

BEAT THE RAP

What can you do?

See a lawyer

If you are being questioned or have to go to court, it is very important to get legal advice. You can get legal advice from a lawyer by contacting Legal Aid, a community legal centre or a lawyer in private practice. Legal Aid and community legal centres can provide free legal advice. Lawyers in private practice usually charge a fee for giving advice.

A lawyer can give you **advice** about what happens in the legal process, what your legal options are and what is likely to happen. Sometimes they will **take your case** on up to court and will speak for you in court.

At court there is usually a free legal aid lawyer, called the '**duty lawyer**'. They may be able to give you advice and talk for you if you are pleading guilty to certain offences. They will not always be able to represent you if you are defending the charge (pleading not guilty). It depends on how serious the charge is and if you are likely to go to jail. Legal Aid and community legal centres are funded by government and have limited funding so they have to prioritise what cases they can take on.

Go to the homepage of **Legal Aid** in your state or the National Association of **Community Legal Centres**, www.naclc.org.au, for contact details across Australia.

Use Interpreters

In criminal cases, if you are not able to understand English well, you have a right to a free interpreter for interviews with police, meetings with your lawyer and in court.

Interpreters can be provided over the telephone or in person. Interpreters are provided by the Translating and Interpreting Service (phone 131 450).

The police, your lawyer or the court can arrange for an interpreter.

In the 'Boys Don't Talk' film on the DVD :

Joseph goes to see a legal aid lawyer after he has been charged by police and before the court case. He talks with the lawyer about the charges of drink driving, dangerous driving and stealing of the wallet. He agrees he had done the driving charges but says he didn't steal the wallet. The lawyer notes that Joseph will plead 'not guilty' to the stealing charge.