



## Happy volunteers can ease the pain

Court Network is a free and confidential court support service. Highly-trained volunteers provide non-legal information, support and referral to all court users on an impartial and non-judgemental basis. Any court user is eligible to receive services from Court Network. The organisation understands that the court system can be overwhelming, so volunteers advocate for the needs of all court users.

Court Network is a small organisation but have a huge impact in the justice system. Our 375 volunteers provide support in 28 courts across the state. 12 Program Managers support these volunteers.

The award winning program begins with an intensive recruitment and intake process, paired with a challenging continuing education program. Emphasis is placed on the importance of volunteer's wellbeing, taking into account the complexities of the role. Volunteers are encouraged to debrief with their Program Manager and perform self-care. Each year, Court Network recognises the volunteers who have been with the organisation for milestone years. The organisation also encourages volunteers to nominate to be part of the Court Network Board so that they can then be involved in strategic decisions for the organisation. The program ensures volunteers feel confident, supported and celebrated.

The program makes a huge impact in the community by ensuring that court users feel confident and empowered in accessing the justice system. Courts can be intimidating and confusing, so volunteers offer emotional and practical support to anyone who needs it. Volunteers also offer appropriate referral pathways so vulnerable court users can access community organisations, which can provide further support to them.

Volunteering is becoming more nuanced and is responding to community needs. There are more opportunities for people to volunteer in organisations that they are passionate about. Positively, and through initiatives such as the State Awards, the work of volunteers is being more publicly recognised and celebrated.

The award has been wonderful recognition for the Court Network. It has served as a reminder that all aspects of the program are integral to the organisation's continuing success, and the importance of excellent program management that drives the organisation.

**Congratulations Court Network on their well-deserved Excellence Award at the 2019 Volunteering Victoria State Awards.**



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