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THE SUPREME COURT OF  
THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

SCC 22425987

THE KING

and

NATHAN HARRISON

(Sentence)

BLOKLAND J

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

AT DARWIN ON THURSDAY 14 MAY 2026

Transcribed by:  
EPIQ

HER HONOUR: Nathan Harrison entered a plea today to one count of intentionally performing a grossly indecent act on the victim without her consent and being reckless as to her lack of consent. The particulars are that he touched her in the vulval area with his fingers contrary to s 2018HB(1) of the *Criminal Code*. The date of the offending was 15 August 2024.

The facts in brief are that Nathan Harrison and the victim were with a group of people. Some of them were relatives of the victim. They had been drinking in an area at Yarrawonga. They had gone to another area that has been described in the facts as a drain located underneath the cycle path bridge between Stuart Highway and the rear of Gateway Extra Shopping Centre.

They continued to consume alcohol while in that area. When I say “they” that is, as I understand it, a group and, according to the facts, that included both the victim and Nathan Harrison. The victim fell asleep. She awoke to the feeling of being dragged along stones. Nathan Harrison laid on top of her and she realised she was no longer wearing her shirt or underwear. Only her bra and skirt remained on.

Nathan Harrison pushed her legs apart and touched her vulval area with an unknown number of his fingers causing her pain. She attempted to push him off of her and screamed “get off me” and, “Help.” He slapped her across the face with his right hand three times telling her to shut up.

He then stood up and said they would move from that location. The victim took that opportunity to run away. She sought help from the public and was then, after an ambulance was called, taken to Palmerston Regional Hospital and taken the next to the Sexual Assault Referral Centre where she underwent a sexual assault examination.

Nathan Harrison was arrested on 19 August 2024 and he has remanded in custody since then. In terms of assessing the gravity of the offending it must be remembered that the victim was intoxicated. She was asleep. She was clearly in a vulnerable state. It is understood that Nathan Harrison was also intoxicated but he took advantage of someone in an extremely vulnerable state.

It was highly intrusive sexual behaviour towards her as well as an invasion of her person. It also caused her pain. He also slapped her across the face three times which, although is not as substantial as the violence seen in some cases, when violent like that is perpetrated on somebody already in a vulnerable state it is of significance.

It would have been frightening for the victim and clearly she was alarmed and frightened given she ran in the state that she was in to a member of the public and fortunately that member of the public sought help from her. There is no victim impact statement but the court can take into account that this kind of offending always has some form of negative impact on a victim.

It is why matters of this nature are treated so seriously by the courts. Every case is somewhat different. I do have a very helpful summary of cases from the last six or seven or more years before the court. There is quite a range of offending.

This is to be regarded as an early plea notwithstanding that Mr Harrison was arrested on 19 August 2024. He was originally charged with a more serious offence. In terms of the chronology of the proceedings it would appear that an offer was made by previous representatives in October 2025 and the then prosecutor made the appropriate enquiries.

Regrettably it would appear that things fell into something of a lacuna between March and May but certainly Mr Thomas who now acts for Mr Harrison and Mr Maybury who has recently taken over the matter from the Crown have worked hard to resolve the matter in this last month.

It is not precisely clear why an offer to plead to a lesser charge was not made earlier than October of last year but I appreciate also that someone in Mr Harrison's circumstances, that he is someone in custody. He has lived much of his life remotely. Does not really have the opportunity to make such offers unless their lawyers are proactive in negotiating on their behalf.

So I do not know what his original thoughts were about the particular charge but what is known is that he has been prepared to plead to the current charge for some time. I will make an adjustment in the order of 20 per cent noting that this should be regarded as a plea that is a timely plea.

He is now 54 years old. He grew up in the Barunga, Bulman and those communities in that part of the Northern Territory. He is someone that has grown up with disadvantage having attended school only till around Year 7 and 8. He reads and writes a little. Kriol is his first language. His employment consists of having done CDP work on or near bush communities and some ranger work near the Bulman Community.

His parents are deceased. He still has some contact with some siblings including a sister in the Darwin area. He is also the father of a 5-year-old child. She currently resides with foster parents.

One of the difficulties with sentencing Mr Harrison is he has an established, albeit it somewhat dated, record of serious sexual offending. It is appreciated that the most significant of that offending was committed some 18 or so years ago. However, it cannot be ignored in proceedings such as these.

He has previously received sentences in the range of ten years for single offences. Non-parole periods, for instance, of 13 years. In 1998 he received a sentence of some 14 years. What is unknown is what extent he has taken up parole in the past. What is not known is to what extent he has been given the privilege of parole in the past.

There was also an earlier incident of sexual offending in 1988. He was a juvenile at that time and was ordered to serve 4 years' imprisonment noting that the first two years was ordered to be served in a detention centre being the Wilderness Waters Camp.

Against that background of significant sexual offending he must still be sentenced on the basis of what is a proportionate sentence to the offending on this occasion. However, clearly personal deterrence has a more significant role to play.

It is extremely unfortunate for the community, the victim and for him that significant terms of imprisonment seem to have done little to deter him from offending in this way again. I do mention, in coming to a proportionate sentence, that this offending, although, of course grave, is not in the same category as some of the previous offending for which he has been dealt with by the courts.

This was more of opportunistic offending. As awful as it was it was not protracted. No weapon was used. And while it is not mitigating it would appear that it happened in a context of him being intoxicated and probably not in the best situation to refrain from offending in an opportunistic way.

His counsel has asked that a s 103 report be obtained to assess his suitability for supervision. In my view, given his background, given the significance of this offending it would not be an appropriate outcome to suspend any part of the offending of the sentence.

Of course, I will set a non-parole period must reflect the minimum that is appropriate for him to serve for such significant offending. I am there guided somewhat by the comparative table that has been handed up today which I have found useful. So I do record that I have rejected that request.

I do note his age, 54. It is my hope that the correctional authorities ensure that he has access to appropriate programs to reduce the risk of re-offending in the future. I am not sure whether he has been subject to other orders under other legislation and it is generally considered to be inappropriate to take that into account.

But I do think that he should be encouraged to take on programs and be encouraged to apply for parole on the basis that it is more conducive to community safety in the future that someone with Mr Harrison's background be on a parole order post-release rather than no order at all.

All things considered my starting point would be that for 5 years' imprisonment. I reduce that because of the timely plea. He will be convicted and ordered to serve 4 years' imprisonment commencing on 19 August 2024. And I set a non-parole period of 3 years' from the same date.

MR MAYBURY: May it please the court.

MR THOMAS: If the court pleases.

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