

STATE OF TASMANIA v MELISSA MAREE STOCKS
COMMENTS ON PASSING SENTENCE

4 MAY 2026
JAGO J

Melissa Maree Stocks you have pleaded guilty to one count of trafficking in a controlled substance. The trafficking occurred between 29 July 2023 and 27 October 2023, a period of about three months. Your crime was detected when members of the Western Drug and Firearms Unit conducted a search at the premises at which you were staying with your then partner on 27 October 2023. Your partner, Trent Jones, was separately charged with trafficking. He pleaded guilty to the charge and was sentenced by me on 19 March 2025 to a period of imprisonment of 16 months with a non-parole period of 10 months. Parity is relevant in a general sense, but your role in the trafficking enterprise was less than Mr Jones, and your criminal history is also more minimal.

Mr Jones was sentenced on the basis that he had been selling methylamphetamine in various quantities about three times per week, for a period of about six months. When you were interviewed by police, you said you were a relatively heavy user of methylamphetamine and had been using it for three to four years. You told police you had been using up to five points a day but in more recent times, had been trying to cut back the amount you were using. You admitted to police that a quantity of methylamphetamine, approximately 27 grams, found during the search of the premises, had been purchased by both you and Mr Jones. You said you had used some of it, and some of it was to be sold. You admitted to police that you had previously sold methylamphetamine, the last time being the week before. You told police that you had been selling methylamphetamine to support your own habit. You said the money you made from selling methylamphetamine was spent on future drug purchases for yourself. You said that you thought you had made approximately \$350 from the sale of methylamphetamine in the previous two months and that you had been selling predominantly to the same three people.

A search of your mobile phone revealed messages spanning the period 29 July to 22 October 2023 which were consistent with you selling methylamphetamine to others. The street value of the methylamphetamine in your possession was between \$5,00 and \$8,000 if sold by the ounce and up to \$27,300 if sold by the point.

You are to be sentenced for trafficking on the basis that you possessed the 27.3 grams of methylamphetamine intending to sell it and that you had in fact sold methamphetamine on at least four occasions between 1 August and 2 October 2023. The State also accepts, however, that a portion of the methylamphetamine that was found in your possession would have been used by both you and Mr Jones.

You are 35 years of age. At the time of this crime, you had relatively minor prior convictions; some driving offences, bail offences and a conviction under the *Misuse of Drugs Act* for using cannabis and possessing a smoking device. In May 2025 you were sentenced for offences contrary to the *Misuse of Drugs Act* and a large number of bail offences. The drug offences had occurred predominantly between 2020 and 2022. It is unclear to me why it took so long for them to be dealt with. Those offences included a charge of selling a controlled plant, but otherwise were offences consistent with your use of both cannabis and methamphetamine.

You had a stable upbringing and have good family support. Your drug addiction commenced at a relatively early age. You started smoking cannabis when you were 14 and that very quickly became a daily habit. As is so often heard by this Court, your use of cannabis soon escalated

to the use of other substances, including in time methamphetamine, and within a short period you had developed a concerning addiction. It led to the breakdown of your relationship with your children's father, and when that relationship ended, your two children, remained living with their father. For some time, you had limited contact with your children, but I am told that since you have done some work on your drug addiction, you have been able to re-establish a relationship with your children. You have a good work history and prior to your addiction you had accumulated several assets and were in a solid financial position. I am told however that because of your addiction you lost your house and your motor vehicle and essentially were left with nothing. You have experienced homelessness, relying on family and friends for somewhere to stay.

You now recognise the significant deleterious impact your addiction has had upon you. In 2024 you spent a short period of time in custody. That was an awakening for you. When you were released, you enrolled in the Salvation Army's Bridge Program and were an inpatient at that programme between December 2024 and July 2025. Since completing that program you have been able to maintain your abstinence from drugs save for two brief periods. Your grandfather, to whom you were very close, passed away in December 2025. That led to a period of two weeks in which you relapsed and used methylamphetamine. I am also told that in March of this year you used a small quantity of the substance but immediately regretted it and are once again determined to not return to the use of methamphetamine, appreciating that even a single use may quickly re-ignite your addiction.

I accept that you have worked hard at addressing your drug use. You are in a fortunate position whereby you have the support of family. I received a letter from a family member indicating the changes they have noticed in you since completing the Bridge Program. Your family is willing to support your ongoing recovery. You also have the benefit of a close family friend who is willing to provide you with accommodation. I had you assessed to your suitability for a home detention order. You are suitable. The report is generally positive. It confirms that you have undertaken several steps to address your drug addiction and turn your life around.

In my view, because of the great harm that is caused to the community by trafficking in methylamphetamine, and the paramountcy of general deterrence in the sentencing exercise, your offending deserves the imposition of a sentence of imprisonment. However, having regard to the brief period over which you trafficked methylamphetamine, the fact the trafficking stemmed from your own addiction, your lack of relevant prior criminal history, your plea of guilty and the significant effort you have made since the commission of the crime to rehabilitate yourself, I am persuaded that I should place considerable emphasis on your rehabilitation. I am satisfied the imprisonment can be by way of a home detention order. Home detention is a sentence which carries a substantial deterrent effect as it is an order that imposes significant restraints upon one's liberty.

I make the following orders. You are convicted of the crime of trafficking. I make a home detention order for an operational period of 14 months commencing from tomorrow.

That order will include the following conditions:

- you must not commit an offence that is punishable by imprisonment.
- you must reside at the home detention premises of [address redacted] and at all times, be present at those premises unless your absence is approved by a probation officer;
- you must for the duration of the operational period of the order, submit to electronic monitoring and have any electronic monitoring device fitted and comply with all

reasonable and lawful directions given to you with respect to the operation and monitoring from such device.

There are also special conditions which will attach to the Home Detention Order. They are as follows:

- 1 You must permit a probation officer, a police officer, or other prescribed officer to enter the home detention premises.
- 2 You must permit a police officer to conduct a search of the premises, conduct a frisk search of you and take a sample of any substance that may be found on the premises or on your person.
- 3 You must submit to electronic monitoring, including the wearing or carrying of an electronic monitoring device.
- 4 You must not remove, tamper with, damage, disable or interfere with the proper functioning of that device or equipment used for the purpose of electronic monitoring.
- 5 You must not allow any other person to remove, tamper with, damage, disable or interfere with the proper functioning of that device or equipment used for the purpose of electronic monitoring.
- 6 You must comply with all reasonable and lawful directions given to you in relation to the electronic monitoring device, including directions relating to the installation, attachment or operation of the device.
- 7 You must maintain in operating condition an active mobile phone service, provide the contact details to Community Corrections and be accessible for contact through that device at all times.
- 8 You must not take any illicit or prohibited substances.
- 9 You must not take any prescribed medication unless you provide written evidence from your medical practitioner that you have been prescribed that medication.
- 10 You must not during the operational period of the order consume alcohol and you must, if directed to do so by a probation officer, police officer, or community corrections officer, submit to a breath test, urine test or other test for the presence of alcohol.
- 11 You must submit to the supervision of a Community Corrections Officer as and when required by that officer.

I also intend to impose a Community Correction Order with supervision to provide you with continued support for your drug rehabilitation, particularly given the relapses I have noted.

I therefore make a Community Correction Order for an operational period of 12 months from tomorrow. The statutory core conditions of a Community Correction Order are imposed. Those conditions will be set out in a document that will be provided to you.

I also impose the following special conditions:

- You must during the operational period of the order submit to the supervision of a probation officer as required by the probation officer.
- You must comply with directions regarding referrals to and compliance with alcohol and drug services.
- You must undergo assessment and treatment for alcohol or drug dependency if directed to do so by a probation officer.

- You must for the duration of the operational period of the order submit to medical, psychological or psychiatric assessment or treatment or counselling if directed to do so by a probation officer.
- You must, if directed by a probation officer to do so, attend, participate in and complete the EQUIPS Addiction Programme.

A copy of all of the conditions of both the Home Detention Order and the Community Correction Order will be provided to you.

I order that you must report to Community Corrections, Devonport by no later than 10 am tomorrow for induction into these orders.