

RETURN OF PROPERTY

Police deal mainly with two types of property:

- the recovery of stolen goods
- property collected at a crime scene for evidence that is referred to as an “exhibit”.

Stolen Property

When police recover stolen property they will attempt to identify the owner of the property and arrange for the property to be returned to its rightful owner.

Police may also ask you to provide them with insurance details for the item/s stolen at the time of the report.

If you see your property for sale in a pawnbroker shop, speak to the owner of the shop and let them know that it is your property. Then report the matter to police.

Exhibits

In certain circumstances your property may be retained by police as evidence for the duration of a hearing and any pending appeals. You may request a receipt for the property taken if you are not a suspect, likely to be charged with a criminal offence or are charged with a criminal offence. The length of time that your property is kept by police varies and this could be indefinitely if it is required for forensic or scientific testing. For example, murder weapons and implements used in armed hold ups.

In many cases, police can photograph, fingerprint or analyse property as needed, then return the property to the owner. Police can often satisfy the onus of presenting evidence at court by tendering photos of the exhibit with a sworn testimony that the exhibit exists.

Police cannot always guarantee that property will be returned. In some circumstances it could be destroyed by the analysis process or be deemed unsafe to return. Exhibits may also need to be retained for certain offence types and until any appeal period expires.

Returning property

You should contact the officer in charge of your matter if you have any concerns about the return of your property, be it recovered stolen goods or property being used as an “exhibit”. If they are unavailable ask to speak to the supervising Sergeant.

If your property is recovered or no longer required as an “exhibit” you will be notified about how to collect your property. You will need to tell police within 28 days whether you want to collect and take your property or not. After 28 days police may destroy any uncollected property.