

What Happens in Each Downing Centre Courtroom?

The Downing Centre is a large court complex located on Liverpool Street in the city.

While some smaller courthouses have just one or two courtrooms, the [Downing Centre](#) has dozens of courts distributed over seven levels.

The best thing to do when you arrive at the Downing Centre is to look for your allocated courtroom on the relevant noticeboard.

If you are going to the District Court, there will be a noticeboard straight ahead after you go through the security screening on ground floor.

If your case is in the Local Court, a noticeboard will be straight ahead after you exit the lifts on level 4.

District Court

The District courtrooms are located on five levels, from lower ground up to level 3.

Courtroom 3.1 – Short Matters List and Callover Court

Courtroom 3.1 is possibly the most crowded courtroom in the Downing Centre.

It deals with a range of short matters from adjournments, to 'callovers' (to determine whether trials are ready to proceed), to short appeals, applications for release (bail) and sentencing cases.

The Chief Judge will often sit in the courtroom and distribute cases to other District courtrooms.

But beware, even a relatively short court appearance can take a considerable amount of time when the queue in 3.1 is long.

The courtroom was also the scene of the [infamous Downing Centre escape by Ali Chahine](#) last year.

Other District courtrooms are often used for sentencing hearings, appeals and, of course, jury trials.

The Local Court

The Local courtrooms are located on levels 4 and 5 of the Downing Centre.

Courtroom 4.4 – Registrar’s Court

This is where many cases that come before the court for the first time will start off.

A registrar will sit on the bench (rather than a magistrate), and they will deal with procedural matters such as granting adjournments for legal advice, dealing with subpoenas, recording pleas of ‘guilty’ or ‘not guilty’, setting ‘timetables’ for police to serve the evidence upon the defence and listing cases for hearing.

If you wish to plead guilty and receive your penalty the same day, the Registrar will send your case to a magistrate in another court – usually courtroom 4.5 next door.

Courtroom 5.1 – Hearings List

If your case is listed for a defended hearing, your case will usually be listed in courtroom 5.1 together with a bunch of others.

If your case is ready to proceed, the magistrate will usually send your case to another courtroom for the hearing.

Hearing Courts

Many courtrooms are capable of dealing with 'defended hearings' – which is where the witnesses attend court and the magistrate decides guilt or innocence.

Hearings often take place in courtrooms 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.7, 4.8, 5.3 and 5.4.

Courtroom 5.2 – DPP and Domestic Violence cases

All cases start in the Local court – no matter how serious they are.

More serious cases, which are likely to eventually go to the District Court, will normally be taken over from police by the [Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions](#) (DPP).

DPP cases are dealt with on Tuesdays and Thursdays in courtroom 5.2.

On Wednesdays, 5.2 is used for domestic violence-related cases and other matters involving Apprehended Violence Orders (AVOs).

Courtroom 5.5 – Commonwealth Cases

The majority of criminal cases in NSW fall under NSW laws, but there are many Commonwealth (federal) offences too.

If you are charged with a Commonwealth offence, your case will most likely be listed in courtroom 5.5.

Courtroom 5.8 – Domestic Violence Women's Cases

On Wednesdays (which is AVO day at the Downing Centre), courtroom 5.8 functions as a support room for women who are PINOPs (Persons In Need Of Protection)

Cases are not heard in the courtroom at this time. Rather, it is a place for female complainants to get support and wait until it is time for their cases to be heard.

Finding Out Your Courtroom Before the Court Date

You can check the details of your upcoming case in advance by looking online.

The [NSW Online Court Registry](#) can be used to determine the date, courthouse, courtroom and sometimes the judge, magistrate or registrar who will be sitting in your upcoming case.

Whether you are attending the Downing Centre for your upcoming court date, a school excursion or just as an observer, we hope your experience is as pleasant as it can be.