

Mr Watson has pleaded guilty to six charges of fraud. On six occasions over a period of about three months, from 25 February 2023 to 27 May 2023, he defrauded his employer by transferring money into his personal bank account. These misappropriations occurred when Mr Watson was employed at a suburban retail store in Hobart on a casual basis as a customer service operator. He was 18 years old at the time of the offending and is now 19. On each occasion he disguised the payment as a refund transaction. On the first two occasions he did not create a refund transaction receipt. On the last four occasions he falsified refund transaction receipts. The individual amounts transferred ranged from \$499 to \$999.99. The total misappropriated was \$4895.98.

Staff at the store identified discrepancies in the accounts. There was an internal investigation. Mr Watson was interviewed by staff investigators on 14 June 2023. He made admissions to them. His employment was terminated. He was interviewed by police officers that evening, cooperated with them, and made detailed admissions. He explained that he had things to pay for "all at once", knew that he was not going to be rostered on for three or four weeks, and thought of falsifying refunds as a way of getting the money from his employer. He acknowledged that the transactions were acts of stupidity.

Mr Watson pleaded guilty in the Magistrates Court on his first appearance. He has repaid his employer in full. He borrowed from his grandmother to do so and has since repaid her. He is a single man. He lives with his mother. I accept that what he did was out of character. He was unemployed for several weeks but then found a new job.

Because he was charged with fraud, rather than stealing or dishonestly acquiring a financial advantage, it was necessary for this case to be dealt with in the Supreme Court. That has delayed the finalisation of the proceedings, as well as having a significant impact on Mr Watson. I think he is unlikely to re-offend.

In the circumstances, I think the most appropriate course is to make an order requiring him to perform some community service, without imposing a conviction. I have decided not to impose a conviction because of the scale of Mr Watson's offending, his repayment of the money, his otherwise good character, his young age, and the likelihood that a conviction might cause him to lose his employment.

I find the charges proven. Daniel James Watson, I make a community correction order for an operational period of six months, with a special condition that you must within that period complete and satisfactorily perform 50 hours of community service as directed by a probation officer or a supervisor.