

JUST BITES

A CAFÉ FOR A COURT



The NJC has a not-for-profit café on its court floor – aptly named Just Bites (formerly Just Delights.) The café is managed by a local neighbourhood house, and it represents just one of the many ways the local community has been incorporated into the Centre.

Just Bites provides free tea, coffee, milo and water to NJC clients. It also sells espresso coffee and a range of snacks and nutritious hot meals. The hot meals are prepared on-site four days a week by Just Bites staff, and are available for purchase by clients attending court, those visiting the centre, and NJC staff.

Why does the NJC have a café?

If you understand the NJC as a community centre (that also happens to include a court), a café seems quite logical. But there's more to it than that. From the open, light and colourful interior design of the NJC building to the welcoming security guards at the entrance, the friendly attitude of staff and the respect shown to court clients, the NJC deliberately cultivates a welcoming atmosphere. This is because one of its fundamental goals is to help people lift themselves up to a better place in their own lives. Just Bites adds to that welcoming atmosphere.

Indeed, the NJC is required by law to operate in a therapeutic manner. This means there is a recognition that attending court is potentially a daunting and stressful experience that can involve many hours of waiting around. Providing visitors to the Centre with free hot drinks, and affordable meals is just one way that the experience of attending court can be made less stressful. In order to provide food and drinks at affordable prices (and in many cases, for free), the NJC subsidises wages at the café because of its commitment to providing this service.

Just Bites recruits staff from local public housing estates, thereby providing an opportunity for training and employment in hospitality. Staff are well known and respected members of the local

community, and therefore offer a familiar face to visitors and clients who are also usually local residents.

What do NJC clients think of Just Bites?

When clients of the NJC court were asked in a survey 'What is the best thing about the NJC Court?' many of them mentioned Just Bites:

"Lots of support staff – eg mediation and financial counsellor. Lawyers on site. Food and coffee available. Same lawyer each time to facilitate process. Clean bright non-threatening environment." *Female victim, intervention order*

"I like coming to this court because it is easy to find and how they have free coffee and tea." *Indigenous male accused, criminal matter*

"Free tea and coffee, real friendly staff." *Male accused, criminal matter*

"Very helpful, offering food and coffee. All the staff are excellent and I've been very relaxed at this court." *Female accused, criminal matter*

"Free coffee and friendly service. Also not too busy and also lunch provided if we want." *Male victim, criminal matter*

"Free legal aid and I had a good lunch last time." *Female accused, criminal matter and intervention order*

"Free milo and coffee. Service is friendly." *Female victim, criminal matter*

"The free coffee and milo and free lunches." *Female accused, criminal matter*

"If I could choose where I go to court I would choose this court. And free coffee plus reasonably priced food is a major bonus ... I've been coming about once a month for five months." *Female accused, criminal matter*

"The food served at lunch time." *Female support person, intervention order*

(Source: NJC Court User Surveys, 2009, 2014, 2016)