

Police on the Wrong Side of the Law in Downing Centre Local Court

In March this year, the tables were turned at the Downing Centre Local Court. This time, it was a former policeman who had to appear before a magistrate on charges of giving false evidence.

Former Northern Rivers senior police officer Shane Diehm was charged with giving false evidence during private hearings in 2011, along with several other officers.

After 10 adjournments, his case was heard on March 24. Footage was played in the courtroom, showing a motel party for the retirement of former Detective Superintendent John Alt. The police partied unaware that they were being filmed.

The Police Integrity Commission, which had its suspicions, had already arranged for the Queensland Crime and Misconduct Commission to put video surveillance video cameras in two Gold Coast hotel rooms before the party took place. There were suspicions that drugs were being obtained for the party.

This footage was central to the undercover investigation of drug use amongst Northern NSW police.

One of these rooms had been paid for by Diehm, a former Tweed/Byron inspector and other guests were police and former police, according to phone taps.

While his defence team admit he was at the party, they deny he was the one heard saying, in an alleged discussion about drugs "it takes three f***king months to get out of your system."

In the initial hearing, Diehm arrived at the Court supported by his family. During the hearing, he was seen taking notes

and shaking his head repeatedly as excerpts of the video from the night in question were played.

Another Tweed police officer was cleared of offences relating to the night in question. He was found not guilty of five counts of giving false or misleading information.

Diehm had a separate hearing and is expected to return in June.

For Diehm who was once one of the most senior police officers on the Northern Rivers, this was not the first run-in he has had with the law: he was discharged from the police force in 2012 following an alleged positive result to cocaine at a party in Sydney and was investigated during a targeted investigation of drug use in police ranks.

To read more about Diehm's March trial, [click here](#).

He is not the only police to be hitting the news for misbehaviour related to Downing Centre.

In April, level four of [the Downing Centre](#) actually saw a commotion described by one witness as 'a football match,' as dozens of police were involved in a public brawl with a family who were themselves on trial for brawling with police.

After three of the Mehanna family members were convicted of affray, resisting arrest and assaulting police during a fight outside their Bankstown home, the case was adjourned for sentencing.

The fight broke out as the family left the courtroom. One police officer was smacked in the face as one of the family members kept screaming, "this is police brutality!"

The riot squad was called and one member of the Mehanna family was taken into custody.

Police misbehaviour is not just confined to the Downing

Centre.

Earlier this year the [Daily Telegraph](#) reported the surprising statistic that one in every 40 serving police officers in the state has committed an offence (which equates to about 2.5%, or 437 officers in total).

This is up 230% over the past 5 years, although one police expert said that this is probably due to Police Commissioner Andrew Scipione cracking down on police misbehaviour and a focus on the police force prosecuting their own, rather than an actual increase of bad behaviour.

And while some NSW police chiefs may let their officers quietly resign when they were facing the courts, Scipione leaves any officers under him charged with an offence to face the criminal justice system.