



# AUSTRALIA'S MAGNA CARTA INSTITUTE

## RULE OF LAW EDUCATION

### PREPARING FOR A SUCCESSFUL COURT EXCURSION

#### Overview

A visit to the court is strongly recommended in the NSW Legal Studies syllabus and is suggested for Commerce students.

This document is designed as a series to 'Frequently Asked Questions' (FAQs) to assist teachers who are organising their own court excursion.

Please take the time to read the information so you can ensure your court excursion is a worthwhile syllabus relevant educational experience for your students.

#### 1. What Court do I want my students to visit in Sydney?

**Downing Centre, 143-147 Liverpool St, Sydney NSW 2000**

- Local Courts are situated on Levels 4 & 5.
- Courts 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.6, 4.7, 4.8 are usually hearing courts. They are relatively small. Around 10 students can fit into these courts.
- Court 4.5 caters for first mentions
- Court 5.1 is a large court which traverses a range of LC matters such as mentions, hearings and sentencing.
- Court 5.2 is another large courtroom and is the main AVO court particularly on a Wednesday
- Court 5.6 may hear Commonwealth matters

## **The District Court spans Lower Ground to Level 3 and Level 6.**

- Court 3.1 on Level 3 hosts short criminal matters every day of the week. The court room is small and only 10 -15 students should be in there at a time.

## **The Supreme Court - multiple locations**

The Supreme Court has 4 locations. It traverses levels 1 - 14 in the main Queens Square building 184 Phillip St, Sydney NSW 2000 , hosting civil and criminal matters.

King Street and Darlinghurst Courts host murder trials and the Hospital Road courts which hosts mainly equity matters

- 11A is the bail court running from Mondays to Thursdays with applicants appearing via video link. Court 11A is very small and seating preference is given to family members
- It is not always possible to have the students attend a murder trial in the Supreme Court. Frequently they will find themselves viewing civil or Federal court matters
- The Federal Court is located in the Supreme Court on levels 17 - 22
- Of interest to students may be the Refugee Review cases

## **Parramatta Court Complex, 12 George Street Parramatta NSW 2150**

- Parramatta Court - the Local and District Court are in separate buildings
  - The list court in the District Court is usually on Level 1
  - The Parole Board is in 1A (Monday, Tuesday, Thursday)

## **Court Hours**

- List courts 9.30 - 4pm daily
- Hearing courts - 10am - 4pm daily
- Recess\* at roughly 11:30 – 12:00 for 15 to 30 minutes
- Lunch 1:00 – 2:00 pm.

**NB\*** Court morning tea and lunch times may vary slightly depending on the individual case.

## 2. How do I book a court excursion?

For metropolitan Courts visits pre-book your excursion with the Rule of Law Institute [www.ruleoflaw.org.au/courteducation](http://www.ruleoflaw.org.au/courteducation)

For any booking you will need to provide the following information:

- Name of school
- Student numbers
- Year of students ie Year 10, 11 or 12
- The location of the court you wish to visit
- The date and time of visit - Schools visiting the Downing Centre will be allocated an arrival time when booking
- Your contact name and number
- Information about students with disabilities or special needs to ascertain if there is appropriate access and services

For other local and district locations in NSW go to the following website and find the court contact details to book in:

- <https://www.service.nsw.gov.au/nswgovdirectory/local-courts>

For the Federal Court listing go to the following website:

- <http://www.fedcourt.gov.au/court-calendar/daily-court-lists/nsw>

As a general rule the student numbers provided below are suitable for the major Sydney courts:

- Downing Centre - 45 students
- Parramatta Court - 25 students
- Supreme Court - 20 students
- Other courts - please contact the individual court

## 3. What is the ideal teacher/student ratio?

Organise at least 1 teacher per 20 Year 11 and/or Year 12 students and 1 teacher per 15 students in Year 10. **Years 7, 8, or 9 students should not attend court visits.** Be aware that taking very large groups to court can pose

difficulties if there are not many suitable matters listed, and/or seating in court may be restricted.

#### **4. How do I find out the most syllabus relevant matters to see?**

The court lists for the Local Court, District Court and Supreme Court can be found at [www.onlineregistry.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/content/court-lists](http://www.onlineregistry.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/content/court-lists). The daily lists are posted at 3:30 pm the day before court because the case fixtures can change. The court list will tell you:

- Whether the matter is criminal or civil and what court it is in
- The location (courtroom and, where applicable, building) of the case in question and time of commencement of the case
- The names of the parties involved in the case
- The judge presiding over the case

It is good planning to look at the list thoroughly the day before your excursion. You may then do an internet search of the accused persons' names as this can assist in determining relevant cases for the students to observe. However, do not be surprised if there is no information available. In such cases you may have to find out on the day. Usually if you approach a barrister or lawyer acting in the matter or the court officer in the court they may be able to give you a very general idea about the matter ie murder or theft, drugs or where it is up to ie sentencing, appeal, etc

#### **5. What Risks and Security Protocols should I know about?**

Court complexes are secure locations and in some larger courts school groups will have to pass through security scanning (much like at the airport):

- Security staff may wish to speak to the students about court protocol before they go through security screening.
- Students should listen respectfully and carefully and follow all instructions provided by security staff
- When going through security, everything in pockets must go into a tray. All digital items must also go into a tray ready for scanning. Students should leave at home scissors, compasses, glass bottles and any metal cutlery. More obvious restricted items such as knives, guns, toy weapons and other offensive implements as named under the *Weapons Prohibition Act 1998* will be confiscated and may lead to charges, fines and imprisonment. Epi pens and inhalers are fine

- Use of any form of recording device including MOBILE PHONES within a Court complex is an offence under the *Court Security Act 2005* and can carry a penalty of up to \$22,000 and 12 months imprisonment. Please emphasise to students that this covers all photography (including “selfies” or pictures through augmented reality games such as Pokémon Go) as well as any form of audio recording. These restrictions are in place from the moment they enter Court premises. It is strongly recommended that you tell students to turn their phones off before going through security and to leave them off for the visit. Students may see some people talking on phones. They are usually legal representatives and they have special permission to use their phones
- You as the teacher and guardian have the duty of care for your students at all times
- If there is a security or terrorism threat in a court complex a school visit may be cancelled without notice
- If you split students into smaller groups you should ensure there is a plan where and when students should meet with you and what they should do if they become lost
- When doing a risk assessment you should include what students should do if they find themselves in an uncomfortable situation and you are not around.

**6. What is expected of students teachers regarding dress code?**

- Students need to wear neat, clean and tidy full school uniform or conservative clothing to the court. Shoes should be closed in. Hats cannot be worn inside the building. Thongs, singlets or shirts and T-shirts with inappropriate messages, along with short skirts or short shorts must not be worn.

**7. Is food available to buy in the court building?**

- Once in the building there is nowhere to buy food or drink. Students and teachers should therefore bring morning tea. Students may leave the building for lunch but remember they must pass through security again to re-enter the court.

**8. Are there amenities at the Court?**

- Toilets are conveniently located in court buildings and there are disabled toilets.

**9. What do students need to know about court protocol?**

- If the court is in session (ie the Judge/Magistrate is sitting in court), when the students enter or leave a courtroom, they must stand inside the door and bow towards the Coat of Arms behind His/Her Honour. A simple bend of the head is sufficient. The bowing of the head is an old tradition to show respect for the law. It is important that you discuss with the students the requirement to bow when entering and leaving the court. It is also important to ascertain before the court excursion whether any students are not prepared to bow and whether therefore the excursion is suitable for them
- If the judge is not present when the students enter the courtroom, bowing is not required
- When the judge enters or leaves the room, the court officer will clearly say "Silence, all stand" and the students should stand, bow when the judge is standing at their chair and only sit after they do
- Food or drink should not be consumed in court
- There is no reason to rummage in school bags
- Students should refrain from speaking in the courtroom
- Talking outside a court is OK but there is no reason for excessive noise It is inexcusable to disturb a court while it is in progress particularly when evidence is being taken
- School groups may be asked to leave a courtroom by the Judge or Court Officer for a variety of reasons. If this is the case, please comply quietly and find a different courtroom
- Students should be discouraged from constantly walking in and out of courtrooms. It is very disruptive for court proceedings. As a rule of thumb leaving after 20 minutes is acceptable.

**10. What does the signage on the court door mean?**

- *Non-publication Order* - means that while the court is open to the public no notes should be taken about the case or the names of the parties and no information about it should be posted on the internet or in any school newsletter/post.

- *Closed Court* - no members of the public can enter to watch these proceedings. These are usually child sexual assault cases.
- There will invariably also be signs requesting mobile phones to be switched off.

**11. Will there be other people at court? What if students feel uncomfortable?**

The court building and the courts will be filled with other members of the public, who may be accused persons, victims, witnesses or the friends and family of such persons. Many people who attend courts are in a fragile state including those with recognised mental illness. Students should be sensitive and respectful towards people in their vicinity. This includes not staring, laughing loudly or making comments. Please remember other visitors might not be having a good day and may also behave and/or react in unpredictable ways.

**12. What do students need to know when unaccompanied during the day?**

When going between courts keep as many small groups as possible on the same floor of the court building so that a single teacher can travel between courts to supervise the students.

If there is an incident in the court complex and students are not with you they should be told to remain calm. If possible they should go into a courtroom where there is a judicial officer and court staff. If there is a police officer or court security nearby students may need to go and stand with them.

**Conclusion**

A court excursion is a great learning tool. We hope the information above assists you. If you have any further questions please contact us on [courtvisit@ruleoflaw.org.au](mailto:courtvisit@ruleoflaw.org.au)



# AUSTRALIA'S MAGNA CARTA INSTITUTE

RULE OF LAW EDUCATION

## Law Day Out - Venue and Safety Information for School Excursions

**Organisation:** Australia's Magna Carta Institute Incorporated - Rule of Law Education

**Web Address:** [www.ruleoflaw.org.au](http://www.ruleoflaw.org.au)

**Venues attended:** Local Court / District Court / Supreme Court of NSW

**Location:** Various locations in Sydney, Parramatta and Wollongong

**Staff Accreditation:** At a minimum each Rule of Law facilitator has a working with children

**Recommended Age** check.

**of Students attending:** Years 10 to 12 Australian Secondary School



Glossary: LDO = Law Day Out excursions  
 AMCI = Rule of Law Education

Activity	Potential Risks	Control Strategies
<p><b>Entry to courts and court buildings</b></p>	<p>Airport type scanner / security checks conducted by court staff at entry of Court venues</p> <hr/> <p>A wide range of members of the public access court buildings and could potentially negatively interact with students at the time of security scanning processes.</p> <p>Limited Disabled access</p>	<p>Prior to visiting courts, students are to be briefed by the teacher on the rules and requirements of the court environment, including prohibition of the use of any recording devices or taking of photographs.</p> <p>Staff and students are to allow extra time to be screened by security when entering each venue. Items not permitted (if any) in each venue will be collected and returned at the end of the activity and upon exiting the building.</p> <p>See:  <a href="http://www.courts.justice.nsw.gov.au/Pages/cats/support/security.aspx">http://www.courts.justice.nsw.gov.au/Pages/cats/support/security.aspx</a> for security screening information in NSW Courts.</p> <p>And  <a href="http://www.supremecourt.justice.nsw.gov.au/Pages/SCO2_facilitiesupport/sco2_courtsecurity.aspx">http://www.supremecourt.justice.nsw.gov.au/Pages/SCO2_facilitiesupport/sco2_courtsecurity.aspx</a> and  <a href="http://www.lawcourtsltd.com.au/security.html">http://www.lawcourtsltd.com.au/security.html</a> for the Supreme Court building security requirements.</p> <hr/> <p>Teachers remain responsible for students during court visits. AMCI facilitators are available to assist teachers with advice and strategies for moving within court buildings. Court security staff are available to assist with any concerns or queries from teachers and students.</p> <p>Most of the courts attended on LDOs (except the Darlinghurst Courts)</p>

	<p>Failure of students to be given access to court premises by security or court staff, due to inappropriate clothing.</p>	<p>have ground level wheelchair access from street level supplemented by lifts and ramps in public areas. To facilitate access for students with disabilities teachers are required to contact the AMCI and the relevant venue prior to the visit to check in regard to any requirements for disabled access.</p> <p>Only limited assistance is provided in some courts for hearing impaired persons and disabled toilet access may not be available in all venues.</p> <p>Students should be in full school uniform, where possible, with appropriate closed in shoes or in smart casual attire with closed in shoes when attending court buildings. Students and teachers are not to wear hats or clothing that has inappropriate logos or words printed on it.</p>
<p><b>Moving within court buildings and in courts</b></p>	<p>A wide range of members of the public access court buildings and could potentially negatively interact with students.</p> <p>There is a reasonable risk that students could hear verbal altercations or witness physical altercations, or violence between members of the public in court rooms or in public areas of the court building.</p> <p>An emergency occurs and/or evacuation required, including terrorism incidents.</p>	<p>Teachers remain responsible for students during court visits. AMCI facilitators are available to assist teachers with advice and strategies for moving within court buildings.</p> <p>Court security staff are available to assist with any concerns or queries from teachers and students about the behaviour of members of the public. Teachers and students are subject to the supervision and direction of court staff and security staff regarding any incident that might occur.</p> <p>Courts are security controlled buildings and visitors are subject to the supervision and direction of court staff and security staff at all times. Teachers should liaise with security staff regarding any safety concerns and follow the directions of court and security staff during any</p>

	<hr/> <p>Student or teacher suffers an injury, illness or adverse health event.</p>	<p>emergency or evacuation. Exits are clearly indicated and fire control mechanisms are in place. Evacuation plans are on the walls in the vicinity of lifts or exits in most court buildings. Teachers should familiarise themselves with these maps on entering the building with students.</p> <hr/> <p>All venues have first aid facilities. Teachers are to liaise with first aid staff regarding the assistance required.</p>
<b>Observing court proceedings.</b>	<p>There is a reasonable risk that students could hear or witness proceedings that contain distressing information, explicit details of physical or emotional violence and observe witnesses and members of the public suffering from a range of emotions including distress or anger.</p>	<p>Prior to visiting courts, students are to be briefed by their supervising teacher that there is a reasonable risk of students observing court proceedings, which may cause them some distress.</p> <p>The welfare of students is the responsibility of the teacher. AMCI facilitators are available to assist teachers with suggestions of proceedings to observe, but are not responsible for any adverse outcomes arising for students from the observation of any proceedings or from students observing any court proceedings whilst unsupervised.</p>
<b>Moving within court buildings whilst unsupervised, including visiting toilet facilities and students getting lost.</b>	<p>Student suffers an injury, illness, adverse health event or distress.</p>	<p>Teachers are responsible for the safety and security of students when they are unsupervised in court buildings. Teachers should have in place strategies for student safety if they get lost and liaise with security staff regarding any safety concerns or lost students. RoLIA facilitators may suggest a meeting point for students and staff and assist with information on moving within court buildings.</p>
<b>Moving in public areas outside court buildings, including crossing</b>	<p>Student suffers an injury, illness or adverse health event.</p>	<p>Teachers are responsible for the safety and security of students when moving between venues and should have in place strategies for student safety if they get lost.</p>

<b>roads and walking on public walkways and students getting lost.</b>		Teachers should bring first aid kits on LDOs, including appropriate medication for asthma, anaphylaxis, as well as pain medication.
<b>Students with Special Needs</b>	Students who require support due to physical/mental disability or mental health issues	Teachers are responsible for the safety and security of students when moving between venues and should have in place strategies to assist and support students safely so they are provided with an equitable educational experience.
<b>Other Requirements</b>	<b>Students are at all times under the supervision of teachers on LDOs. AMCI facilitators will assist teachers in the processes of a LDO but have no liability for the safety or welfare of students or teachers on LDOs, which at all times remains with teachers and their relevant schools.</b>	

**Disclaimer:** *The above information has been provided by the Australia's Magna Carta Institute to assist schools in their risk management planning for the Law Day Out Court Excursion program. If further information is required please contact the venue/s directly.*

*All information contained in this document is advisory only to assist in the formulation of your school's risk assessment for the Law Day Out Court Excursion program. The Rule of Law Institute of Australia is not liable for any of its advice, errors or omissions in this document.*