



Information Sheet for Students Law Day Out Program

Dear Student

To deepen your learning in Legal Studies, your teacher has arranged for you to participate in a Law Day Out program run by the Rule of Law Education Centre. During this experience, you will hear directly from a judicial officer and witness aspects of the justice process firsthand. You will observe the operation of courts, the role of court personnel, the criminal trial process and legal and non-legal responses in action.

You will see the rule of law being carried out in each court, regardless of the matter or what stage the hearing is at. We encourage you to look for the procedures that ensure that all people are treated equally and fairly before the law and consider how these help to create just outcomes for victims, accused persons, offenders and the community.

Although a very exciting opportunity, this can also be a confronting experience and requires you to behave in a way that is responsible and respectful at all times.

To prepare for your Law Day Out Program, please review the following information carefully. If you have any questions, ensure you ask your teacher before the date of your excursion.

What should I wear?

- **Students are required to wear full school uniform or conservative clothes** when attending a Law Day Out program.
- **You must wear closed in shoes** when attending the court complex and **hats are not permitted** to be worn inside.
- **Persons dressed unsuitably will be refused access to the complex**, including wearing t-shirts or hats with inappropriate logos or words on them.

What should I bring?

- Bring minimal items - **A small bag with a notepad and a pen, a water bottle and some food is all you need.** There is no food or drink available for purchase inside the courts.
- **Student's bags will be scanned, pockets must be emptied and all digital items must be put in a tray to scan.** Students will need to pass through metal detectors before entry to the courts is permitted.
- **You should ensure you have nothing sharp with you (metal cutlery in lunchboxes, compasses or scissors in pencil cases, glass bottles etc).** Items



found will be taken and disposed of by security. When going through security, everything in pockets must go into a tray. Epipens and inhalers are fine to bring through security. Please make security staff aware if you have the following:

- a blood glucose monitoring implant
- an epipen
- an inhaler

Restricted items such as knives, guns, toy weapons and other offensive implements as named under the Weapons Prohibition Act 1998 will be confiscated and may lead to charges, fines and imprisonment.

What are the expectations of students inside the court complex?

Students are asked to behave in a way that is **always respectful** of those around them. It is very important that students be mindful that members of the public around them may be offenders, victims, families or support persons and be experiencing emotional distress while awaiting a matter. They could be experiencing the worst day of their life. In addition, there are often people in the court complex with complicated mental health or addiction issues and stressful family situations.

Students should try to make themselves part of the background while they are inside the court complex and should aim to be seen and not heard.

Examples of **unacceptable behaviour** include:

- Discussing cases while in the court complex, particularly in public spaces
- Laughing loudly
- Making comments about cases or people
- Speaking while in court
- Using mobile phones at any time in the court complex
- Pointing
- Staring
- Running

You must also **obey any restrictions you are given upon arrival** at the court complex.



Can I use a mobile phone in the court complex?

The use of any form of recording device including mobile phones within a Court complex is an offence under the Court Security Act 2005 and can carry a penalty of up to \$22,000 and 12 months imprisonment.

This includes ALL video recordings, photography (including “selfies”, photographs, facetime, snapchat or pictures through augmented reality games such as Pokémon Go or social media) as well as **any form of audio recording**. These restrictions are in place from the moment you enter Court premises.

It is strongly recommended that you turn off your phone before going through security and to leave it off for the duration of the visit. You will notice that most courts have a sign that indicates a requirement that your phone must be switched off prior to entering the courtroom. You will see people using phones, but in order to prevent any issues, it is best to have your phone switched off.

What do I need to do when entering and leaving a courtroom?

It is court protocol that members of the public, including students, nod their head to the Coat of Arms behind the judge when entering the court as a sign of respect for the law, and face the judge again and do the same when leaving. This is only required when a hearing is already in progress when you enter or leave. If you enter the court and a judge is not in there yet, this is not required, but you will be asked to stand by the court officer when the judge enters or leaves for a recess. There are permissions from senior members of all religious denominations stating that you are able to bow in a court, so there are no religious reasons for not bowing. If you need further information, please contact us at courtvisit@ruleoflaw.org.au.

How long do I have to stay in a courtroom?

Ideally, the guideline is that anyone that enters a court to observe proceedings should stay for at least 20 minutes to minimise disruption to the justice process, unless you are finding the content too distressing or are asked to leave due to the sensitivity of a matter. If you are asked to leave, you must immediately comply. **Boredom is not a reason to leave a courtroom.** If a magistrate is reading, which must happen for them to make a decision on sentence, you will need to remain in order to see what sentence is determined.



What will I be doing and seeing?

You will begin your experience by hearing from a judicial officer who has volunteered their time to speak with you about their careers and experiences working in the justice system. You will be observing various hearings at different stages of progress covering a range of matters, such as hearings, pleas, committal proceedings, bail applications, sentencing and AVO/ ADVO applications. We ask students to be mindful that you may hear distressing details in some courts, and if you are finding content distressing, to leave and seek out one of your teachers for advice, even if you have not remained for the recommended 20 minutes. Judicial officers will understand that content is distressing and will grant some leeway to a faster exit than is recommended.

Please remember that it may take you some time to understand what a matter is about, what stage it is at, or what type of matter it is, so you may need to stay for a while to understand processes properly. Completing Booklet 1 – Suggested Pre-Learning Activities will help you to understand some of the terminology and processes better. This booklet is available on our website.

Can I ask questions of the judicial officer when we hear them speak?

If time allows, judicial officers will generally give students the opportunity to ask questions and may even ask questions of students themselves. Students should remember that given the impartiality of judges, there are some questions that they will not be able to answer, such as questions about sentence appropriateness, whether they believe an acquitted party to have been guilty etc.

How can I stay safe during my visit?

Be aware that you will be in public galleries and public spaces with accused persons, witnesses, victims and families of these groups as well. It is extremely important that you not discuss the cases you have witnessed in public areas in order to not impact on the justice process.

Students are advised to always attend the bathrooms in groups of two or three as a safety precaution. DO NOT accept anything from anyone during your time at the court, including holding things for people while they are in court. You do not know what is contained in anything given to you and could lead to a possession charge if an illegal good.



Court complexes are secure venues, with many security staff and police in attendance, making safety issues unlikely. However, confrontations can occur between parties. By remaining respectful and unobtrusive, you make yourself less likely to have any adverse interactions with anyone in the complex. Should you witness any confrontation, you should leave the area immediately and advise any security staff you see of the location and issue. If you have an adverse encounter anywhere in the court complex with a member of the public or court attendee, make your way immediately to the nearest court security officer or teacher for assistance. Do not try to handle the problem yourself.

What if there is an emergency?

In case of any emergencies, follow the instructions of security staff. There are emergency exits located throughout the court complex, and maps showing evacuation assembly points. Take a moment to familiarise yourself with these when you enter the courts. You will also have a safety talk from your Rule of Law Education Centre facilitator or a sheriff's officer prior to entering the complex. Sheriffs and wardens will evacuate the public to Hyde Park across Elizabeth St. The meeting point for your group after an emergency evacuation will be to the right of the War Memorial as you are walking towards it behind the café above Museum Station.

What if I have a medical issue at the court complex?

Students should seek out a teacher as quickly as possible, or a court security officer who will also be able to assist.

Finally ...We hope that you enjoy your LDO Program and get a great insight into the workings of the justice system! Remember that upholding the rule of law and achieving rule of law principles at all stages of the justice process is what creates just outcomes. From the creation of a law through to the outcome of a trial, every step plays a vital role in ensuring justice is achieved.

