

Is 'dobbing' a good thing?

This is a question that can generate some robust discussions, but first let's clarify what we mean by the term 'dobbing'.

We're talking about informing against or reporting someone's illegal or unethical activities or behaviour to authorities or other relevant individuals, especially to police. You might also have heard similar terms such as 'whistleblowing', 'squealing' or 'snitching'.

You would think that this was a responsible and ethical thing to do, but there can be negative connotations attached to doing this.

Some people see it as being disloyal to their mates by telling authorities what they've done, instead of turning a blind eye because they're your friends and you don't really want to see them getting into trouble with the law.

Not many people want to be known as a snitch, busy-body or dobber, but you don't have to wear that label. Sharing what you know without saying who you are means you can be quietly satisfied that you've played your part in helping to bring about positive change.

According to YouGov Omnibus in 2020, 64% of Australians supported 'dobbing' people for not following social distancing or lockdown rules during the COVID-19 pandemic.

So, what are the consequences if you 'dob' or if you don't?

If you want to tell police, an employer or family member about someone's dubious behaviour or suspicious activities, you're presumably not comfortable with what they're doing and want things to change. But at the same time, you might not want to get involved or be known as the source of information, because this could jeopardise that person's job or relationships, and perhaps put you in a difficult or dangerous situation. Because Crime Stoppers offers anonymity, you can safely share that information without revealing your identity. Your information does make a difference and might help you, your community or even the culprit get out of a tricky situation.

On the other hand, you might be hesitant to 'dob', even though this nags at your conscience or means you continue to watch things go downhill in terms of your relationship with that individual or organisation. Not taking action might impact the safety of you, your family or community.

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Previous Crime Stoppers campaigns have asked the public to 'dob in a drug dealer' to reduce the harm this causes in our communities. If it was a workmate or someone in your family who was involved in the illegal drug trade, you would have to ask yourself what damage they were doing, or would you be OK if it meant someone else you cared about became addicted?

How much of a mate is someone who makes money out of creating dependence on drugs? If it came to the crunch, would their loyalty be more to a dealer or organised crime group than to you?

Misconduct at work is often a tricky one to call out. If you worry about being known as the 'whistleblower', losing your job security, professional reputation, or friendships, then it's understandable you want to keep tight-lipped. Most of us want to do the right thing but the pitfalls can sometimes feel more overwhelming than the positive outcomes of 'dobbing'.

We're not asking you to put your safety at risk, but to seriously consider how keeping quiet could make things worse. You won't have fingers pointed at you as the 'dobber' because they'll never know it was you and neither will we, unless you choose to tell us.