

Downing Centre Local Court List Boasts Unusual and High Profile Visitors

Downing Centre Local Court may just be a humble local courthouse but its magistrates have presided over many cases involving big names, or unlikely characters.

While most of those whose names grace the criminal part of the local court list are there for minor misdemeanours and less serious charges, many an interesting case has been decided, or at least commenced, within its walls.

It was the courthouse where former judge Marcus Einfeld first argued that his speeding ticket was acquired by a friend – and [almost got away with it](#).

Had it not been for two vigilant journalists who followed the case and then researched who Teresa Brennan was to check the spelling of her name, it is very possible that this judge's lie would never have come to light.

After they found out she had died, the case hit the press. Soon everyone in Australia knew that instead of paying a \$77 fine and losing three demerit points, Einfeld chose to tell the court first that his US-based (and dead) friend Theresa Brennan was actually driving his car. After he was confronted with the fact that she was dead, he claimed it was another US-based (and unfortunately, also deceased) Teresa Brennan who had been responsible.

His very public trial and two year stint in Silverwater Jail demonstrated once and for all, if nothing else, that if you are going to cover up your own misdemeanours, it is a good idea to check that the person (and especially not two) that you intend on blaming isn't actually dead first.

Although the bar association struck him off as not a 'fit and proper person' this former judge, once dubbed a 'national living treasure' can retire on the comfortable tax-payer funded pension to the tune of \$184,000 – apparently no one setting up the scheme had thought that a judge would end up a common criminal.

Einfeld is, however, not the first judge to appear on the other side of the bench in the Downing Centre courthouse – back in the late 1990s, New South Wales District Court judge came before the court on child sex charges but the case was later dropped.

A more unlikely suspect appearing on the Downing centre's local court list last year, and on a decidedly more trivial charge, was Garry, a goat.

The case [hit the papers](#), and the charge was as follows: eating flowers in central Sydney's Museum of Contemporary Art.

Garry came dressed in his finest for his day in court, sporting a colourful stripy hat and a black bow tie.

The magistrate showed clemency and dismissed the \$440 fine, as she couldn't find the requisite intention of vandalising vegetation.

Gary's lawyer said that the police issued the wrong infringement notice, because it didn't relate to goats, but people, and there was no way it could be proved that his owner had put him up to it.

More recently to hit the news is the star of TV show Hey Dad! Robert Hughes who appeared before the Downing Centre court earlier this year and was convicted of nine counts of sexual and indecent assault that took place back in the 1980s.

After the 29-day trial ended, Hughes was found guilty. The 65 year-old actor has been sentenced to jail for 10 years and

nine months full term with a 6 year non-parole period. The non-parole period is the time Hughes must spend in prison before being eligible to apply to get out on conditions (parole). Contrary to popular views, there is certainly no guarantee that parole will be granted after 6 years.

And nor is the court reserved just for dealing with the aftermath of crimes – it has seen some action one spectator likened to a ‘football match.’ One recent case to hit the local court list ended in an out and out brawl between police and a family, three of whom featured on [the Downing Centre Local Court list](#) that day, accused (and convicted) of brawling with police outside their Bankstown home.

The Downing Centre is definitely not a local court that could be called ‘boring’!