

What to Expect When You Go to Downing Centre Court

Going to court can be an intimidating experience, particularly if you have never been to one before. Knowing what to expect before you walk in the door can help alleviate some of your worries, and make you feel more confident during what is for most people an upsetting and stressful time in their lives. Whether you go to a large court like [Downing Centre Court](#), or a smaller regional courthouse, the procedure is much the same.

Downing Centre Court is both a local and district court, which means that it deals with less serious matters, and with complex criminal trials. Cases can be presided over by a magistrate or judge if it's a local court matter, or a judge and jury if the matter is before the district court.

When you arrive

Downing Centre Court, like many other courthouses, has a number of different courtrooms. Make sure you arrive early, so you have time to find where you need to be without having to rush. A list of courtrooms and cases that are being heard should be in the foyer. When you arrive at the court complex, the first thing you will need to do is check which courtroom your case is being heard in, and make your way there.

Once you arrive at the right courtroom, there will be a court officer who will generally be identifiable by a badge or uniform. You will need to let them know you are there, and they might ask you a number of questions about your case. Once you have spoken to them, they will probably tell you to sit and wait until it is your turn.

In the courtroom

You will be called in to the courtroom when it is your turn. A

number of other people will be in the room, including the judge or magistrate, the prosecuting lawyer and your lawyer if you have one. Depending on the nature and severity of the case there might be other people present, such as members of the public or journalists.

Once you are before the court, you will need to let the judge or magistrate know whether you want to [plead guilty or not guilty](#). Make sure you stand up when you address the judge or magistrate – there will generally be a microphone to speak into. If you decide to plead guilty, the matter will probably be finalised that day unless it is highly complex or serious in nature.

If you choose to plead not guilty, the court will be adjourned, and you will be given a later date to have the matter heard. This is to give you and the prosecution both time to prepare your cases, and gather any evidence you might need. If you are unsure whether to plead guilty or not guilty, it is best to speak to a lawyer beforehand as how you plead on your first court appearance can make a big difference to the outcome of your case.

Although visiting a court house such as Downing Centre Court can be nerve wracking, it is best to try to stay as calm as possible. If a lawyer is representing you, they can help to guide you through the process and alleviate any of your concerns, as well as help you get the most positive outcome possible from your court hearing.

History of the Downing Centre

The Downing Centre was originally built as a department store for Mark Foy's in 1908.

Mark Foy's was taken over by Grace Brothers in 1980 who traded in the Centre until 1983.

The building was then converted into a court complex which opened in 1985.

It was named the 'Downing Centre' in 1991 after former Attorney General and Minister for Justice Reg Downing.

The Downing Centre contains 7 levels of courtrooms.

The Local Courts are situated on levels 4 & 5 and the District Courts are on the lower ground level up to level 3.

The Downing Centre is NSW's central court complex and is presided over by the Chief Judge of the NSW District Court, Justice Reg Blanch, and the Chief Magistrate of the NSW Local Court, Judge Graeme Henson.

It is a classically crafted building whose exterior comprises white bricks separated by yellow sills and cornices.

Its cultural significance is reflected in its listing on the Register of the National Estate.

All in all, the Downing Centre is a great place to work.

New Magistrates for the Downing Centre

There are a number of new Magistrates in the Downing Centre Local Court this year.

Magistrate Reiss has come from Ryde Local Court. He is an extremely thorough and careful Magistrate. He is frequently in

the Commonwealth Court 5.5 replacing Magistrate O'Shane.

Magistrate Milledge is from Waverley. She is fantastic. Very just and fair, especially towards those who are genuinely remorseful for criminal offences. She replaces Magistrate Barkell who had primarily been presiding over defended hearings.

And of course, there are Magistrates Buscombe, Stevenson and Favretto – a great new mix for 2013.