



NSW Sheriff's Office

FACTSHEET – Reaching a verdict

Reaching a verdict

At the end of the trial, jurors are required to consider their verdict by discussing the information and evidence presented to them during the trial amongst themselves. This process is known as deliberation. All deliberation discussions are kept confidential and must not be disclosed by jurors.

In order to reach a fair verdict, each member of the jury must understand and follow the Presiding Trial Judge's instructions on the law. If the jury has any questions related to the trial, these should be handed to the trial judge in a jury note to answer via the Court Officer.

As a juror, it is important that you carefully consider all the evidence presented to you in court. Do not be afraid to speak up and express your views during the deliberation process. There will be instances where jurors have different views. These should always be handled respectfully and equally.

Your decision will have a significant effect on the lives of other people, so give the case your complete attention and make thoughtful deliberations.



Deliberation process

There is no set procedure which jurors are bound to follow in reaching their decision. A jury panel is given as much time as its members need to decide on the verdict.

Provided they follow the judge's instructions, jurors are free to deliberate in any way they wish.

However, it may be useful for jurors to decide at the start on general guidelines for the discussions. For example, they may ask the 'foreperson' (a member of the jury selected to represent the jury), to chair discussions.



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The foreperson should ensure that discussions are carried out in a free, unhurried and orderly way, focusing on the issues to be decided. Each juror should be given a chance to participate, and each juror's views and input should be respected.

The foreperson should respect the opinions and different viewpoints that the jurors bring to the case. This will help the jury to reach a fair verdict.

How is the verdict delivered in court?

Once the jury has decided on a verdict, the foreperson will send a note with the Court Officer or Sheriff's Officer advising the judge that a verdict has been reached. The foreperson will not disclose what the verdict.

The jurors will return to the courtroom where they will be asked if they agree on a verdict. The foreperson then announces the verdict once the Judge prompts them to do so.

Immediately after this, the judge will discharge the jury and jurors will be permitted to leave the court complex. In some trials the court may accept a majority verdict and the trial judge will provide guidance if this is required.

If the accused or defendant is found guilty, the judge decides what sentence to impose. This does not usually occur immediately after the verdict is given. The sentence may be given days or weeks later, but the jury is no longer required.

Assistance from the court

There can be a lot of information presented throughout a trial and it can be overwhelming trying to remember everything that you have heard.

Judge

If jury members cannot recall particular evidence, have a question about the law, or do not understand something in the judge's instructions, they should ask for help. This is done by sending a written request to the judge through the court officer in a sealed envelope.

The judge can provide:

- further clarification or explanation
- the definition of a word or legal principle



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- a transcript of all or part of the testimony of a witness

Court Officer

The Court Officer will be the person you will have most contact with and who will direct you in and out of the courtroom. If you have any practical day-to-day questions, you should ask the court officer.

If you need any detail about the trial repeated or clarified by the judge, the court officer will give your written request to the judge. The court officer is not permitted to discuss or answer any questions relating to the trial with jurors.

Sheriff's Officers

The Sheriff's Officers are responsible for security in court and will usually be the first point of contact for members of the public attending court, as they may be stationed at the entrance of the court complex conducting security screening.

Occasionally, the jury might be taken on a 'jury view', where they are taken to the scene of an alleged crime. In these instances, a Sheriff's Officer will accompany the jury, the judge and legal representatives to the scene for security purposes.

A more in-depth explanation of each person's role in court can be found at [Roles in Court](#).

Support after the trial

Participating in a trial as a juror may be a challenging and overwhelming process for some people. The NSW Sheriff's Office provides jurors with access to free counselling support after the trial. Information on the Juror Support Program will be provided to jurors by a Court Officer or Sheriff's Officer.

If you need support or require further information about this program, you can also contact **1300 687 327**.

Further information on support can also be found in the [Juror Support Program Brochure](#).