



Mark Speakman
Attorney General

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\$10.6M UPGRADE DOES GRAND OLD BUILDING JUSTICE

The veil has been lifted on a \$10.6 million-dollar refurbishment of Australia's busiest courthouse, boosting capacity and improving access to justice.

NSW Attorney General Mark Speakman said the works inside and out of the Downing Centre have added fresh lustre to the former grand dame of Sydney retail and resulted in four new state-of-the-art courtrooms for the Local Court.

"The Local Court deals with 96 per cent of all criminal matters from start to finish. The new courtrooms increase its hearing capacity, helping the court to manage its significant workload. The additions include a multi-purpose custodial courtroom able to accommodate a Drug Court." Mr Speakman said.

"This project preserves the heritage of the former Mark Foy's department store, an important Sydney landmark, while also delivering major improvements to the engine room of the largest justice precinct in the southern hemisphere."

The 1908 building was home to Mark Foy's department store, Australia's leading fashion destination, until the company was sold in 1968. The building eventually closed as a store in 1983 and was transformed into the Downing Centre in 1990. The complex now has 40 courtrooms.

Along with the new courtrooms, there are new spaces for wraparound legal and support services that collaborate in the Drug Court, including Legal Aid, NSW Police, NSW Health, Community Corrections and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions.

There are also an additional six interview rooms, three additional remote witness rooms and a new safe room.

"Victims of crimes such as domestic violence and sexual assault show great courage in coming forward and it's pleasing there are now more private and secure areas for them to prepare for court and give evidence," Mr Speakman said.

The works also included restoration of the graceful awnings of the Edwardian era building, including the awning rods and distinctive lion heads that hold them. Bathroom facilities, some of which were past their third decade, have also been gutted and refurbished.