



4 March 2019

Joe Alvaro
President, Economic and Business Educators of NSW
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By email: joealvaro@hotmail.com

Dear Mr Alvaro

Court Visits to the Downing Centre Court Building

I write to inform you about recent communications with the Chief Magistrate's Office regarding school group court visits to the Downing Centre Court Complex who have contacted us as the peak body facilitating Law Day Out (LDO) Court Excursions to a number of courts in the Sydney CBD, Parramatta, Wollongong and Newcastle .

We request that you share the information set out below to your members as soon as possible to ensure the future viability of school visits to the Downing Centre.

We have had a number of urgent requests from the Chief Magistrate's Office that are relevant to teachers conducting court excursions. These requests are in response to a significant increase in the number of school groups attending the Downing Centre and a growing number of complaints about student conduct in and around courtrooms impacting on the work of the court.

As you are aware, we facilitate excursions to the Courts and ensure the below occurs. We are mindful that our Law Day Out program is almost fully booked for 2019 and many schools visit the Courts independently.

We set out below some information for incorporation in teacher's planning for court excursions to the Downing Centre which will address the issues raised by the Chief Magistrate's Office and is also relevant for court excursions in general.

Please ensure the following when visiting the Downing Centre Court with students:

- that you have exhausted all practical options of visiting a Local Court closer to your school. The District Court also sits at some Local Court locations. The Rule of Law Institute in conjunction with the Local Court may assist you arrange for a Magistrate/Judge to speak to the students in your area.

Links to Local Courts locations and District Court sitting dates at Local Courts are provided below.

<http://www.localcourt.justice.nsw.gov.au/courtlocations>

http://www.districtcourt.justice.nsw.gov.au/Pages/courtlists/sitting_dates_crim.aspx

- No Year 9 students are to visit the Downing Centre
- No more than 50 students from a single school should visit the court on a single excursion

- Students are adequately briefed before attending court about security protocols - see <https://www.ruleoflaw.org.au/planning-court-visit-nsw/>
- Students are actively supervised - teachers to student ratio needs to be 1 to 15 for Year 10 and 1 to 20 for Years 11 and 12
- Teachers need to be on the same floor/s as their students at all times
- Ensure the students have been well prepared with a syllabus relevant focus for their court visit
- When visiting any courtroom and in particular the Local Courts on levels 4 and 5 students need to spend a minimum of 15 minutes sitting in a court before moving onto observing other courts
- Students are not to ride up and down in the lifts without a purpose as this is disruptive to the work of the court
- Students and teachers need to ensure that they treat members of the public and court staff with courtesy at all times.

If you require any clarification about the above please feel welcome to contact me on 0419 266 880 or jackie@ruleoflaw.org.au. I am happy for my details to be circulated to your members.

Thank you in advance for your prompt action of this matter.

Kind Regards

Jackie Charles

Education Manager