

Father Bashes Child Sex Offender in Downing Centre Court

Courthouses are places where you might expect people to be on their best behaviour. At the same time, the courtroom can be a tense and stressful place for all involved, including their families.

While court is not the best place to let your anger take over, not everyone succeeds in keeping their cool when emotions run high.

Father Attacks Child's Abuser

Just last week, the Downing Centre District Court was at the centre of unanticipated drama when a [defendant was attacked while sitting in the dock](#).

The 64-year-old defendant, who cannot be named, was convicted of sexually assaulting a five-year-old girl. He faced four charges of "aggravated sexual assault of a child under 10" and was convicted of two of them, before being sentenced to imprisonment

[Section 66A of the Crimes Act 1900](#) (NSW) sets down a maximum penalty of life imprisonment for the sexual assault of a child under the age of 10 years. Although the defendant did not receive a life sentence, he will not be eligible for release from prison until 2023.

The Presiding Judge had just finished handing down his sentence, when the little girl's father leapt over a banister and a bench before arriving at the dock area and punching the defendant several times in the face. He had to be dragged away by five people.

The defendant cowered in the dock, repeating the words: "I am innocent." To add to the drama, the defendant's wife called the girl's mother a "liar and a bitch". The mother returned fire, lunging at the wife and allegedly punching her in the face.

The Judge is reported to have sat there emotionless, not uttering a word. He is said to have waited for the defendant to be escorted away, before leaving the courtroom himself.

It remains to be seen whether the parents will face charges as a result of their actions.

Fights at Courthouses

This couple are by no means the only ones to attract attention for physical fights inside the Downing Centre.

In fact, level four of the courthouse was the scene of another dramatic fight last year between police and a family of three men who, ironically, were themselves on trial for brawling with police.

A riot squad was called in to break up the fight, which one witness described as a "football match."

And earlier this year in Melbourne, [a fight between two families caused an entire floor of Melbourne's busiest courthouse to close](#). The families knew each other well, having a history of altercations. Court officers subdued the fighting men using capsicum spray, which unfortunately also affected innocent bystanders, including several young children.

One of the brawling men is a kick-boxer who calls himself "the punisher". Four men were later arrested and questioned over the fight.

What Does the Law Say About Fighting in Court?

You probably won't be surprised that brawling in court is

against the law. Possible charges include “common assault” (where no injuries, or only trivial ones, are caused) “assault occasioning actual bodily harm” (where injuries are caused), “affray” (which involves the use or threat of unlawful violence) and “contempt of court”.

Contempt of court can involve any act which has the tendency to interfere with, or undermine, the authority, performance or dignity of those who participate in court proceedings.

Contempt of court can potentially include refusing to leave court when directed to do so, refusing to answer questions on the witness stand, showing serious disrespect to the court, and a wide range of other conduct. Engaging in physical violence during court proceedings could certainly form the basis of contempt charges.

So there you have it – real courtroom dramas and the potential consequences.