

Should I Report to Police?

You have been the victim of a crime. You're not sure what to do or who to speak with. The stress which people go through immediately after a crime is often significant.

Not everyone chooses to report a crime to the police. The reasons vary – some won't report out of fear of retribution (“they'll come back if they find out I've gone to the police”), some people feel embarrassed (“I should have been able to prevent it happening”). Some have concerns about the matter going to court and being “made public”. Others believe it's “too late” when a crime has occurred months or even years earlier.

An unreported crime doesn't diminish the significance for the victim. Being subjected to a crime is a daunting experience which can leave the victim, or victims, bewildered and frightened. Well meaning family and friends may encourage the victim to report “You've got to go to the police!” Or alternatively, many victims of crime may not have the support of family or friends to report “It's not worth getting anyone in trouble... just let it go”.

Ideally, a report to the police needs to be made as soon as reasonably practicable after the crime occurs. This enables the police to investigate the crime before evidence is lost or destroyed. For those subjected to personal crimes such as domestic violence and sexual assault, early reporting also enables police to offer protection.

For those who are worried about reporting a crime to police, it may be helpful to discuss your concerns with someone else. Victim Support Service often meets with people to provide information about their options and discuss how the process of reporting works. Within legal requirements confidentiality is maintained and those limitations can be explained to you. When contacting any service, if you have concerns or questions about confidentiality, then you have the right to ask about any legal limitations or obligations the service may have.

The decision to report a crime to police may be an easy decision for some, and difficult and frightening for others. Whatever decision a person makes regarding the reporting of a crime, Victim Support Service can offer support and assistance.

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