

From the Department of Justice

Personal Safety for Justices of the Peace

Volunteering as a JP is an important and valued service to the Tasmanian community. Every day, JPs assist members of the public with witnessing documents, certifying copies and administering declarations. While this role is rewarding, it is also important for JPs to prioritise their own personal safety when arranging appointments with members of the public.

Although many JPs provide services from their homes, this is generally not recommended unless the JP personally knows the individual. Wherever possible, appointments should be arranged in locations that appropriately balance privacy and personal safety.

When arranging to meet with a member of the public, the following general personal safety considerations may assist:

- ask for the person's full name and contact details when making the appointment
- ask what type of document requires witnessing so you can be prepared and allow sufficient time for the appointment
- arrange a clear meeting time and location
- consider meeting in an appropriate location that balances the need for both personal safety and privacy, such as:
 - a public library meeting room
 - a community or neighbourhood house
 - council offices
 - a JP document signing centre
 - another suitable office or meeting space.
- avoid meeting people alone in isolated locations
- carry a mobile phone whenever possible
- let a trusted friend or family member know where you are going and when you expect to return
- if travelling after dark, consider choosing well-lit and busy areas and remain aware of your surroundings.

It is also important to remember that dealings between a JP and a member of the public are confidential. Meetings should therefore take place in a setting where documents cannot easily be viewed by others and conversations cannot be overheard.

If a JP agrees to attend a person's home to provide services, they should carefully consider their personal safety and individual circumstances. JPs are encouraged to prioritise their personal safety and exercise their own judgement when arranging appointments.

Importantly, JPs are not expected to tolerate abusive, threatening or aggressive behaviour from members of the public. If at any stage you feel unsafe, end the interaction immediately. In an emergency, contact emergency services on 000.

The Department of Justice appreciates the ongoing contribution made by Tasmania's JPs and encourages all JPs to make personal safety a priority while continuing to provide this valuable community service.

For further information or assistance, please contact the Manager, Justices of the Peace by email at jp@justice.tas.gov.au or telephone 6166 1429.