons or bail. When you get to court let the counter staff know that you are there.

## Duty lawyer service

Victoria Legal Aid can help people at court. The type of help you get depends on your income, circumstances and what you have been charged with.

## Problems Attending Court

Each Magistrates' Court has a Court Coordinator who organises the time and date for the cases to be heard. If you have any problems it is important for you to contact this person.

If you cannot come to court because you have a good reason or because you cannot get transport, contact the court coordinator **before the day of your court case**. You may be able to have your case moved to a different date and possibly to another court.

<http://www.magistratescourt.vic.gov.au>

## Summary Case Conference

A summary case conference enables an out of court discussion between you and a police prosecutor prior to the first hearing date of your case to identify and discuss the issues in dispute. You may be required to participate in a summary case conference before your matter can be adjourned for a plea of not guilty. This discussion may determine how the charges against you will proceed before the court. The police prosecutor can discuss your case with you however will not provide legal advice.

Website <http://www.police.vic.gov.au>

## IF YOU NEED AN INTERPRETER

If you need to have an interpreter, ask someone to contact the court coordinator at least five days before the day of your court case.

## NOTE THE TIME AND DATE YOU SHOULD BE AT COURT