

Reporting to Police

Sexual assault is a crime. It can happen to anyone and is never the fault of the victim.

The experience and impact of sexual assault is different for everyone but whatever the reaction, it is a normal response to an extreme emotional and physical violation.

Investigating sexual assault and bringing offenders to justice is a priority for NSW Police. They recognise that making a report is difficult. When making a report to Police, the person who has experienced sexual violence is known as the complainant. Detectives will take the complainant's statement or account of what happened. It will include: a description of the offender/s, a description of events before the assault, details about the assault, and what happened after. They will ask many questions and some will be distressing. A complainant can ask why certain questions are being asked and the Detective will explain. The statement taking process can be completed over several days and the complainant can ask for a break or to come back later. Detectives will determine what investigations will take place after taking the complainant's statement. This may take some time and the Detectives may ask for further information.

The statement is important as it will be used in court. Errors in the final document need to be corrected and the complainant can ask for a copy. Trauma can make remembering all events in order difficult, and sometimes facts are remembered later. If this happens, the person can contact the Detective and make a further statement.

When thinking about reporting to Police it is useful to remember:

- If walking into the Police Station feels difficult, ring the Crime Manager to arrange an easier way to make contact.
- A complaint can be made at any time. It does not have to be straight away.
- The complainant can have forensic evidence taken and decide about reporting later.
- If the assault happened in the past, or when the person was a child, a statement can still be made. Sometimes Detectives have other information about the offender which may help build a case.
- When making a complaint the person can take a support person as long as that person will not be a witness- the Detectives can assist in deciding this. The complainant can ask to meet Detectives at another location initially, although the statement will be taken at the Police Station.
- If an interpreter is needed the Police will arrange this.
- The complainant can request to speak to a female or male Detective and if one is available that will be arranged.
- If the complainant would like Police to have information about the crime, but does not want to make a formal complaint, the information can be provided by completing the Sexual Assault Reporting Option form. This information may help Police in other investigations.
- A complainant has the right to withdraw a complaint at any time.
- If the Detective can gather enough evidence, charges will be laid. Sometimes there is not enough evidence and there is no further action. This does not mean the Police do not believe the complainant. It only means that their assessment is that they will not be able to prove 'beyond reasonable doubt' that a crime has occurred.

For more information go to: http://www.police.nsw.gov.au/community_issues/adult_sexual_assault

NSW Rape Crisis Centre

Counselling 24/7 1800 424 017
Online www.nswrapecrisis.com.au

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