

# Queensland Intermediary Scheme

## Everybody deserves to be heard



### What is an intermediary?

Intermediaries are professionals with qualifications in speech pathology, psychology, occupational therapy, or social work who help witnesses to understand and be understood. Through their experience as professionals, and with training provided by the Queensland Intermediary Scheme (QIS), they facilitate communication between witnesses and police and witnesses and courts.

Intermediaries can:

- assess vulnerable witnesses and advise on their specific communication needs; and
- provide practical strategies to police, lawyers and judges on how to best communicate with and question vulnerable witnesses to obtain the best evidence.

Intermediaries are impartial – they are not a support person for the witness and cannot take anyone's 'side'. These professionals form part of the Intermediaries Panel and are assigned work by QIS based on the individual needs of a witness.

### Why do we need intermediaries?

Vulnerable witnesses may be unable to give clear and accurate evidence due to their communication needs. Intermediaries are experienced in assessing and advising on these needs, including (but not limited to):

- very young age
- cognitive issues
- trauma
- learning disabilities
- ADHD and autism.

The QIS aims to overcome communication barriers and improve access to justice. Intermediaries aim to reduce trauma to vulnerable witnesses and increase the quality of evidence they provide.

## What does an intermediary do?

When engaged during a **police investigation** an intermediary:

1. conducts a witness assessment;
2. provides recommendations to the police officer on how best to communicate with the witness during the police interview; and
3. attends the police interview to ensure the witness understands and their evidence is understood.

When engaged at the **court stage** an intermediary:

1. conducts a witness assessment;
2. writes a court report with recommendations about how to best communicate with the witness;
3. participates in a 'directions hearing' where the intermediary's recommendations are discussed; and
4. attends court when the witness gives evidence to ensure the witness understands and their evidence is understood.

## Legislative framework

The new Division 4C of the [Evidence Act 1977 \(Qld\)](#) provides the framework in which QIS operates. These legislative amendments to the *Evidence Act* are contained in the [Criminal Code \(Child Sexual Offences Reform\) and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2020](#).

## What is the Queensland Intermediary Scheme?

The Queensland Intermediary Scheme (QIS) arose from recommendations from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. By using intermediaries, the QIS assists eligible individuals to give their best evidence.

Currently intermediary services are limited to prosecution witnesses in child sexual offence matters who:

- are under 16; or
- have an impairment of the mind; or
- have difficulty communicating.

## For more information

Contact the Queensland Intermediary Scheme:

E | [intermediaryscheme@justice.qld.gov.au](mailto:intermediaryscheme@justice.qld.gov.au)

P | (07) 3738 7503