

STATE OF TASMANIA v MEREDITH HEATH ADAMS
COMMENTS ON PASSING SENTENCE

3 JULY 2026
JAGO J

Meredith Adams, you have pleaded guilty to one count of perjury committed on 6 August 2024. On that date, you gave evidence in the Supreme Court as a witness on an application for bail made by a Mr Jesse March. You had previously sworn a statutory declaration dated 5 August 2024. In that statutory declaration, you deposed "I have known Jesse March for nearly 30 years. I have full confidence that I can control Jesse and make him comply with his bail conditions". During the course of your evidence, you confirmed the contents of the statutory declaration were true and correct and it was tendered. In your evidence, you answered a series of questions in which you confirmed that you had known the family for 30 years, had lost contact with them for a period of time but had, in the last seven or so months, resumed contact. You claimed that your relationship with Jesse March was "back to how it was when he was a young child and the respect has been there, has been fully forthcoming".

Mr March was subsequently granted bail with strict conditions, including to live with you, a curfew condition and you were required to pay a surety bond into the Supreme Court.

What you told the Court during your evidence was not the truth. You had, in fact, only met Mr March about six months earlier. After Mr March was released on bail, you experienced difficulties with him living with you. He became abusive and threatening. On 29 August 2024, you called Tasmania Police. You told them of his behaviour. You also made a further statutory declaration in which you stated the truth. You told police "I went to the Burnie Supreme Court and said that I knew him from years ago, it was a lie".

Mr March was subsequently arrested, and his bail was revoked. On 17 November 2024, you participated in a record of interview. You confirmed that you had lied during your evidence to the Court. You said that you did not believe that Mr March was receiving the treatment that he should within the gaol system, and you thought you could assist him in obtaining bail. You said that you had only known Mr March for a period of about six months. You had met him through his former partner. You said after he was remanded in custody, he was ringing you nearly every day, telling you that he had cancer and needed treatment, and that he was not obtaining it within the prison system. He also said that he could feel that his "lumps were getting bigger". You said you felt sorry for Mr March and that he had played on your emotions. You said you were truly sorry for having lied to the Court.

You entered a plea of guilty to the charge of perjury at an early point, when the matter was still before the Magistrates Court. You have no relevant prior convictions. There are some matters on your prior criminal history involving possession and use of cannabis and one occasion, the sale of cannabis.

You are 58 years of age. You have several adult children who live independently from you. You are currently assisting one of your children who suffers with depression. You are providing support for her. You receive a Disability Support pension. You had a difficult upbringing. You experienced sexual abuse during your childhood. You have also experienced considerable family violence throughout various relationships in which you have been involved. On occasions, police have had to intervene and take you to shelters because of the seriousness of the violence within those relationships.

You suffer from scoliosis and spondylosis. You are in constant pain. You also experience regular muscle spasms. Some days the pain is to the point that you cannot get out of bed. Your physical difficulties have led to a significant decline in your mental health.

As to the circumstances of the offending, I am told you met Mr March's partner, a Ms Sowtell, in March 2024. You became close and you allowed Ms Sowtell to move in with you. She told you about some difficulties Mr March was experiencing, and you met Mr March through her. Mr March told you of charges he was facing and explained that he needed a bail address. You allowed him to move in. He was then arrested for some bail breaches and whilst he was remanded in custody, he regularly phoned you and told you about a number of difficulties he was allegedly experiencing in custody. He claimed that his breast cancer was getting worse and suggested that if he did not receive appropriate treatment, there may be dire consequences for him. I accept he played on your emotions and manipulated your good will. You felt sorry for him, and it was in those circumstances that you committed this crime.

Mr March told you what you needed to say and do in order to help him secure bail. You felt pressure to complete the statutory declaration and once you had sworn the statutory declaration, you felt there was no turning back. You were not expecting to have to give evidence on the bail application, but once you were called to do so, you felt cornered and compelled to maintain the lie.

Once Mr March was bailed, it was not long before difficulties developed. Whilst he was initially grateful for your role in this, he soon turned nasty and became aggressive and threatening towards you. You ended up becoming very scared and contacted police.

I accept that you are remorseful for your conduct, and to an extent, were manipulated by Mr March. But this is very serious criminal conduct. Perjury undermines the very foundation of the justice system. Courts need to be able to trust that documentation that is tendered and evidence that is given, is honest and valid. People who seek to deceive the Court and manipulate the law as you did, must understand that in most circumstances, the outcome will be imprisonment.

Whilst I accept that you did not intend to cause any harm to others by your conduct, you demonstrated a rather arrogant disregard for the Court and its processes. You thought you knew better and rather than allowing the justice system to operate as it should, you lied in order to bring about a particular outcome. For a period, your lies successfully achieved that outcome. I take into account that in the long run, that outcome was actually adverse to you and Mr March behaved poorly towards you. That, in itself, has been a salient lesson.

In sentencing any matter of this nature, general deterrence is always a paramount sentencing consideration. There needs to be a very clear message conveyed that behaviour of this sort is unacceptable. A period of imprisonment must be imposed to mark the gravity of the offending, but I am satisfied, in light of your personal circumstances and your lack of relevant prior convictions, that it is appropriate to wholly suspend the period of imprisonment I intend to impose.

I make the following orders. You are convicted of the crime of perjury. You are sentenced to imprisonment for a period of six months. The whole of that period of imprisonment will be suspended upon condition that you commit no offence punishable by imprisonment for a period of two years from today.

