

Man Who Sold Fatal Ecstasy Learns His Fate

Over ten thousand drug cases are heard in Local Courts around NSW every year, including the Downing Centre court in Sydney – which is the busiest courthouse in the state. In 2014 alone 13,639 people were found guilty of drug possession in NSW, which makes it the third-most common criminal offence, ranking behind drink driving/DUI and common assault, according to the [Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research](#).

Last year, the tragic death of teenager Georgina Bartter showed that taking pills that are produced by strangers – often with deadly “fillers” – is not only against the law, but can be fatal.

Ms Bartter died in hospital from a cardiac arrest after consuming one and a half of pills sold as ecstasy at a music festival.

Recently, the man who sold these fatal pills faced the music in the Downing Centre District Court.

19-year-old university student Matthew Forti didn't sell the drugs directly to Bartter, but to her friend, Rebecca Hannibal, who was sentenced in the Downing Centre courthouse year in June. Hannibal received a criminal record and a good behaviour bond for 12 months.

However, Forti would not be so lucky when it came to avoiding prison time. Before the Judge handed down her sentence, the court heard that even after Ms Bartter's death, Forti had [continued to sell drugs](#).

Texts to Ms Hannibal suggested that he felt bad after the tragedy, but this was not enough to prevent him from continuing to sell drugs to friends and acquaintances on

several occasions.

Mr Forti said that his involvement with drugs began when his parents' marriage broke down in 2014, and the Judge accepted that Forti was "essentially a positive young man who went astray for a while."

Her Honour noted that Forti was not legally responsible for Bartter's death – which was the same comment made by Chief Magistrate Henson when he sentenced Hannibal in the local court back in June.

Mr Forti's criminal lawyer argued that his client had excellent prospects of rehabilitation, which is something that judges take into account during the sentencing process. The lawyer argued for a good behaviour bond, community service or an "intensive correction order" instead of full time imprisonment.

But District Court Judge Deborah Sweeney came to the conclusion that prison was the only appropriate penalty for Mr Forti, saying that "despite his positive character and demonstration of remorse he is to serve some time in custody."

But like other defendants who enter an early plea of guilty, Forti received a 25% discount on his sentence. [He was given a maximum of 22 months imprisonment](#), and will have to serve 12 months behind bars before being eligible for parole.

The maximum penalty that Forti could have received for each of the supply charges was 15 years imprisonment and/or a \$220,000 fine.

Forti is reported to have appeared "stunned" by the sentence, while his mother and girlfriend cried. He was allowed to hug them before being taken away by corrective service officers.

I've been charged with a drug offence: what should I do?

With 7 levels of courtrooms, the Downing Centre courthouse in

Sydney hears all kinds of drug cases each year.

If you are facing drug charges, you are certainly not alone. The first step is to contact law firms that have a proven track record of achieving outstanding outcomes in drug cases. Many firms offer a first free conference if you have an upcoming court date, so you can find out your options, the best way forward and the likely result before deciding whether to hand them your hard-earned money.

Take the time to have a look through the recent cases and client testimonials on their websites, and it is a good idea to see several law firms before deciding which one is right for you.