

SEEKING EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST – ACT INTERMEDIARY PANEL

- **Provision of intermediary services in the Australian Capital Territory**
- **Speech Pathologists; Psychologists; Social Workers; Occupational Therapists and other professionals with relevant skills are eligible to apply**
- **Rate of \$160 (plus GST) per hour**
- **Multiple ACT Intermediary Panel roles available.**

The ACT Human Rights Commission is seeking expressions of interest from skilled professionals to be involved in an exciting program working with criminal justice and other stakeholders to elicit the best possible evidence from vulnerable witnesses to improve justice outcomes.

The ACT Intermediary Program, which commenced on 31 January 2020, is based in the Victim of Crime Commissioner's team within the ACT Human Rights Commission. Intermediaries are accredited professionals and independent officers of the court. They provide specialised advice at police investigative interviews, to lawyers and at court to facilitate the giving of evidence by vulnerable witnesses. Currently, the Program mainly receives requests for intermediaries for matters involving child complainants in sexual assault and child witnesses in homicide matters, however, there has also been demand for the Program with matters involving adults with disabilities and other communication difficulties. The Program model draws on the expertise of a small number of 'in-house' intermediaries and a larger ACT Intermediary Panel. We are presently seeking expressions of interest for membership of this panel.

Intermediaries are usually allied health professionals but may be other professionals who have extensive experience communicating with vulnerable people. Becoming an accredited ACT intermediary is an opportunity to make a professional contribution to the effectiveness of the ACT criminal justice system.

More information regarding the Program can be found here: <https://hrc.act.gov.au/act-intermediary-program/>

About the intermediary role

Intermediaries directly facilitate the communication of vulnerable witnesses during criminal investigations and at trial. They ensure that a witness understands questions put to them and can communicate answers effectively in police interviews and court settings.

Being an intermediary is a challenging role that involves working closely with vulnerable witnesses, police, legal professionals and ACT courts. Intermediaries are often required to assess a witness's communication capabilities in short timeframes and with limited advance notice, requiring flexibility and an ability to operate under pressure.

The Program will ensure intermediaries are available at ACT courts and ACT police stations, particularly at Winchester Station in Belconnen where the Sexual Assault and Child Abuse Team (SACAT) are based. Where matters proceed to court, intermediaries will be required to produce a comprehensive written report outlining the witness's communication needs and making a range of recommendations for the court's consideration. Intermediaries must be available to engage in court proceedings on court-mandated dates.

More information regarding the intermediary role can be found in the [Procedural Guidance Manual \(PGM\)](#).

Eligibility requirements

The following professionals are eligible to apply to become an accredited ACT Intermediary:

- Psychologists and Occupational Therapists who have full, unrestricted registration with Australian Health Practitioners Registration Agency;
- Social Workers who are members of the Australian Association of Social Workers and possess a mental health accreditation;
- Speech Pathologists who are members of Speech Pathology Australia with a Practising Membership grade; and
- Other professionals (e.g., teachers with special needs experience, mental health practitioners etc.) with relevant skill sets required by the intermediary role.

Applicants must also demonstrate:

- a minimum of 3 years' experience working with people with communication and/or developmental needs including children, young people, people with a disability and older people;
- excellent interpersonal skills and emotional resilience; and
- strong written communication skills.

It is highly desirable that applicants also have experience engaging responsively with people who are disproportionately impacted by crime and trauma - particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and/or people from Culturally and

Linguistically Diverse backgrounds. Applicants able to demonstrate their contribution(s) in these regards will be viewed favourably.

Compulsory Intermediary Training

Applicants **must** be available to attend:

- A short, face-to-face interview (at the Program's office in Canberra City) in the week commencing **7 June 2021**; and
- Intensive training and assessment over three days on **Monday 21 June, Tuesday 22 June and Wednesday 23 June 2021**. This training will be led by the ACT Intermediary Program with modules delivered in partnership with stakeholders including ACT Police.

Professionals who attend the above training and successfully complete the assessment requirements will become accredited ACT Intermediaries. They may then be appointed to the Intermediary Panel. The above training and assessment activities will be provided free of charge to participants.

Other important information

- The work of intermediary panel members is contracted on an hourly basis in accordance with operational needs;
- The majority of referrals made to the Program are received **during business hours on weekdays**. However, there are also matters received after business hours (after 5pm), on weekends and on public holidays. It is highly desirable if applicants have flexibility to meet this varied demand;
- In some circumstances, intermediaries will be required at short notice. However, it is expected that some panel members will be managing a range of professional commitments impacting their availability from time to time;
- Successful applicants must have the ability to participate in mandatory Continued Professional Development (CPD) provided free of charge by the ACT Intermediary Program; and
- Intermediaries will require an ACT Working with Vulnerable People clearance and a National Police Check upon application.

ACT Intermediary Program – background information

On 15 June 2018, the Chief Minister and Attorney-General released the ACT Government Response to the four reports issued by the *Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse* ('the Royal Commission').

The Royal Commission found that child complainants and witnesses in sexual abuse cases face significant communication barriers when giving their evidence. The

Commission recommended that states and territories establish intermediary programs to assist children's communication of their evidence to police and courts.

In response, the ACT Government allocated funding in its 2019-20 budget to establish an Intermediary Program within the ACT Human Rights Commission which commenced operations on 31 January 2020 with ACT Police and 9 March 2020 with ACT Courts.

The ACT Intermediary Program's objectives are to enable vulnerable witnesses to communicate their best evidence at the police interview and trial stages of the criminal justice process. The Program aims to reduce vulnerable witnesses' trauma, increase access to justice and enhance the administration of criminal justice in the ACT by ensuring the best available evidence is before the court.

Intermediaries are officers of the court who are trained communication specialists who are impartial. An intermediary's paramount duty is to the court and their role is to assess vulnerable witnesses' communication and advise on how to ensure effective communication in prescribed contexts.

Expressions of Interest

Submitting an Expression of Interest: if you wish to express your interest in becoming an accredited ACT Intermediary and being appointed to the ACT Intermediary Panel, please:

- fill out an Application Form;
- write a cover letter demonstrating how you meet the position requirements;
- provide a response to the scenario included (**no more** than one page in **total**);
- provide a copy of your ACT Working with Vulnerable People Clearance and National Police Check; and
- provide a current resume supporting the above to:

intermediaryprogram@act.gov.au marked 'ACT Intermediary Panel – Expression of Interest' by no later than **5pm, Monday 31 May 2021**.

Should your Expression of Interest meet requirements, we will contact you by **4 June 2021** to arrange a short face-to-face interview for the week of **7 June 2021**, after which final training and assessment information will be provided to successful applicants.

Please note: attendance will be limited to **30 participants** to ensure social distancing requirements are met. All applicants will be notified of the outcome of their submission by **11 June 2021**.

Contact: if you have questions regarding the information provided above or about the ACT Intermediary Panel, please contact Laura Cilesio, Director, ACT Intermediary Program or Vanessa McKinley, Assistant Director, ACT Intermediary Program on **0434 855 030**.

Alternatively, you can email intermediaryprogram@act.gov.au.

SCENARIO QUESTIONS FOR PANEL INTERMEDIARY APPLICATION

Please provide answers to the following scenario questions in **one page or less (in total)**. You should consult the ACT Intermediary [Procedural Guidance Manual \(PGM\)](#) in formulating your responses.

1. Identify three behaviours or situations an intermediary must avoid when undertaking their role and explain why.
2. Explain why confidentiality and impartiality are important considerations for intermediaries.
3. After a police interview, the police officer asks you if you believe the evidence given by the witness has been coached by a family member. What should you do and why?
4. You complete a communication assessment for a witness in a court matter. At the ground rules hearing, you are asked by one of the parties if the witness is reliable. What would you say and why?

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) ACT Intermediary Program

What is the deadline for applying?

Your documentation (comprising your completed Application Form, Cover Letter, Scenario Response and Resume) must be received before 5pm, Monday 31 May 2021.

When will I be contacted regarding the outcome of the recruitment?

We will notify both successful and unsuccessful applicants by 5pm, Friday, 11 June 2021.

Will more intermediaries be recruited in future?

Possibly. There are no concrete plans to recruit more intermediaries in the near future, but in the event additional Panel Intermediaries are required, the role will be advertised in the same way.

Will I be paid to attend the training?

No. The training is provided free of charge but you are not paid to attend.

Do I need to have experience working with police or in court to become an intermediary engaged on the ACT Intermediary Panel?

While this type of experience is valuable, it is not required. The intermediary training and accreditation process will cover how intermediaries must engage with police, in courtrooms and elsewhere. If you successfully complete the training and receive accreditation, you will get an opportunity to observe court proceedings prior to undertaking any court referrals.

How regularly will I be offered work if I am engaged on the ACT Intermediaries Panel?

Unfortunately, there is no way to estimate the amount of work you may receive as an intermediary. It will be dependent on a range of factors, including stakeholders' and witness's needs and whether your areas of expertise best match individual case requirements.

Can the rate of \$160 (plus GST) per hour be negotiated?

The rate of \$160 (plus GST) per hour is a set rate and is not able to be negotiated.

What type of cases could I be engaged in if I am on the ACT Intermediary Panel?

Intermediaries will primarily be engaged to work on criminal matters involving allegations of sexual or violent offences. The victims and witnesses in these matters may include children, young people, adults with communication difficulties and older people. The selection of candidates will include close consideration of suitability to engage with these cohorts.

Do I have to attend the training and accreditation?

Yes. Attending each full day of the intermediary training and accreditation process scheduled in June 2021 is compulsory. The training and accreditation are provided to participants free of charge. Training and accreditation will be provided by the ACT Intermediary Program and other relevant stakeholders involved in the Program. If you do not successfully complete the entirety of training you cannot be accredited to become an intermediary.

How many people will be engaged on the ACT Intermediary Panel?

The precise number of people who will be engaged is not currently known and will depend on a range of factors. There is no cap on how many intermediaries may be engaged on the ACT Intermediary Panel.

Where can I find more information on the ACT Intermediary Program?

You can find more information regarding the Program on the [HRC Website](#).