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THE SUPREME COURT OF
THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

SCC 22532997

THE KING

and

MEGAN ECHO

(Sentence)

KELLY J

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

AT DARWIN ON TUESDAY 5 MAY 2026

Transcribed by:
EPIQ

HER HONOUR: Ms Echo, I am going to sentence you now. You can stay sitting down while I do that because I need to talk to you about quite a few things.

Megan Echo, you have pleaded guilty to one charge of unlawfully causing serious harm to RJ. The maximum punishment for that offence is imprisonment for 14 years.

I am going to talk about what happened now. You are 32 years old. The victim is your cousin, RJ. She is 54 years old.

On the evening of 10 March into the early hours of 11 March 2025, you and RJ were drinking together. You were drinking together with another woman.

At about 2:30 in the morning, RJ was looking for something to drink. You put a black kettle filled with water on the stove to boil - I do not know whether it was on the stove or if there was an electric kettle - anyway, you put the kettle on to boil. RJ collected her handbag and phone and went outside to lie down. You confronted RJ. You said, "Oh what, you trying to steal my beer?" She said, "No, I want my cold water."

She told you she would leave and walk home. RJ started to walk home. You followed her, carrying the kettle of hot water. RJ saw you following her. She phoned 000 for help. She told the operator, "Megan Echo wanna scald me with hot water." RJ shouted out to you, "I don't have any beer." She was still on the phone to police when she said this.

RJ told the operator, "She's following me." Then suddenly, the call cut out. RJ ran away from you. You chased her carrying the jug. Then you threw the hot water in the jug on RJ and burnt her. RJ tried to run away from you. She fell down. When she fell down, she hit her head. She got a deep laceration on her head and lost a tooth.

RJ walked to the BP Service Station in Katherine and asked for help. She was bleeding and in serious pain. The console operator at the service station phoned police. At about 3:00 in the morning, police got to the BP Service Station. They gave RJ first aid until St John's Ambulance arrived. RJ was crying and groaning from pain, and police had trouble controlling the bleeding from her head.

At about 3:20 in the morning, St John Ambulance paramedics arrived and took RJ to the Katherine District Hospital. At the hospital, they treated her for the burns and the laceration on her head. They gave her intravenous pain relief, antibiotics and a tetanus injection. RJ was later transferred to the Royal Darwin Hospital by CareFlight because her injuries were serious. Royal Darwin Hospital gave her the following treatments:

- They did a surgical wash out of the burns to her left temple, jaw, neck, left arm, chest, back and shoulders.

- They did surgical wash out, debridement and suturing of two lacerations to her head. “Debridement” means cutting away the bad tissue.
- They gave her pain relief and intravenous antibiotics.

RJ was discharged from hospital, but she had to stay at the hostel nearby to allow for further specialist review. On 14 March, RJ was reviewed by the Royal Darwin Hospital Burns Clinic. They could not dress the burns on her left temple, jaw and neck properly. They were treated with paraffin ointment. The burns across her left arm, chest, back and shoulder were dressed with antimicrobial dressings.

She was no longer in pain from the injuries and had been sleeping well. The hospital arranged to transport her back to Katherine. They booked her in for outpatient review at the Katherine District Hospital the following week. RJ suffered the following injuries from your assault on her:

- Superficial burns to 3 percent of her total body surface area.
- Two scalp lacerations down to the bone, one 8 centimetre and one 3 centimetre long.
- And she lost a tooth.

Police arrested you for a different matter on 9 May 2025. Police later served you with a summons to appear in the Darwin Local Court for this offending.

I have read a victim impact statement from RJ. She talks about the cuts on her head and the stitches and the burns that she suffered. She said, emotionally, she was sad and worried about her grandchildren. She said she had never been hurt like this before. She said she wants you charged and locked up for a long time.

I am going to talk about you now. You have a lengthy criminal history which includes eight convictions for aggravated assault. You also have convictions for stealing, unlawful entry and property damage. You have a history of disobeying court orders. You have two breaches of bail; two breaches of suspended sentence; four breaches of domestic violence orders and a breach of a reconnaissance order.

Now, you are not to be punished again for these things, but it means you do not come here as a person of prior good character, and you do not come here as a first offender and are not entitled to any leniency for that. Also, a history of disobeying court orders means that it affects the way that I structure your sentence.

Your lawyer gave me some information about you. You are 33 years old. You were 32 when you committed this offence.

You are originally from Borroloola, but you have spent most of your life living in Katherine with your grandmother. She raised you and your two sisters. Your mother

and father separated when you were about 10 years old, but you were already living with your grandparents at that time. I am told you still see your mother occasionally, but you do not have a close relationship with her. Your father had throat cancer. He passed away in 2017.

You went to McFarlane Primary School, then Katherine High School. You left school at the end of Year 9. You have not had a steady job, but you do participate in activities with the Kalano Community Association. You have helped with cooking and preparing meals for the elderly people in the community for a long time.

You were in a long-term relationship with a previous partner. That relationship lasted for 14 years. You had two children together, a daughter and a son. Your daughter is 13. She is boarding at Marrara Christian College. Your son is 8. He has been raised in Minyerri by your ex-partner's sister.

You say the relationship with your ex-partner was a violent one. He went to prison many times for the things he did to you. He hit you with objects and he broke your foot with a rock. You now have a new partner.

When you are released, you plan to go and live with your new partner's family in Oenpelli. You say that your new partner's sister is a good woman who does not drink alcohol. She has a steady job working at the local school. You think this will be the right place for you. Your family has lots of trouble. Going to Oenpelli will get you away from the trouble on your side of the family. You say you should be able to keep away from alcohol in Oenpelli. Well, I hope that all works out for you.

You say your time in gaol has been difficult. You were remanded in the new Sector 11 which has better conditions than Sector 4. But your younger sister was arrested and placed on remand in February this year. When that happened, you asked for a transfer back to Sector 4 so you could be closer to your sister. You wanted to support her in prison. You have a job in prison as a PALS worker where, you say, you "Help other prisoners out".

Your younger cousin passed away recently. You were very close to her. You are worried that you will miss the funeral and that has made your time in custody more difficult. You also miss your children.

I need to talk to you about the things I have to think about when I sentence you. You caused serious injuries to your cousin. This is domestic violence. You did not suddenly lose control and throw water at her; you followed your cousin out of the house with the boiling water; you chased her when she tried to run away and you threw the hot water on her. I do accept that you did not boil the water for that purpose. You had the water on to make tea or noodles or something. But there was that degree of planning in following her. I consider this is about mid-range of seriousness or slightly higher.

There is way too much violence in our community, particularly, sadly, in Indigenous communities, often between family members. And you have a sorry

history of violent offending. I have to send a strong message that the community and the court strongly disapproves of this kind of offending. I have to impose a sentence that will discourage you and other people from committing this kind of violent offence.

You have pleaded guilty and I can give you a reduced sentence for that. But I do not believe you are remorseful. After you burned your cousin, you just walked away and left her on the ground badly injured. You did not try and get help for her. She had to make her own way to the BP Service Station in severe pain, burnt, bleeding and badly injured.

If it were not for your guilty plea, I would have sentenced you to imprisonment for 6 and a half years. I am going to reduce that by 20 percent for your guilty plea. Applying that 20 percent reduction, you will be convicted and sentenced to imprisonment for 5 years and 2 months. As of today's date, 5 May 2026, I believe you have served 11 months and 27 days in custody. This includes a 5-month sentence of imprisonment for separate offending.

That sentence was imposed by the Local Court on 29 July 2025 and backdated to 9 May 2025. I do not think there should be full concurrency between those sentences. They involved separate offending on separate occasions, separate decisions to commit criminal behaviour. I will direct that 1 month of that sentence be served at the same time as this sentence. That means, the start date for this sentence, on my calculation, is 9 September 2025 and I fix a non-parole period of 2 years and 6 months.

I should say this, it is not just because your sentence exceeds 5 years, even if the sentence had been 5 years or less, I would have imposed a non-parole period because of your history of breaching suspended sentences and bail and matters of that nature.

Has someone checked my dates and is there anything arising?

MS SMITH: Those dates are correct on my view, your Honour. And nothing arising.

MS MACCARRON: Yes. Nothing arising.

HER HONOUR: All right. Thank you.

Please adjourn the court.
