

# Conduct Agreement Orders in FVRO proceedings



If you have a family violence restraining order (FVRO) case at court, this information may help you if you are considering resolving your case by agreement to a court order without going to a final order hearing.

## What is a Conduct Agreement Order?

A Conduct Agreement Order (CAO) is the name given to an FVRO that has been made with the consent of the Respondent (the Person Bound), without making any admissions.

A CAO can include all the restraints and conditions that are included in an FVRO. If the Respondent consents to a final order imposing restraints, the usual practice is for the Respondent to agree to a CAO on those terms. If a CAO is made the case will not proceed to a final order hearing. Also, there will be no finding or admission of family violence.

The court does not have to be satisfied of the grounds to make an FVRO before making a CAO.

If the Applicant does not agree with the Respondent about the length or terms of the final CAO, the case can still proceed to a hearing for the court to decide whether to make an FVRO and with what terms and length. However, there is no guarantee that the court will make a final FVRO.

The CAO will be in force immediately if the Respondent is in court when it is made. Otherwise it will come into force when it is served on the Respondent, or later if this is stated on the order.

## What is the difference between 'without admission' and a 'finding of family violence'?

"Without admission" means a party is not agreeing with any of the allegations made against them by the other party. This means the party does not agree that family violence occurred.

A "finding of family violence" means a court has decided that family violence occurred based on evidence presented in court where there has been an opportunity to test that evidence, such as through cross-examination.

If the Respondent agrees to a CAO there is no finding by a court of family violence. The Respondent does not admit to any of the matters alleged in the FVRO application and the court disregards any evidence/information given in the

case.

## Is a CAO an FVRO?

A CAO is the name given to the order made when a Respondent consents to an FVRO on a without admission basis. It is taken to be an FVRO for the purposes of the *Restraining Orders Act 1997 (WA)*.

A CAO is not an undertaking because a CAO is a court order that is enforceable by the police and the courts.

## Is a CAO a criminal charge?

A CAO is not a criminal charge. Notice of the order does not go on the Respondent's criminal record.

## Is a breach of a CAO a criminal offence?

Yes, it is an offence to breach a CAO. If a person breaches the CAO they may be arrested and charged with the offence of breaching an FVRO if there is enough evidence.

On conviction the maximum penalty for breaching the CAO is a fine of \$10,000 or imprisonment for 2 years. A conviction for a breach will go on their criminal record.

If the person has previously breached a Police Order or an FVRO, including a CAO, more than once in the last 2 years, they might be treated as a repeat offender. In this case, the court must impose a sentence that includes a term of suspended or immediate imprisonment, unless it would be clearly unjust to do so.

## Are CAOs nationally recognised?

All CAOs made since 25 November 2017 will be automatically recognised nationally. If your CAO was made before then, you should get legal advice about whether you need to apply in the Magistrates Court to have it declared and recognised nationally.

### How long can a CAO last?

It lasts as long as it says in the order. If no duration is stated in the order against an adult it expires after 2 years and against a child after 6 months.

If the Respondent is in prison at the time of service, the CAO must have a minimum duration of 2 years and that is enforceable from the date that the CAO is made, with the duration starting to run from the date of the Respondent's first release from prison.

### Why are CAOs used?

There are many reasons why CAOs are used to resolve FVRO applications, these include where the Respondent wants to avoid:

- admitting they committed family violence as alleged in the FVRO application
- risking a finding of family violence being made against them
- giving evidence in a final order hearing
- children or other potential witnesses being required to give evidence, whether for or against them
- the related financial and emotional costs of further proceedings or a hearing; or
- the risk of paying the Applicant's legal costs, which can be substantial.

### How is a CAO made?

At some courts, duty lawyers can help to negotiate the restraints on CAOs. The court will then make the CAO with the consent of the Respondent. The CAO can be drafted and signed by both parties. An example of such a CAO is included below.

Respondents can also tell the magistrate that they consent to the CAO during court proceedings. When they do the magistrate can make the CAO without the requirement for the parties to sign it.

### When can a CAO be made?

It can be made at any stage in proceedings under the *Restraining Orders Act 1997 (WA)* relating to an FVRO.

If the other party has a lawyer, you can contact them before the court date to discuss the conditions of a CAO.

### What can a CAO say?

The restraints included in a CAO are usually very similar to the FVRO they replace. They can contain:

- conditions outlining what the Respondent cannot do (such as have contact by any means or be near the other person or their home or place of work).
- conditions outlining what the Respondent can do. This may include attending mediation, or allowing contact to make arrangements for children or deal with the parties' personal property.

Every CAO must have a firearms clause, unless the Respondent satisfies the court that they need a firearm licence and firearm:

- for their employment, and
- no firearm was used to commit an alleged act of family violence, and
- the safety of any person, or their perception of their safety is not likely to be adversely affected by their possession of a firearm.

A CAO can be worded to cover most situations. However, it is not intended to be a substitute for family court property or parenting orders.

An example of the restraints that can be included in a CAO is shown in this information sheet. **You may need legal advice about the restraints on your CAO.**

### Can a CAO be changed or cancelled?

Either the Person Bound by the CAO or the Person Protected by it can apply to change or cancel the CAO in the same way as an FVRO.

### What if there are family court orders in place regarding my children?

The Applicant for an FVRO should have informed the court when they applied of any family court orders or pending applications.

The CAO will not usually override the family court order. The court that makes the CAO can change or cancel any family court orders in very limited circumstances.

You should get legal advice about your situation **before** agreeing to a CAO.

### Where can I get more information?

- **Legal Aid WA** has other infosheets that may help you including: **Responding to a restraining order** and **Undertakings in restraining order proceedings**. Contact **Legal Aid WA's Infoline** on **1300 650 579** or go to any office to get a copy. See also the [Legal Aid WA website](#) to download a copy and for more information.

### *Example of a Conduct Agreement Order (agreed to by both Applicant and Respondent)*

**Person protected:** ("Person Protected")

**Person bound:** ("Person Bound")

The parties in this family violence restraining order matter have come to the following agreement.

The Person Protected agrees to settle her/his [delete/strike through the one that does not apply] family violence restraining order application on the basis of the Person Bound consenting to the following Conduct Agreement Order:

The duration of this order is ..... months/ ..... years.

#### **PART A: ORDERS: EXCEPT AS SET OUT IN PART B THE PERSON BOUND MUST NOT:**

- be in possession of a firearm, a firearms licence or obtain a firearms licence,
- cause or attempt to cause damage to any property in the possession of the Person Protected,
- except as set out in Part B, communicate or attempt to communicate with the Person Protected by any means whatsoever, including SMS or text messages or any other electronic means,
- harass the Person Protected by any electronic means, including by using the internet and any social network application (such as "Facebook") to depict or refer in any offensive manner to the person Protected,
- enter, remain upon ..... or any other premises where the Person Protected lives, or works, or is educated; or be within ..... metres of the nearest external boundary of those premises,
- enter upon the street and adjoining road reserve known as .....,
- approach within ..... metres of the Person Protected unless within the grounds of ..... for the purposes of undertaking education,
- approach within ..... metres of any property (including vehicles) of, or under the control of, the Person Protected,
- prevent or hinder the Person Protected from using .....,
- prevent or hinder the Person Protected from attending at..... in the company of a police officer for the purposes of recovering personal or other property,
- distribute or publish, or threaten to publish, any intimate personal images of the Person Protected,
- monitor the movement or communications of the Protected Person,
- cause or allow any other person to engage in conduct of the type referred to in any of the preceding paragraphs of this agreement for you.

**PART B: THE PERSON BOUND WILL NOT BREACH THE ORDERS IN PART A IF SHE/HE** [delete/strike through the one that does not apply]:

- (a) communicates with the Person Protected through an Australian legal practitioner as defined in the *Legal Profession Act 2008* (WA) or a person acting under Section 48 of the *Aboriginal Affairs Planning Authority Act 1972* (WA),
- (b) complies with a court order or parenting plan made under the *Family Court Act 1997* (WA) or *Family Law Act 1975* (Cth) allowing the Person Bound to live with, spend time with or communicate with a child or children named in that order or the plan,
- (c) communicates with the Person Protected by email, SMS, text message or by any other written electronic means solely to make arrangements to spend time with, or communicate with any child or children of the Person Protected and the Person Bound,
- (d) participates with the Person Protected in family dispute resolution or family counselling, as defined in the *Family Court Act 1997* (WA) or *Family Law Act 1975* (Cth),
- (e) instructs a process server or bailiff or other person to serve any legal process requiring service on the Person Protected,
- (f) participates in and go to court events in proceedings in which the Person Protected and the Person Bound are parties or witnesses, and to comply with any order or direction of a Court,
- (g) attends in the company of a police officer for the purposes of recovering personal or other property,
- (h) engages in any mediation as directed or ordered by a Court, or other mediation as agreed in writing by the parties and as arranged by a mutually agreed third party.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Person Bound:

Dated: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Person Protected:

Dated: \_\_\_\_\_

## Legal Aid WA Offices

**TELEPHONE INFOLINE: 1300 650 579 (General Enquiries)**

Infoline open Monday to Friday 9.00 am to 4.00 pm  
(Australian Western Standard Time) except public holidays

**Translating and Interpreting Service 131 450**  
**National Relay Service (for hearing and speech impaired) 133 677**

[www.legalaid.wa.gov.au](http://www.legalaid.wa.gov.au)

### **Perth Office**

32 St Georges Terrace, Perth, WA 6000  
1300 650 579  
(08) 9261 6222

### **Southwest Regional Office**

7<sup>th</sup> Floor, Bunbury Tower, 61 Victoria Street, Bunbury, WA 6230  
(08) 9721 2277

### **Great Southern Regional Office**

Unit 3, 43-47 Duke Street, Albany, WA 6330  
(08) 9892 9700

### **Goldfields Regional Office**

Suite 3, 120 Egan Street, Kalgoorlie, WA 6430  
(08) 9025 1300

### **Midwest & Gascoyne Regional Office**

Unit 8, The Boardwalk, 273 Foreshore Drive, Geraldton, WA 6530  
(08) 9921 0200

### **Pilbara Regional Office**

28 Throssell Road, South Hedland, WA 6722  
(08) 9172 3733

### **West Kimberley Regional Office**

Upper Level, Woody's Arcade, 15-17 Dampier Terrace, Broome, WA 6725  
(08) 9195 5888

### **East Kimberley Regional Office**

98 Konkerberry Drive, Kununurra, WA 6743  
(08) 9166 5800

### **Indian Ocean Office**

Administration Building, 20 Jalan Pantai  
Christmas Island, Indian Ocean, WA 6798  
(08) 9164 7529

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