

The defendant Annaleigh Williams has pleaded guilty to one count of assault. In the early hours of Sunday, 4 June 2023, the complainant Jessi Wilton-Prince attended the Observatory Bar at Franklin Wharf in Hobart. She was 20 years of age then and enjoying a night out with two friends. The complainant and her friend Morgan Riley joined a queue outside the toilet at the venue. There were a number of people standing around the entrance, including the defendant Annaleigh Williams who was standing in the doorway. As the complainant and Ms Riley entered the toilets, the complainant said, "that was a shit place to stand".

The defendant and two other young women followed the complainant and Ms Riley into the toilet and cornered them near the back of the bathroom. One of the defendant's companions tapped the complainant on the shoulder and asked if she was talking to them. The complainant replied that it was directed at everyone standing in that area.

The defendant and her companions asked the complainant if she knew who they were. The complainant was confused by the question as she had never met them before and replied "no".

The defendant stepped towards the complainant so close that their noses were touching and yelled at her. The complainant yelled back, "you stepped into my face."

The complainant attempted to step back. The defendant punched her to the left eye. The complainant felt immediate pain, stepped back and put her head down and her arm up to protect herself. The defendant then punched the complainant to the top left of her forehead and punched her again, this time to the right side of her forehead.

As the complainant and Ms Riley walked away, the complainant said to the defendant "do you feel tough because I didn't hit back?". The complainant left the bar soon afterwards due to the increasing pain in her left eye.

The complainant continued to experience pain in her eye. Later that day, during the afternoon, she was with her parents and developed a black spot in her eye that grew bigger. She was terrified, panicked and lost consciousness for approximately a minute. Her mother took her to the Royal Hobart Hospital, and the following day, the complainant attended the Derwent Eye Specialists for a specialist appointment. The ophthalmologist was of the opinion that the complainant had sustained a closed globe injury with vitreous haemorrhage appearing to arise from the optic nerve and retinal haemorrhages. On 14 August 2023, the complainant had surgery to remove the vitreous gel from the eye and to reinforce the retina. She is at risk of developing a cataract and glaucoma. She also remains at risk of retinal detachment, although fortunately upon last review with her ophthalmologist there were no signs of this.

The complainant has provided a victim impact statement. The crime has had a lasting and significant adverse effect upon her life. The symptoms of her injury were frightening, and recovery from surgery was painful. Her eye was uncomfortable and needed eye drops to prevent infection and an eye shield worn at night to protect it. The complainant described her eye as looking "horrible" and because she worked in retail, she avoided customers which negatively affected her work ethic and professionalism. There has been a significant cost to her financially arising from medical expenses and loss of wages from being away from work.

The complainant suffers from regular eye strain and headaches which affects her work which is computer-based. She is scared to go to certain public places for fear that she may see the defendant. The complainant feels anxious doing basic tasks and she feels uncomfortable just being in public. She felt extremely anxious when flying, which ruined her first experience on a plane.

The incident has increased her anxiety and fear about her physical health and also affected her outlook and approach to life. She no longer enjoys activities the way she used to such as playing with her nieces and nephews and her dog because she is concerned about accidental impact to her eye. She will never be comfortable playing ball or contact sports again.

The complainant describes herself before the assault as "energetic, rambunctious and active". Since the assault, she says she is not the same person and feels she never will be. She does not stand up for herself anymore as she is fearful of repercussions. She is upset and angry that her family and future children will not get to enjoy the person she used to be. The complainant expects she will need ongoing support from mental health professionals.

Returning to events on the day of the assault, the complainant's sister put a post on Facebook seeking further information as to the person responsible for the assault. The defendant responded on the post making comments criticising the complainant's sister for suggesting the complainant was "bashed", acknowledging she had assaulted the complainant but suggesting it was no big deal and referring to the complainant as "beaming off her guts getting in my face". The defendant's post demonstrated a lack of remorse at that time.

The complainant's sister and the defendant messaged each other. The tenure of a message sent by the defendant was in threatening terms.

On 29 August 2023, the defendant voluntarily attended the Bridgewater Police Station and participated in an electronically recorded interview. During the interview she claimed to have no memory of the incident.

The defendant was aged 20 years at the time of the assault, she is now 23. She has no prior convictions for violence or any convictions for violence since committing this crime. The defendant has prior convictions for offences of dishonesty and breach of bail. Two months before the assault she appeared in the Magistrates Court on eight counts of stealing involving shoplifting and breaches of bail and received a deferred sentence. She was resentenced in relation to those offences and for these and other similar offending and received a community correction order with 70 hours of community service. On 19 August 2024, the defendant received 28 days imprisonment for offences largely involving breaches of bail, a dishonesty offence and three offences of possession of a controlled drug involving methamphetamine, MDMA and cannabis. The effect of the sentence was that she served 6 days in prison and the balance was suspended for 12 months on condition that she comply with a community correction order. The defendant has not been convicted of any offending since receiving that sentence. The defendant was resentenced on 4 December 2025 for the stealing and breaches of bail, which attracted the 70 hours of community service and a community correction order. The sentence was reduced to 50 hours and is presently in place.

In determining the appropriate sentence, I must take into account the defendant's circumstances. She is a young Aboriginal woman, the eldest, with two younger siblings. During her upbringing she was exposed to significant family violence and parental substance

abuse. There was often conflict in the home, and violence was the usual form of conflict resolution. Her parents separated when she was approximately seven or eight and her mother became the primary carer. Her mother's substance abuse issues were stressful for the defendant and even when very young she felt responsibility for her two younger siblings. At one point the home was burnt down, and the family unit relocated to South Hobart. The defendant attended a State High School until grade nine and then moved to EdZone, a flexible learning environment, but did not complete her grade 10 year. Her latter high school years were a particularly chaotic period. At around that time, the family was evicted from the home in South Hobart due to her mother's substance abuse issues. Her mother went to Melbourne for a period and the defendant moved in with her father but that was not a stable environment, and she then lived a transient lifestyle for a period.

The defendant commenced drug taking at a young age as a coping mechanism. She was introduced to cannabis at the young age of 13. Cannabis and alcohol were readily available in the family home and she soon became a daily user of cannabis. She was introduced to methamphetamine at age 16.

The defendant had insight with regard to her cannabis addiction and at the beginning of 2023 she resided for a week at the Bridge Program's detoxification unit. She was successful in addressing her cannabis addiction and has remained abstinent. However, she began increasing her consumption of alcohol. She had developed a dependence on alcohol in 2021 when she relied upon it to suppress the "trauma" she had experienced when she was in a violent relationship.

It was during that period when her consumption of alcohol had increased and there had been some decline in her mental health that she committed this crime. She was intoxicated on the night, but that, of course, does not excuse her behaviour or reduce the seriousness of what she did. I note that Ms Williams does not suggest that it provides her with any form of excuse.

After the crime, the defendant's life deteriorated and she had a number of relationships involving family violence. Her circumstances were unstable and she was using methamphetamine on a regular basis.

More recently there has been some improvement in her circumstances. The defendant has stable accommodation. She has been engaging in a positive way with her probation officer. She is intending to commence the Shark Cage Program, offered by SIS (Support. Information. Strength.), a family violence prevention legal service. This program aims to empower those who have suffered abuse and enhance their safety. It is offered on a one-to-one basis and the defendant was to commence the program in late February.

When the matter was last in Court in February, it was thought that the defendant would be able to have made a good start on her community service hours by the time of her court date today.

Unexpectedly, in March this year the defendant's father died. That has been a traumatic time for the defendant and her family. The defendant is dealing with her grief and needs some time. Understandably, appointments with the Shark Cage program, her probation officer and community service have been rescheduled.

The defendant accepts responsibility for her actions and acknowledges that there was no reason for her violent actions. She is remorseful for her crime and also the way she engaged with the

complainant's sister online. She felt ashamed when the victim impact statement was read and she heard about the way her violence has affected the complainant's life.

She has pleaded guilty and while it is not an early plea it has saved the complainant the stress of having to give evidence and saved the community the expense of a trial.

I requested and have been provided with a pre-sentence report dated 4 May 2026. The defendant believes she experiences anxiety and depression but has not been diagnosed or treated for those conditions. She is willing to see a general practitioner to arrange a mental health care plan.

I note another positive consideration is that she is interested in engaging in programs offered by the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre and in particular, the Palawa Employment Program which would be very beneficial. She has never had employment and if she had that opportunity I expect she would enjoy it.

She is still a regular user of methamphetamine and requires drug rehabilitation. She is willing to comply with intervention and address her illicit substance use.

The defendant is regarded by community corrections as presently unsuitable for further community service hours due to previous non-compliance and the fact she has not completed the 50 hours outstanding since December last year. However, that is explained and is not due to her unwillingness or poor attitude.

She is assessed as requiring a very high level of supervision from Community Corrections.

This was an unprovoked act of violence upon an unsuspecting young woman who was simply out socialising with friends. You inflicted three blows, one to her eye and then two to the head while she was trying to protect herself. It has caused her lasting harm, both significant physical injury to her eye with the risk of complications in the future and, emotional harm, involving ongoing distress, and anxiety. I note that you did not intend any of those outcomes.

The sentence I impose must make it clear that this kind of senseless alcohol-fuelled violence will not be tolerated by the courts.

However, I also take into account your rehabilitation which will be given particular weight in this case today noting your young age at the time, your lack of convictions before or since for violence, your very deprived background and the limited opportunity you had to thrive as a young person and yet despite that, your motivation to reform and your positive attitude to receiving support from various agencies.

I record a conviction for the crime of assault and I impose eight months' imprisonment. That sentence of imprisonment is wholly suspended on a number of strict conditions for a period of two years from today:

- (a) you commit no offence punishable by imprisonment for a period of 2 years from today;
- (b) you must submit to the supervision of a probation officer, for that same period of 2 years, as required by the probation officer;
- (c) you must report by 4.00pm tomorrow to a probation officer at Community Corrections, 75 Liverpool Street, Hobart;
- (d) you must report to a probation officer as required by that officer;

- (e) you must comply with the reasonable and lawful directions given by a probation officer;
- (f) you must not leave or remain outside Tasmania without the permission of a probation officer;
- (g) you must give notification to a probation officer of any change of your address or employment before or within two (2) working days after, the change; and
- (h) you must, within 2 years, satisfactorily perform community service, as directed by a probation officer or supervisor, for 70 hours.

In addition, you must comply with for the following conditions for the same period of 2 years:

- (i) you must attend, participate in, and complete the EQUIPS Addiction Program as directed by a probation officer;
- (j) you must attend educational and other programs, including vocational programs, as directed by a probation officer;
- (k) you must undergo assessment and treatment for drug dependency as directed by a probation officer;
- (l) you must undergo assessment and treatment for alcohol dependency as directed by a probation officer;
- (m) you must submit to medical, psychological or psychiatric assessment or treatment as directed by a probation officer; and
- (n) you must appear before the Supreme Court of Tasmania at Hobart on Monday, 14 September 2026 at 4.15pm for a review of this Order.