

There are a lot of roles the legal support person can fill. Below are some examples. Don't feel like you're disqualified if you can't do them all. Just let your affinity (or wider) group know your limits so they can plan ahead and maybe someone else can help be the legal support person with you.

The Legal Support Team form may be useful too – you can print it out and use it for each person in your group. Please keep these forms confidential and return them to the individual or hand them on to their lawyer if they request.

## Before the action

If people are going into a known arrestable situation, know as much of people's info as they're comfortable giving – including real full name, arrest history (not just activism related), outstanding warrants, responsibilities they need covered if arrested, emergency contacts. If people are unsure whether they may be putting themselves in an arrestable situation, ask them to consider these things beforehand anyway and make it clear that they should get this information to a legal support person as soon as possible.

Arrange ahead of time, *and let ALL of your affinity group members know*, a local number that accepts collect calls from jail where you can be reached, or that you will be checking regularly and frequently.

Know or find out people's medical info: do they suffer from asthma, heart problems, allergies; do they require prescription medications; and record their doctor's name and phone number.

## During the action

- ?? **DON'T GET ARRESTED.** Your role as a legal support person is vital for those who are arrested and you are much more use outside than in!
- ?? When people are arrested ask the senior police officer on site to let you know where they will be taken to be processed and also what charges they may be facing. Inform them (if you have been told to) of any medical issues arrestees may have. They may split up the arrestees or may take them to a distant police station for processing, so be ready to travel.

## Taking notes

You must anticipate, because once the action starts you will not necessarily have time to get enough down. As soon as possible after an incident or arrest (whether your own arrest or someone else's), sit down and write out everything you remember about the incident – particularly details like times, locations, movements, statements or conversations, etc. You will be surprised how quickly you can forget details, and the trial may not be for another year or two. Use the **Arrestee/injured Instruction Sheet** and **Arrest Watch** forms available on the [www.activistrights.org.au](http://www.activistrights.org.au) website.

## Observation paper and pen: use them to:

- ?? write names of arrested persons and their phone numbers, their friends' phone numbers, their condition before they disappeared from the scene, the words spoken by police during their arrest, their words, the number of the car or wagon they are put into, etc.,
- ?? write down police badge numbers and or descriptions of police involved in the arrest (of those that are aggressive, those who make arrests or are just on the scene, since sometimes there may be testimony from police who were not in fact at the scene at all. Of course, photographs and sound recordings are also useful;
- ?? record significant conversations;
- ?? record licence plates of vehicles (and/or squad car numbers if police vehicles) and the description and location of vehicles.
- ?? If you are witnessing the arrests yourself, take detailed notes of who has been arrested, the numbers or identifying information of arresting officers, times, and any excess force used in the course of the arrest. Be sure to write this out later as a statutory declaration if necessary.

## After an action

- ?? If you are working with lawyers, please inform them of any arrests and provide all details of where the arrestees have been taken, what charges they may face, etc.
- ?? Keep security and confidentiality at the forefront of your mind. Remind people

## Legal Support person Info sheet

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calling that phones may be tapped (the jail's and/or yours).

- ?? Get (and keep track of) arrested people's booking and arrest numbers and upcoming court dates.
- ?? If and when you hear from your friends in jail, contact the rest of your affinity group and others the arrested folks want informed of the situation. Update those people regularly, even if nothing's changed.
- ?? Be able to arrange travel home for your arrested friends. This can mean arranging a friend with a car, collecting money for public transport, or providing their own transport outside the police station following the arrest.
- ?? Be available until everyone in your affinity group is out of jail.
- ?? Be able to get messages from the outside world to your arrested friends. This is a HUGE morale booster.
- ?? Start a call-in or write-in campaign. Call your local member of parliament, the police commissioner, and radio talk back lines to explain what has gone on and to let people know how many people have been arrested. Write a letter to the editor of papers like the Age, the Herald Sun or local press highlighting any issues that came about because of the arrests, including denouncing police harassment, misconduct, unlawful arrests, and/or the attempt to oppress and silence people.

Once people start getting out of jail

- ?? Copy (and keep track of) everyone's paperwork from the police (arrest reports, etc.), jail (booking info, property reports) and court (hearing dates, info on charges, etc.).
- ?? Remind people about their upcoming court dates by calling, mailing and emailing them.
- ?? Have extra Police Complaint forms for your affinity group members to fill out at the action, or after.
- ?? They also lay the groundwork for suing the police. Get your complaint reports to the legal team (sometimes they need to be hand delivered).

*Adapted from material developed by the Midnight Special law Collective: [www.midnightspecial.net](http://www.midnightspecial.net)*