

Channel Nine Reporter Accused of Child Pornography Offences

In 2014, *A Current Affair* reporter Ben McCormack sat in the Downing Centre District Court as former 'Hey Dad' star [Robert Hughes was found guilty of child sex offences](#).

Today, the sexual assault complainants' champion – who liaised with the victims of Hughes and others – was himself arrested and charged with sexually inappropriate conduct towards children.

It has been reported that police detectives launched an investigation into the 42-year old after a tip off from the Joint Anti Child Exploitation team. Officers arrested Mr McCormack at 7.30am this morning during a vehicle stop at Moore Park and conveyed him to Redfern Police Station.

Police then executed search warrants at Mr McCormack's home in Alexandra and at the offices of *A Current Affair* in Willoughby, where they seized a mobile phone, computers, USBs and external hard drives.

"Police will allege in court the man was engaged in sexually explicit conversations about children with an adult male and discussed child pornography," a police spokesperson stated.

Mr McCormack was charged with '[using a carriage service for child pornography material](#)'.

'The charge

'Using a carriage service for child pornography material' is an offence under [section 474.19 of the Criminal Code Act 1995](#) (Cth).

For a person to be found guilty, the prosecution must prove beyond reasonable doubt that he or she:

1. Accessed material, or caused material to be transmitted to him or herself, or transmitted, made available, published, distributed, advertised, or promoted material, or solicited material, and
2. The person used a 'carriage service' to do this, and
3. The material was 'child pornography material'.

The prosecution must establish that the defendant 'intended' to do one of the acts listed in subsection 1 above, and that he or she was at least 'reckless' as to whether the material was 'child pornography material'.

The maximum penalty for the offence is 15 years' imprisonment.

Mr McCormack has been granted conditional bail and is scheduled to appear in [Downing Centre Local Court](#) on the 1st of May.

He is entitled to the presumption of innocence unless and until the prosecution is able to prove the case against him.

Definitions

[Section 7 of the Telecommunications Act 1977](#) defines a 'carriage service' as "a service for carrying communications by means of guided and/or unguided electromagnetic energy"; which includes fixed and mobile telephones and the internet.

Section 473.1 of the Criminal Code Act defines 'child pornography material' as:

(a) material that depicts a person, or a representation of a person, who is, or appears to be, under 18 years of age and who

(i) is engaged in, or appears to be engaged in, a sexual pose or sexual activity (whether or not in the presence of other persons); or

(ii) is in the presence of a person who is engaged in, or

appears to be engaged in, a sexual pose or sexual activity;

And does this in a way that reasonable persons would regard as being, in all the circumstances, offensive; or

(b) material the dominant characteristic of which is the depiction, for a sexual purpose, of:

(i) a sexual organ or the anal region of a person who is, or appears to be, under 18 years of age; or

(ii) a representation of such a sexual organ or anal region; or

(iii) the breasts, or a representation of the breasts, of a female person who is, or appears to be, under 18 years of age;

In a way that reasonable persons would regard as being, in all the circumstances, offensive; or

(c) material that describes a person who is, or is implied to be, under 18 years of age and who:

(i) is engaged in, or is implied to be engaged in, a sexual pose or sexual activity (whether or not in the presence of other persons); or

(ii) is in the presence of a person who is engaged in, or is implied to be engaged in, a sexual pose or sexual activity;

And does this in a way that reasonable persons would regard as being, in all the circumstances, offensive; or

(d) material that describes:

(i) a sexual organ or the anal region of a person who is, or is implied to be, under 18 years of age; or

(ii) the breasts of a female person who is, or is implied to be, under 18 years of age;

And does this in a way that reasonable persons would regard as being, in all the circumstances, offensive.

Defences

Section 474.21 of the Criminal Code Act provides that a person is not guilty of 'using a carriage service for child pornography material' if he or she convinces the court on the 'balance of probabilities' (ie more than 50%) that the conduct:

- (a) was of public benefit; and
- (b) did not extend beyond what is of public benefit.

The conduct can only be of public benefit if it was necessary for:

- (a) enforcing a law of the Commonwealth, a State or a Territory; or
- (b) monitoring compliance with, or investigating a contravention of, a law of the Commonwealth, a State or a Territory; or
- (c) the administration of justice; or
- (d) conducting scientific, medical or educational research that has been approved by the Minister in writing for the purposes of this section.

An additional defence is available for law enforcement officers acting in execution of their duties.

Sydney Taxi Driver Charged with Indecent Assault

A 45-year old taxi driver has been charged with indecently assaulting a 25-year old woman during a trip between the Sydney CBD and Leichhardt.

The driver picked up the woman from outside a licensed venue in George Street, Sydney and drove her to Norton Street in Leichhardt.

Police allege the driver “indecently assaulted the woman a number of times” en route, then “attempted to stop the woman” after she got out of the cab.

The complainant reported the matter to Leichhardt Local Area Command who commenced an investigation, resulting in the man attending Glebe Police Station at 2pm yesterday.

The driver was charged with indecent assault and common assault, and bailed to appear in Downing Centre Local Court on 13 January 2017.

Indecent Assault in NSW

Section 61L of the Crimes Act 1900 contains the offence of ‘indecent assault’, which carries a maximum penalty of five years’ imprisonment in the District Court, or two years if the case remains in the Local Court.

A person is guilty if the prosecution is able to prove beyond reasonable doubt that they ‘assault[ed] another, and at the time of the assault or immediately before or after it... also commit[ed] an act of indecency’.

An act of indecency must have some sexual connotation, and there must be an intention to obtain sexual gratification. As the NSW Judicial Commission explains:

“For an assault to be “indecent” it must have a sexual connotation. It will have that connotation where the touching or threat is of a portion of the complainant’s body, or by use of part of the assailant’s body, which gives rise to that connotation: *R v Harkin* (1989) 38 A Crim R 296 at 301. However, if the assault does not unequivocally offer a sexual connotation, the Crown must show that the accused’s conduct was accompanied by an intention to obtain sexual gratification”

For those who plead guilty or are found guilty of indecent assault, the court can impose any one of the following penalties:

- A ‘section 10’, which means guilty but no criminal record. This may be accompanied by a good behaviour bond.
- A fine.
- A ‘section 9’ good behaviour bond, which comes with a criminal record.
- A community service order.
- An intensive correction order.
- A suspended sentence; or
- Prison.

The applicable penalty will depend on a range of factors, including the seriousness of the conduct, whether a plea of guilty was entered, the defendant’s age, any mental condition/s suffered, demonstrated remorse, the likelihood of committing further offences etc.

Woman who are using taxis alone are advised to sit in the back seat, and to immediately report any untoward advances to the relevant taxi company and authorities after recording the driver’s details.

'F*** Fred Nile', 'Bigots F*** Off': Protesters Found Not Guilty of Offensive Language

There is no list of words which are considered to be '[offensive](#)' under NSW law.

Whether a word or phrase is offensive depends on the context in which it is used, and whether it would 'wound the feelings, arouse anger or resentment or outrage in the mind of a reasonable person.'

The words must be said in or near a public place or school to constitute offensive language under the law.

Sydney Protest

In September 2015, Christian Democratic Party leader MP Fred Nile led a protest in Sydney against proposed same-sex marriage laws.

A [counter protest](#) was conducted at the same time by members and supporters of activist group Community Action Against Homophobia (CAAH).

During the protest, CAAH convenors Cat Rose and Patrick Wright were issued with [criminal infringement notices](#) (CINs) for offensive language after chanting 'fuck Fred Nile' and 'bigots fuck off'.

CAAH member and LGBTI Officer for the National Union of Students, April Holcombe, received a CIN days after the event

for saying:

“We need to make a stand against them and make sure us using bad language about the fuckers is nothing compared to the epidemic of suicides there people contribute to”.

Ms Holcombe later said:

“I was called 48 hours after the protest to be told that I had sworn, that this was on police footage, and that my \$500 fine was in the mail... The police are keeping tabs on protesters and trying to intimidate them with shady penalty notices”.

Police then realised the CINs were invalid because they cannot be issued during a genuine demonstration or protest.

They then issued Court Attendance Notices instead.

In Court

The case reached a defended hearing before Magistrate Bradd in Downing Centre Local court yesterday, where the trio faced fines of up to \$660 and criminal records.

The court heard Ms Rose told police that “fuck off is part of the common vernacular”, to which police responded “it’s not part of children’s vernacular” – implying kids were around.

In delivering judgment, His Honour said there was no evidence Ms Rose used the phrase “fuck off” when speaking to police – which may have amounted to offensive language.

He noted that whether the word “fuck” is part of a child’s vernacular “depends on the words that a child listens to from others”.

He remarked that phrases like “you fucking beauty” and “fucking hell” are unlikely to be held offensive in this day and age.

His Honour found that the phrase “fuck Fred Nile” was used to

dismiss an argument against marriage equality, and was not sufficient to wound the feelings, arouse anger, resentment, disgust or outrage in the mind of a reasonable person.

He found all three defendants not guilty of the charge.

The Aftermath

After court, Mr Wright declared:

“This is a big win for free speech and the right to protest... the police have attempted to scare marriage equality activists out of speaking up against bigotry. They have failed.”

Ms Rose stated:

“... with marriage equality still banned by law, the homophobes haven't been defeated. We'll keep protesting until we have our rights, and you can expect a few f-bombs along the way.”

Ms Hearn's solicitor added that offensive language laws have:

“for too long been used as a social control applied disproportionately against marginalised and vulnerable people”.

It seems the NSW government may still have some way to go before completely silencing the voices of protesters.

The next marriage equality rally will be held on 26 November at Sydney Town Hall.

Getting Out of Jury Duty

Serving on a jury can be a rewarding experience, but more than that, it's also a chance for any Australian citizen over the age of 18 to directly take part in the legal process.

The role of the jury

The [role of a jury is to hear evidence and then apply the law](#) as directed by the judge, to decide if a person is guilty or not guilty of a particular crime they've been accused of. The jury's decision is called a 'verdict'.

In New South Wales, juries do not participate in the sentencing process.

If you are summoned, you must to attend court at a certain time on a certain date. A summons is a legal document so unless you have express permission not to partake, you need to attend court when you're required to do so, or you may face a hefty fine.

But even if you do attend court, you might not be chosen as part of a jury. And there are many reasons for this. Only a small portion of people who attend court for jury duty actually end up as part of a jury in a court room.

The most recent statistics released by the Office of the NSW Sheriff are from the year 2014-2015. They suggest that 278,000 citizens were selected throughout the state to be on the jury roll, but only 58,000 were actually required to attend court. Of those, 7050 actually served on a jury.

Reasons for asking to be excused

In the same year, [the following excuses were knocked-back:](#)

- "I need to look after my cat,"
- "I'm allergic to air conditioning" and

- “I’m scared of buses and trains and have no one to drive me to court”.

However, the legal system can be understanding if you have a pressing reason, such as you own your own business and are indispensable to its day-to-day operations, or if you work in the system itself (lawyers, judges, police and politicians are not permitted to serve on juries).

If you attend court and realise you know the judge, one of the lawyers, the defendant, complainant or one of the witnesses, this is normally a valid reason for being excused.

People who are ineligible for jury duty include anyone who:

- has served time in prison in the previous 10 years,
- has been detained in a detention centre or other juvenile facility (excluding for a failure to pay a fine), or
- is currently bound by a court order that relates to a criminal charge or conviction; such as bail, a good behaviour bond, parole order, community service order, apprehended violence order or disqualification from driving.

If you fall into one of those categories, you can write to the Sheriffs department asking to be excused from jury duty even before attending court.

Otherwise, you can inform the Sheriff at court about your reasons for requesting to be excused – which may be decided in court by the judge.

‘Exemption’ versus ‘excused’

Some people can apply for exemptions from jury duty. If you work in emergency services or are a full-time carer, a member of the clergy or live a very long way from any courthouse, you may apply for an exemption, which, if granted, means you will

not be chosen for jury duty for a specified period of time.

However, if you are chosen you will need to apply [to be 'excused'](#). This is different altogether, but illness, disability and work commitments, as well as pre-booked and paid for holidays may be valid reasons for being excused, so long as you can provide suitable evidence. Again, you may write to the Sheriffs department advising them of your reasons before attending court, or wait until you get to court to apply.

A change of address may also be a valid reason, especially if you are no longer in the state where you are required for jury duty. However, if you don't keep your address details up to date and therefore don't receive the summons, you may nevertheless be fined.

Jurors get paid

It's worth noting that jurors [get paid for their services](#), and there are travel allowances in some circumstances, and meals provided too.

The average trial in New South Wales is about 7 days long. If you're summoned, then remember how important it is to partake in this civic duty, especially for the ongoing benefit of the system itself.

Besides, it could be one of the most interesting experiences you'll ever have.

To Walk, or Not to Walk –

When is Jaywalking an Offence in NSW?

In recent years, police have carried out several operations targeting jaywalking, including the ongoing '[Operation Franklin](#)' in the Sydney CBD, which have resulted in [over 10,000 infringement notices](#) being issued to alleged jaywalkers and netted hundreds of thousands of dollars.

For those going to [Downing Centre Court](#), police can often be seen on bicycles near the court complex waiting to nab unsuspecting pedestrians.

But what does the law say about crossing the road in NSW? And how can you avoid being fined?

Here's a summary of the main rules:

Crossing a road at pedestrian lights

[Regulation 231](#) of the NSW Road Rules 2014 says you can only start crossing at pedestrian lights (eg the red or green man) if the light is green.

If the light turns red, or flashing red, while you are already on the road, you must "not stay on the road for longer than necessary".

The fine for disobeying this rule is [currently \\$72](#), or a maximum of \$2,200 if you choose to fight the case in court and lose.

Crossing a road at traffic lights

[Regulation 232](#) says you can only start crossing the road at traffic lights – where there are no pedestrian lights – if the traffic lights are green or flashing yellow, or there is no red light showing.

If the traffic lights turn red or yellow while you are already on the road, you must not stay on the road for longer than necessary.

Crossing the road when the traffic light is red or yellow comes with a fine of \$72, or up to \$2,200 if you challenge the case in court and are unsuccessful.

Crossing the road on or near a crossing

[Regulation 234](#) makes it an offence to cross a road within 20 metres of a crossing (eg 20 metres of where there are traffic or pedestrian lights) unless you are:

- (a) crossing, or helping another pedestrian to cross, an area of the road between tram tracks and the far left side of the road to get on, or after getting off, a tram or public bus, or
- (b) crossing to or from a safety zone, or
- (c) crossing at an intersection with traffic lights and a pedestrians may cross diagonally sign, or
- (d) crossing in a shared zone, or
- (e) crossing a road, or a part of a road, from which vehicles are excluded, either permanently or temporarily.

If you are more than 20 metres from a crossing, you must not stay on the road longer than necessary.

Again, the offence comes with a fine of \$72, or up to \$2,200 if contested in court.

Causing a hazard or obstruction

[Regulation 236](#) makes it an offence to “cause a traffic hazard by moving into the path of a driver’ or “unreasonably obstruct[ing] the path or any driver or another pedestrian”.

The penalties are the same as the previous offences.

So, the bottom line is:

- You can only start crossing a road at a pedestrian light if the 'man' is green,
- You can only start crossing a road at traffic lights (where there are no pedestrian lights) if the lights are green or flashing yellow,
- You are allowed to cross a road if you are more than 20 metres away from lights,
- You must get to the other side of the road in a timely manner, and
- You must not cause a hazard or obstruction to drivers or other pedestrians.

“Major Inconsistencies” in Police Accounts of Fatal Shooting

On 18th November 2009, 36-year-old mentally ill man Adam Salter was [shot in the back by NSW Police Sergeant Sheree Bissett](#) at his Lakemba home, dying as a result.

Four police officers had responded a short time earlier to a triple-zero call by Adam's father, Adrian Salter, who reported that his son had been threatening to stab himself with a knife.

The four officers – Sergeant Bissett, Sergeant Emily Metcalfe, Senior Constable Leah Wilson, and Constable Aaron Abela – are

currently on trial before a Judge-alone in [Downing Centre District Court](#) for allegedly giving false evidence to the 2012 Police Integrity Commission (PIC) inquiry into Adam's death.

The District Court has heard evidence from Adrian Salter that at the time of the incident, his son was being treated by ambulance officer on the floor of the kitchen when he got to his feet and moved towards the sink where there was a knife.

"When Adam got to his feet, nobody stopped him. I didn't understand why there was a room full of trained people and nobody stopped him," Mr Salter said.

The concerned father rushed into the kitchen in order to stop his son from grabbing the knife.

"I did try to put my arms around him but he fended me off. I couldn't grab hold of him."

The father became tangled in cords and fell to the kitchen floor, before police shot his son in the back.

"I heard 'taser, taser' – I heard the words twice – and then I heard the bang", he testified.

That evidence was consistent with his initial statement to police and the statements of the treating paramedics – but police gave different versions of the events.

Immediately after the shooting, officers Bissett and Metcalfe were seen talking to one another and smoking on the footpath opposite the Salters' home, while officers Abela and Wilson were also talking to each other on the front porch.

Police Integrity Commission

During the PIC inquiry, the officers gave versions of events that were significantly different to the consistent accounts given by the ambulance officers and Mr

Salter's father.

Sergeant Bissett claimed Constable Abela was "struggling" with Adam who had lunged towards him.

Constable Abela's version was different – that there was some contact with Adam, but it was "just an instantaneous reaction where my arm just came out to stop him". He then proceeded to state that he grabbed the Adam's left arm in two places – just above the elbow with his right hand and just below the elbow with his left.

Officer Wilson's testimony was different again – that officer Abela placed his right hand on Adam's shoulder before Bissett fired the fatal shot.

Officer Metcalfe's evidence was different once again – that Abela was holding Adam around his upper torso when the shot was fired.

Due to these and other inconsistencies, the officers were charged with lying to the PIC.

Police Cover-Up

The PIC was highly critical of the police investigation which followed, finding that the evidence of the ambulance officers was excluded or ignored in an attempt to prevent embarrassment to the police force and conceal Sergeant Bissett's conduct.

The PIC recommended that veteran Homicide Detective Inspector Russell Oxford face disciplinary action over the way he handled the investigation, and that Inspector Matthew Hanlon and Detective Inspector Stephen Tedder also face action for their involvement in preparing misleading reports and documentation.

The Coroner described the police response as [an 'utter failure'](#), finding that "Police killed the person they were supposed to be helping,"

At Trial

In Court, Crown Prosecutor Nannette Williams highlighted the fact that the officers' versions were both inconsistent with one another, and with the evidence of the other eye-witnesses at the scene.

She pointed out that the accused are all experienced police officers, that "[i]t is their job, their profession, to get evidence right," that they were all in close proximity to the incident and yet "in this important matter their accounts do not align."

She said it was obvious the officers "got their heads together" immediately after the incident and agreed to lie by saying the fatal shot was fired because Adam was a threat to officer Abela – although they did not get a chance to sort out the finer details of their lie.

She described Metcalfe's "deliberately vague" testimony as an attempt to avoid locking herself "into a version which may quickly be exposed as a lie".

"For a trained and experienced police officer, those words don't ring true," she told the Court.

Ms Williams also highlighted the "consistency of omi[tting]" any reference to Adam's father's presence inside the kitchen.

"Not one police officer put Mr Adrian Salter in the room because to do so would expose the lie within their evidence to the Police Integrity Commission that it was Constable Abela who had attempted to restrain Adam," she said.

She stressed the fact that the father's account was consistent with the ambulance officers who were present and witnessed the incident.

"The combination of that evidence clearly gives the lie to the police accounts," she submitted.

Who You Gonna Call?

The accused are each represented by experienced criminal defence barristers, including [Raymond Hood](#) who attempted to counter the prosecution case by saying the incident was very quick, and that the officers cannot be expected to observe every detail.

The barristers [cross-examined Adrian Salter at length](#), attempting to elicit inconsistencies in his evidence – but the best they could get was that Mr Salter was unsure of how many times the word “taser” was used or whether his son had been shot or tasered.

The trial continues before Justice Greg Woods

Police Ordered to Pay Protester's Legal Costs

It's taken a year, but a Magistrate in [Downing Centre Local Court](#) has found in favour of protester Simone White, who was manhandled, arrested and falsely charged by Sydney police officers.

The Magistrate also ordered police to pay Ms White's legal costs, due to the improper nature of her arrest, the investigation and subsequent prosecution.

The Court heard that officers grabbed Ms White's breasts and neck, then covered up their actions by deleting evidence, making up a false charge against her, lying under oath and attacking her in court.

The Incident

Simone White was one of hundreds of [protesters](#) rallying at an anti-Reclaim Australia protest in Martin Place last July. She said an officer groped her breasts in a jostle with the crowd and another grabbed her neck as they walked behind her, resulting in bruising.

Ms White turned to take a photo of the officer who had grasped her breasts, and as she was doing so, she was manhandled and arrested by that officer, Senior Constable John Wasko.

White was taken to a mobile police station where a female officer confiscated her phone, saying it was necessary to identify her, despite the fact she had already produced a bank card as identification.

When her phone was eventually returned, the photos of the officer who groped her breasts had been deleted.

The arresting officer, Senior Constable Wasko, claimed Ms White assaulted him in the execution of his duty. He alleged that, as a line of police were shepherding protesters through Martin Place, Ms White turned back at him with her elbow up.

The police case against Ms White relied entirely on Senior Constable Wasko's claim, and was not supported by footage from CCTV cameras in Martin Place or the many police officers who were filming the rally.

CCTV tells a different story

White's legal team subpoenaed footage from the police, which showed her being pushed and shoved by Senior Constable Wasko as the protesters walked through Martin Place, but did not show her assaulting or attempting to assault him at all.

Ms White can also be seen holding a water bottle in one hand, which the Magistrate found made the allegation of raising her elbow at Senior Constable Wasko "inconsistent".

The footage also showed Ms White taking a photo of the officer

on her phone, suggesting evidence was indeed deleted by police.

The Magistrate found that the "evidence strongly indicates" Ms White was indecently assaulted as she alleged. Medical records also showed bruising on Ms White's breasts.

Despite the evidence, the police prosecutor repeatedly accused Ms White of lying.

Her [barrister, Phillip Boulten, SC, told the court](#) on Tuesday that police had "escaped any form of investigation for perverting the course of justice".

"The only reason why [the photo] would be deleted would be to make it more difficult for the complainant to say something in court," he said.

In handing down his judgement, Magistrate Geoffrey Bradd [let police know of his dissatisfaction](#), finding they had investigated the case in "an unreasonable and improper manner," and awarding Ms White \$13,400 in legal costs.

Outside court, Ms White said she was relieved her legal battle was over.

Her solicitor, Lydia Shelly, said: *"This decision sends a very clear message to the police. It is not a criminal offence to protest nor is it an offence to film police if you are not hindering their duties. The NSW public expect more from NSW Police."*

The NSW Police Force says it will review the circumstances surrounding the incident. The officers involved are yet to be reprimanded, and if the Force's track record is anything to go by, it is unlikely they will be.

Man Plans to Sue NSW Police After Kings Cross Brawl

One of the men allegedly involved in a recent Kings Cross brawl during which six people were arrested says he will fight the charges against him and take [legal action against](#) NSW Police, whose tactics left him on crutches and unable to work.

Nari Rossi-Murray was one of those arrested, although he is not the only one who believes police acted with 'overwhelming force'.

Police were patrolling the area, which, until the government's 'lock out laws' came into effect, was notorious for drunken behaviour, when a fight broke out.

Officers initially used capsicum spray to subdue the altercation, but bystanders who captured the incident on their mobile phones say police then began assaulting those involved.

[Witnesses captured](#) Mr Murray being kned to the head at least three times just after saying "I haven't done nothing".

Murray says he will be using mobile phone video, photos and CCTV footage as evidence to defend charges brought against him, and to support his case against police.

He says while he understands and respects that police have a job to do, their actions were 'extreme' in this instance.

Police Brutality

The incident has bought the issue of [police brutality](#) into the spotlight once again, particularly the question of reasonable force when it comes to making an arrest.

There are laws and guidelines police must follow when making an arrest; for example, [section 231](#) of the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act 2002 says:

“A police officer or other person who exercises a power to arrest another person may use such force as is reasonably necessary to make the arrest or to prevent the escape of the person after arrest.”

The use of excessive force constitutes assault, whether exercised by police officers or anyone else. Heavy-handed tactics can also cause an incident to escalate, causing those being man-handled to use self-defensive actions in an attempt to repel the attack.

All six of those involved were arrested and taken to Kings Cross police station, where they were charged with various offences including resisting arrest, assaulting police, offensive language, offensive conduct and hindering police.

Action Against Police

Anyone who believes they have been wrongfully arrested, mistreated or assaulted by police can lodge a [formal complaint](#) through the [Customer Assistance Office](#), providing as much information as possible.

However, police are notorious for clearing their own of misconduct during internal ‘investigations’. Another option is to make a complaint to the [NSW Ombudsman](#), however, he receives in excess of 3,000 complaints against police every year and is powerless to discipline, let alone prosecute police officers.

This leaves the option of civil proceedings against police, which can be expensive and time-consuming; but those who have exhausted all other avenues may feel this is their only viable option.

Mr Murray and his alleged co-offenders are due to appear in

[Downing Centre Court](#) on May 31.

What Happened During the Downing Centre Machete Scare?

Sydney's Downing Centre Court complex was [placed in lockdown late last month](#), after a man walked inside carrying a large black machete.

The man in his 20s, was seen walking over from nearby Hyde Park, where it is believed he was involved in an altercation, before entering the court at around 10am and allegedly yelling at people to "get on the ground".

A few minutes later, he was lying in the ground, surrounded by police officers. During the incident, a police officer drew her gun and pointed it at the man.

"That's when I decided I was going down on to the floor," a staff member told AAP.

During the incident, those in the building were told to stay on the ground, with some choosing to hide under their desks for added safety.

Moments later three police arrived, handcuffed the young man and marched him from the building, putting him in the back of a police wagon and driving off.

A police spokeswoman yesterday said Sheriff's officers, who are responsible for court security, had called for backup when the man, 20, began yelling and ordering people to the ground.

The lockdown meant that all doors to the court were locked,

but police did not start evacuating the building because the situation was quickly brought under control. The doors were reopened shortly after the arrest, and hearings had resumed as normal by 11am.

Police told the [Daily Telegraph](#) the man would undergo a mental health assessment before they considered laying charges.

Increased Security at the Downing Centre

This is not the first time security has become an issue at the Downing Centre. The courthouse has been a target in the past, due to the heated nature of many cases.

Last year, the court was swarmed by members of the New South Wales riot squad and tactical officer units, following a tip-off that that a [“disruption” was going to occur at a trial](#). The proceedings concerned an armed robbery that allegedly occurred outside Broadway Shopping Centre in 2013. According to the tip, the defendant’s associates were planning to perform a drive-by shooting outside the court.

Currently, everyone coming into the courthouse is required to walk through a metal detector, and have their bags x-rayed, before being allowed entry into the complex. Last year, the New South Wales Government [beefed-up security at the Downing Centre](#) by providing it with additional Sheriff's Officers as part of their counterterrorism measures.

The Sheriffs are responsible for court security, scanning those entering the complex and confiscating prohibited items, requesting identification, and [arresting anyone who commits violent or contemptuous acts](#).

Sheriff's Officers were given greater powers of arrest last year, after [Ali Hussein Chahine jumped the dock](#) at the Downing Centre in October and assaulted two corrective services officers before escaping barefoot on a bus.

New South Wales Attorney-General Gabrielle Upton said that change "will assist security officers to perform their role of protecting court personnel and court users more effectively."

However, the Opposition has questioned the effectiveness of the new powers, as budget cuts have left courts across the state with a massive shortfall in the number of sheriffs.

As of December last year, the Government only employed 230 Sheriffs to cover its 154 local courts, which require two officers per court per sitting day. According to Shadow Attorney-General Paul Lynch, some regional courts are being left without Sheriffs on duty, leaving them vulnerable to attack.

Things to Keep in Mind if Going to Court

Security officers have the [power to confiscate](#) anything they believe is a restricted item or offensive implement. 'Offensive implement' covers a very broad category, including anything that could be used to cause damage or injury to a person.

Although it might seem a bit over-the-top, this means they can confiscate many things that you might not consider to be a threat. Examples include keychain pocket knives and scissors.

It is an offence to film or take photos inside a courthouse without permission. Security officers are permitted to [confiscate any recording device](#), including its film, along with anything else that's been used to unlawfully record. This is to protect the safety and identity of those involved in cases.

Sheriff's Officers may ask for your name and address, if this is unknown and if they believe on reasonable grounds that you are carrying a restricted item or have committed an offence. They are required to show their identification before exercising powers of confiscation. They're also required to

provide the reasons for exercising power, and a warning that refusal to comply may be an offence.

Any confiscated items must either be returned to you when you leave the courthouse, unless they are deemed illegal and required as evidence.

[Another Police Brutality Case Before Downing Centre Court](#)

Police brutality is a serious issue around Australia, with cases of vicious and dangerous assaults by members of police forces being regularly captured on smartphones and reported in social and mainstream media.

Just last week, a senior police officer appeared before Sydney's Downing Centre Local Court charged with Assault Occasioning Actual Bodily harm – an offence which carries a maximum penalty of 5 years imprisonment, or 2 years in the Local Court.

Leading Senior Constable Shaun Moylan from Dee Why police station on Sydney's Northern Beaches, is alleged to have [brutally assaulted a man in police custody in April 2015](#).

32-year-old Mark Adamski was arrested on Anzac Day for an alleged domestic assault at Narrabeen. He was taken to Dee Why police station, where it is alleged he was assaulted by LSC Moylan in the charge room.

It is alleged the Constable became verbally abusive towards Mr Adamski, then violently pushed him backwards twice, causing him to hit his head on a concrete wall. During the second

push, Moylan also grabbed Adamski around the throat.

Mr Adamski suffered injuries to his head and neck as a result of the assault. He repeatedly pleaded with police to call an ambulance, but no medical help was offered. Mr Adamski instead had to catch a bus to Manly Hospital following his release.

CCTV footage played in court captured the incident – and Mr Adamski’s version of events was supported by other police officers who witnessed the attack.

One of the officers, Senior Constable Daniel Gill, testified that Moylan had ‘cupped his hand’ around Adamski’s throat when pushing him the second time. He described the force used by the officer as ‘significant,’ and conceded that Adamski had requested medical attention.

Another officer, Constable Brendon Kitchener, told the court that he was so concerned with the force used that he reported it to other colleagues.

Yet Constable Moylan maintains his innocence, with his lawyer suggesting to Mr Adamski in cross-examination that he ‘downplayed [his] role significantly’ and ‘exaggerated [Moylan’s] role’ – statements which Mr Adamski has strenuously denied.

The hearing has been adjourned to a later date, where Mr Moylan’s fate will ultimately be determined by Local Court Magistrate Susan McIntyre. In the meantime, he has been suspended from duty on full pay.

Mr Adamski, on the other hand, has been found not guilty of all charges brought against him.

Other Police Brutality Cases at Downing Centre Court

The Downing Centre has heard several cases in recent times involving allegations of [police brutality and misconduct](#).

In 2014, Magistrate Michael Barko determined that police had used [excessive force in apprehending 18-year-old Jamie Jackson Reed](#) during the annual Mardi Gras parade.

Mr Reed made headlines after video went viral of a Sydney police officer slamming his head into the concrete pavement and stepping on his back.

But it was Mr Reed – rather than the officer behind the brutal attack – who was charged with assault.

In dismissing the charges against Mr Reed and awarding him \$40,000 in costs, Magistrate Barko noted that he had been 'brutalised' by police.

And, just days ago, another police officer, who cannot be named for legal reasons, [appeared before the Downing Centre court charged with numerous assaults and stalk/intimidate](#) for incidents involving his now ex-wife.

The officer is alleged to have repeatedly abused and threatened his former partner – a domestic violence liaison officer – over several years, telling her that she would not be believed if she reported her concerns to police.

That hearing has been adjourned until May.