

Mr Dennison, you have pleaded guilty to one count of aggravated burglary and one count of assault. On 1 January 2023, you assaulted the complainant, Scott Battye, on the doorstep of his home and then when he sought refuge within his home, you forced your way inside and assaulted him further.

The lead up to the incident was that you had been consuming alcohol heavily throughout New Year's Eve at a residence. At a nearby residence, the property of a Mr Milne, there was another social gathering. One of the attendees at Mr Milne's gathering had become intoxicated and verbally abusive and Mr Milne had escorted that guest from his property. You heard the commotion associated with this and apparently thought that you heard a female screaming. You decided to investigate and went to Mr Milne's property in the company of a Rex Whiley.

The complainant, who had been at Mr Milne's gathering earlier in the evening but had since departed, also heard the commotion and went to investigate and check on Mr Milne. He came across you and Mr Whiley. Whilst at Mr Milne's residence, Mr Whiley and another unknown person punched the complainant to the face. Obviously upset, he returned to his residence, intending to go inside and call police. As he returned to his residence, you followed him. He observed you doing so and met you at his doorstep. You punched him there for no apparent reason. The complainant went to return inside the residence, but the door had slammed behind him. He called for his partner to assist and managed to get back inside. You then kicked the door in and entered the residence. You punched the complainant to the face multiple times. Eventually, the complainant and his partner were able to get you out the front door and held it shut whilst they called police. You left the property.

Police and ambulance were called. The complainant attended the Northwest Regional Hospital. He sustained a two-centimetre laceration to the right side of his scalp, which required tissue glue to close it. It is not clear whether this injury was sustained during the initial assault, or as a consequence of the assault you perpetrated.

On 14 February 2023, you were arrested and spoken to by police. Essentially, you said that you were very intoxicated; you had become involved in an altercation at Mr Milne's residence; you could not remember how that fight started; you did not know the complainant and you could not really remember assaulting him. You said you felt bad about the whole incident. I take into account your remorse and your plea of guilty, although I do note that at least part of the incident was captured on CCTV footage.

You are 34 years of age. You were 32 at the time of the incident. You have a lengthy history of prior criminal offending, including a conviction for robbery in 2012, convictions for common assault in 2014, 2016 and 2019. You have been to goal previously for matters of common assault. In 2021, you were sentenced by this Court for the crimes of aggravated burglary and criminal code assault. You were sentenced to 18 months' imprisonment, with a non-parole period of nine months. These crimes then were committed within about 12 months of your release from custody following the serving of that sentence. Moreover, after the commission of these crimes, you have continued to offend. In April 2024, you were sentenced to 10 months' imprisonment, backdated to commence in August 2023 with the balance suspended, for various crimes and offences, including two counts of common assault, one of which occurred in December 2023. Your persistent resort to the use of violence is concerning.

In addition to the matters that I have mentioned, you also have a lengthy history of traffic offences, dishonesty offences, bail offences, offences contrary to the *Misuse of Drugs Act*, offences committed against police and various offences against good order, including behave in a violent manner, destroy property and disorderly conduct.

I am told that you have a longstanding history with illicit substance abuse, and this is reflected in your substantial history of criminal offending.

You had a difficult upbringing. You grew up mainly in foster care. You were sexually abused whilst you were in care. You also saw your sister sexually abused in that environment. You turned to the use of drugs and alcohol from an early age, essentially as a coping mechanism. Drug addiction has plagued you ever since, despite a number of endeavours to address the difficulties. I am told that you have recently made a claim as a consequence of the sexual abuse you suffered whilst in care. You are hopeful that you will receive compensation and that it will enable you to obtain some stable accommodation, something you have been missing for most of your life. You consider the constant instability that you have experienced to have contributed to your criminal offending.

You are the father of two children and stepfather to another child, whom you treat as your own. You care for those children on a regular basis when you are not in custody. In more recent times, you have been trying hard, I am told, to improve yourself so that you can be a better father to your children. I have provided with a letter from a counsellor indicating that you have engaged well in a programme known as Intensive Family Engagement Service. The counsellor commented that during the time that she worked with you, she observed "a deep motivation to cease your cycle of offending and substance abuse and reintegrate into a positive community life and be a positive and reliable role model for your children."

Your counsel submits on your behalf that you are tired of the cycle of criminal offending and punishment and have a genuine desire to bring the cycle to an end. Whilst that is to be commended and encouraged, it is apparent from a review of your record of prior convictions, that in the past you have been offered, by way of the sentences imposed, many opportunities to reform. Unfortunately, it seems the main of those opportunities have been squandered by you.

This was serious criminal conduct. Drunken, violent behaviour of this nature is all too common, and it must be condemned and deterred. You attacked a man in his own home. He had done nothing to you. You interfered in a situation that was of no concern to you and based on a drunken, misconceived perception that the complainant had done something wrong, violently attacked him. Mr Battye has been traumatised by your attack on him. He has been left feeling hypervigilant, apprehensive and anxious.

Although the actual injuries caused to the complainant were relatively moderate, the consequences of your conduct could have been far worse. You were drunk and in no way in control of your actions. There is a strong need for the sentence I impose to act as both a personal and general deterrent and to denounce your conduct. A period of imprisonment is the only appropriate sentencing response. I have carefully considered your claims of a desire to change. Given your history, it is reasonable to assess such claims with a degree of scepticism, but because it does seem you are making some endeavour to improve things for yourself, I will allow the opportunity for the earliest release on parole.

Mr Dennison, you are convicted of the crimes to which you have pleaded guilty. I impose one sentence. You are sentenced to imprisonment for a period of 15 months. That sentence will be backdated to commence on 17 October 2024. I order that you not be eligible for release on parole until you have served one half of that sentence.