

Court Justice, Sydney 6: Drugs and the Law

This week's episode of Court Justice, Sydney dealt with drug-related crimes.

While drug use is nothing new in Australia, the magistrates in Downing Centre Local Court say they are dealing with more ice-related crimes than ever before.

Of the four cases before the court this week, two relate to ice, the third to possession of cocaine, and the fourth demonstrated just how hard it can be to put a life back together after it's been affected by addiction.

Case one:

Paul Farah, a 24-year old plumber, was caught [driving under the influence of an illicit substance](#). When pulled over, police also found 0.7grams of ice hidden in a bag of grapes, resulting in an additional charge of [drug possession](#).

Paul pleaded guilty to both charges and came before Magistrate Wahlquist in Downing Centre Local Court.

Paul has had a drug addiction for about three years. His problem is so severe that his employer deposits his salary into his parents' bank account, who give him a small living allowance.

Paul lives at home with his parents and his concerned father, Michael, has turned up to support his son in court.

Paul was already on a Section 9 good behavior bond at the time of the offences, for being in possession of ecstasy. The latest offences are therefore a breach of that bond.

Paul's defence encouraged his client to find a rehabilitation

facility and begin to deal with his addiction, and he ensures that Paul undertakes urine testing weekly to prove he has remained clean.

In the result, the Magistrate records convictions against Paul for the offences. He is fined \$700 and disqualified from driving for 7 months for the drug driving offence, and fined \$300 for drug possession.

Case two:

54-year old tradesman Dean Matthews pleaded guilty before Judge Henson to possession of 0.2 grams of cocaine, and represented himself.

Police pulled up behind his car and found a small quantity of cocaine within. Matthews admitted that his decision to purchase the drug was out of 'stupidity'.

Judge Henson exercised his discretion under a non conviction order of the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act not to record a conviction against Matthews' name – instead placing him on an 18-month good behaviour bond.

Case three:

Adam Reynolds a long-term drug user with an equally long history of court appearances.

Police attended Reynolds' home after claims of a burglary. On arrival, they saw Reynolds injecting himself with drugs. When told by police to stop, Reynolds responded "I'm allowed to drugs in my own house."

Reynolds pleaded guilty to drug possession before Magistrate Grogan who pointed out that it is not legal to use illicit drugs anywhere.

His Honour recorded a conviction and fined Reynolds \$800.

Case four:

Magistrate Milledge heard the case of Anastacia Downes, a former drug user who is trying to turn her life around.

Downes has an extensive criminal history including fraud and property offences, and pleaded guilty to five traffic offences including [driving whilst suspended](#), driving an unregistered motor vehicle, driving with incorrect number plates and driving an uninsured motor vehicle, each of which carry a maximum penalty of \$2,200.

Downes' drug addiction cost her a great deal – her marriage, her children, her livelihood. However, the Magistrate showed compassion after hearing that Downes has remained conviction-free since 2007 and is trying to get her life back together.

Downes' is fined \$50 for each of three traffic offences, and disqualified from driving for 3 months for driving whilst suspended.

Anastacia was grateful for the outcome. "I really felt that the Magistrate showed a lot of empathy... she showed genuine interest in what she had in front of her. She has given me an out."