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THE SUPREME COURT OF

THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

SCC 22341987 22423970

THE KING

and

JASON CAMPION

(Sentence)

HUNTINGFORD J

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

AT DARWIN ON MONDAY 28 SEPTEMBER 2026

Transcribed by:
EPIQ

HER HONOUR: Jason Campion. You have pleaded guilty to three counts on the indictment dated 30 April 2025. All of the charges involve the same victim, TN.

Count 1 charges that on 28 December 2023, you unlawfully assaulted the victim, and that assault was made worse because she suffered harm, and because she is female and you are male. The maximum punishment for that offence is imprisonment for five years.

The second charge is that on 11 July 2024, you unlawfully caused serious harm to TN. The maximum punishment for that offence is imprisonment for 14 years.

Count 3 was that on 11 July 2024, being a person against whom a domestic violence order was in force, you engaged in conduct that resulted in a breach of that domestic violence order, and the contravention involved harm to the victim. The maximum penalty for that offence is imprisonment for five years.

You were aged 27 and 28 years old when you committed these offences. The victim, TN is a 29-year-old woman.

You and the victim had been in a relationship for approximately four years.

From 1 September 2023, for a period of three years, you were subject to a domestic violence order, with the victim being the protected person. The conditions included no contact with the victim when you were consuming alcohol or drugs, or affected by the same; submitting to testing when requested by police; and prohibitions upon causing harm, threatening or attempting to cause harm, or intimating, harassing, or verbally abusing the victim.

On 28 December 2023, you had consumed an unknown quantity of alcohol. At about 8:30 pm you drove through the Karama Shopping Centre carpark, stopping near the Woolworths entrance.

When the car stopped, two unknown men got out of the back seat, and the victim from the front passenger seat. The victim and one of the men came to the front driver's side window and spoke to you. The victim asked you to return her car keys.

This was seen by AD, a security officer who worked at the shopping centre, and was also captured on CCTV. AD saw you and the victim yelling and hitting each other, and heard the victim say, "Give me my keys." as she reached inside the driver's side window trying to take them from you.

You then grabbed the victim and bit her on the arm. She walked back around the passenger side of the vehicle in an attempt to sit in the back seat. At this time, both the back passenger door, and the front passenger door, were wide open. As the victim attempted to sit in the back seat of the car, you started accelerating, travelling several metres and forcing the victim to stumble from the back passenger door.

As a result of your conduct, multiple security officers working at the shopping centre approached the car. You got out of the driver's seat and confronted the security officers, repeatedly approaching them as they moved away from you.

You then returned to the front seat of the car while the victim was standing on the opposite side. You got out of the car again and approached security staff in an aggressive and threatening manner as you paced around.

On seeing the victim return to the back passenger door and attempt to get in the car, you rushed toward her, and using your right fist and arm pushed the back door heavily into her body, causing her to stumble.

You then approached the security officers again in a threatening and aggressive manner, before making your way towards the front of the car, climbing on top, and proceeding to stomp heavily on the bonnet and kick the front windscreen several times.

You then jumped off and made your way to the front driver's side door, where you punched and kicked the driver's side door window causing it to break.

You briefly walked away when security officers approached the car, and continued to leave, return, and approach security officers whilst still acting in a threatening and aggressive manner.

Police came and you were arrested. You were taken to the watchhouse and asked to submit to a breath test in accordance with the conditions of your domestic violence order, but you refused.

The offending in counts 2 and 3 took place on the evening of 10 July 2024, and into the early morning of 11 July 2024. The victim was living in an NT Health house in Tiwi with her children, while they were receiving medical care.

You were at an unknown location consuming alcohol.

At approximately 12:20 am on 11 July 2024, the victim called JR, KJ, and ME, and asked them to come to the house to help her care for the children.

On arrival, ME took one child into a room where they went to bed.

At approximately 3 am, JR and KD took the second child for a walk. As they walked out the gate, the victim was sitting upright in a chair on the driveway.

Shortly before 3 am, you got into a taxi at the Hibiscus Tavern and travelled to the victim's residence. You did not provide your name to the taxi driver, and upon arrival at the house, you asked the taxi driver to wait while you got money for the fare.

JR and KJ said that when you arrived you asked them to pay for your taxi, but they did not have any money.

KJ said that you looked angry and drunk, and saw you going inside, and then heard you ‘screaming and talking shit’.

As the taxi driver was waiting, he saw a woman standing near the front gate holding a baby.

You found the victim sitting in a chair in the driveway, and you began to yell at her. After you had got out of the taxi, the driver heard a banging sound, which he described as, “Like something being broken and steel repeatedly hitting something”, which lasted for about 30 seconds before things went quiet for a short period. At the same time, he also heard a man yelling in what he believed to be another language.

After turning the taxi around in the street, the car’s dashcam footage captured you hitting someone on the ground with a chair a number of times. You attacked the victim, hitting her a number of times to the head, including with the use of the chair. This caused her to lose consciousness and fall to the ground.

As the victim lay unconscious on the ground, you retrieved boiling water, and poured it on her, causing burns to her face, neck, and chest.

JR stated that when she and KJ were walking back to the house she heard screaming and shouting before finding the victim unconscious, but still breathing on the driveway. She called 000.

Following your attack on the victim, you entered the house and removed your blood-spattered shirt, placing it on the bed in the victim’s bedroom.

The taxi driver became concerned about the noises he heard, so he drove forward to the next house. After ten to 12 minutes, a woman came out of the house and handed him the $20 note. He said this was the same woman he had seen earlier holding the baby, and that the woman did not say anything before she walked back into the yard.

St Johns Ambulance arrived before 4 am and located the victim lying near the front door to the house with serious injuries.

Police arrived and found you inside the victim’s room where you were arrested. You were tested at the watch house and returned a positive reading for alcohol.

As a result of the assault, TN suffered a traumatic brain injury, and fractures to her skull, right jaw, and eye socket, a laceration to her right ear, and burns to her chest.

Dr Kevin Heslop, Rehabilitation Registrar, reports that the victim suffered a severe type of acquired brain injury known as a diffuse axonal injury, which results

from blunt trauma to the brain and occurs when the brain rapidly shifts inside the skull as the injury is occurring.

The brain injury has caused permanent sensory, physical, and neurological impairment, and the victim requires ongoing disability support.

TN has suffered a substantial reduction in functional capacity, including: extreme difficulty with active voluntary and purposeful movement in the lower and upper limbs, meaning she is unable to independently stand or walk; limited ability to communicate with staff or use more than one or two words at a time, although thankfully I'm told that this improved a little from the initial presentation; unable to independently care for her children; and is unable to live or function independently.

A victim impact statement says that TN cannot walk without help. She has trouble talking, so that she can be understood, and cannot do anything by herself. She said that she could not eat normal food and can no longer have the food that she likes. She has to stay away from her family and cannot see her children who are scared of her and do not know her.

She is sad because her children are growing up without her. She feels disconnected not only from family, but from her community and culture, because she can no longer visit Gunbalanya. She can no longer work. She previously enjoyed having a job as a ranger, and is now on the disability pension. She says her life will never be the same.

The offence in count 2 is in the high range compared to other offences of its type. It was a particularly vicious, unprovoked, domestic violence attack with a weapon, which has resulted in extremely serious injuries to the victim which have had profound and permanent impacts upon her life. TN is confined to a wheelchair and lives in supported accommodation. The disability she suffers as a result of what you did is permanent. You have taken from a young woman the opportunity to lead the life that she wanted.

Not only did you strike the victim multiple times to the head with the chair, inflicting a serious traumatic brain injury, causing the victim to become unconscious at the scene, but you poured boiling water on her when she was unconscious, causing burns. The offending caused the victim physical, emotional, and financial hardship, which is significant and ongoing.

Count 3, the breach of the domestic violence order, is based on the same facts as count 2. However, the gravamen of that offence is different. It is failing to follow the court's order. In this case, you have breached almost every condition of the order, and committed extremely serious domestic violence against the victim only nine months into the three-year term of that order. It is an example of an offence which is in the high range. There was also an aggravating circumstance that at the time you committed the offences, which are counts 2 and 3, you were on bail for the offence in count 1.

The offence in count 1 is a serious example of that offence. You bit the offender on the arm. Biting is a particularly concerning and aggressive act. You then used the car as a weapon, driving it forward as the victim attempted to get in the back and forcing her to stumble. When a little later she attempted to get into the car, you rushed at her and used the door as a weapon, pushing it into her heavily so that she stumbled. Fortunately, however, the victim was not seriously injured as a result of your behaviour on that occasion. The offending was aggravated by the fact there were multiple applications of force, and it was domestic violence.

The court has received a psychological report dated 9 August 2026 from Dr Prowse which details your personal history, health, substance use, and psychological issues. You have not been formally diagnosed with any significant physical illness. However, in 2021 you sustained a traumatic head injury when you were struck to the back of the head with a pole during an altercation. You lost consciousness, required 12 stitches, and awoke in hospital, although you received no further treatment.

More recently, on 25 July 2026, you experienced a syncopal episode while in custody, and were taken to the Palmerston Hospital for assessment, although the cause of that episode was not made known to you.

Prior to your current imprisonment, you had not been formally diagnosed with a mental illness. While in custody, you have been prescribed an antianxiety drug to address symptoms of anxiety and depression. The psychologist's report suggests that you have experienced significant emotional and behavioral difficulties since childhood.

You report engaging in self-harm from the age of five or six, with those behaviours escalating in adulthood during conflict with a former partner. The psychologist considers that those behaviours are indicative of longstanding difficulties with emotional regulation and impulse control, and may reflect underlying psychiatric and personality pathology.

You have not previously engaged in psychological counselling or treatment in the community, nor have you undertaken residential rehabilitation, despite acknowledging a significant addition to methamphetamine.

While in custody you have completed an Alcohol and Other Drugs program and a family violence program, however, you have not yet received individual therapy directed towards your trauma history, emotional regulation difficulties, or substance misuse. The report also raises the possibility of neurodevelopmental difficulties, including Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, arising from your mother's heavy alcohol use in pregnancy, although that diagnosis has not been made.

Your childhood was marked by significant adversity, instability, and trauma. You describe your mother as a heavy drinker and say that there was frequent domestic violence between your parents. You were placed into foster care at a young age,

after your father had left the family home when you were about six or seven years old. You have had no contact with him since.

Your mother later remarried and had two daughters, although you never developed a relationship with your half-sisters. Your younger brother and sister were also placed into care, and although efforts were made to keep you together, you are not particularly close to them, notwithstanding occasional contact.

Your experience in foster care was characterised by instability and frequent placement changes. You often remained in placements for only a few months before being moved, which you attribute to behavioral difficulties. You report that those experiences caused you to lose connection with your culture. The most stable placement you experienced was between about 13 and 17 years of age with relatives from your mother's family. I am told that you remain in contact with your foster mother, although your foster father has since passed away.

You were exposed to violence throughout your childhood, not only within your family, but also in the communities in which you lived. You have also disclosed that you were sexually abused between the ages of seven and nine by an older male while visiting a community in Darwin. You say that matter was brought to police attention, and your mother subsequently left that community. The psychological report notes some uncertainty regarding the timing of those events, which may reflect either the effects of trauma upon memory, or genuine uncertainty about the chronology of your childhood experiences.

Your mother's own offending has also had a significant impact upon your life. She was convicted of manslaughter in either 2017 or 2018 after fatally stabbing her partner, and was sentenced to a lengthy term of imprisonment. Despite those events, you told the psychologist that you have forgiven your mother, and you continue to remain in contact with her.

In relation to your education, you attended Bulman Primary School through to Grade 6, and report experiencing learning difficulties for which you received additional support. You are able to read, write, and understand English well. You later attended Katherine High School and St John's College in Darwin, repeating a year due to behavioral problems. Your academic performance is said to have deteriorated over time and you did not complete Year 12. You were ultimately expelled after being found in possession of methamphetamine. You also reported being involved in numerous fights through your primary and secondary schooling.

Your substance misuse commenced at an early age. You began smoking cigarettes and using cannabis around 13 years of age. Alcohol use commenced around 15. Although you say that alcohol has not been a major problem for you, your methamphetamine use became increasingly severe. You say that you were introduced to that drug at approximately 16 or 17 years of age by a fellow student. You describe the drug as making you feel more confident and allowing you to talk and feel normal.

You acknowledge having previously committed offences such as theft, robbery, and assault in order to obtain money for drugs. Periods of abstinence have occurred only when you were incarcerated, and you say that your current imprisonment represents your first sustained period without methamphetamine. Although you have completed substance abuse programs in custody, you have never participated in residential rehabilitation.

Your employment history is limited and has been repeatedly disrupted by both substance abuse and offending. You have in the past relied largely upon Job Seeker payments and not actively sought employment. You did however work as a stockman in the Bulman community for several months in your early twenties but left that employment to return to Katherine and Darwin to access drugs. You later obtained employment in Gunbalanya while on parole, processing and selling meat with the community. But after approximately six months, you say you left again to access methamphetamine in Darwin.

Your personal relationships have been unstable and frequently affected by violence. During your first significant relationship a Domestic Violence Order was made against you. You have a daughter from that relationship. A second brief relationship resulted in the birth of a son, although you have had only limited involvement in his life. Your third significant relationship was with the victim in this matter. That relationship endured for several years and was characterised by domestic violence.

You and the victim have twin sons together who were infants at the time of this offending. You also have a stepdaughter from another relationship who you have not seen since that relationship ended.

You told the psychologist that your current period of imprisonment has been a significant wakeup call, and that you wish to engage in rehabilitation and treatment in order to develop a more stable and prosocial lifestyle.

In relation to the offending in counts 2 and 3, you say that you were angry because the victim and others had left you asleep outside Hibiscus Shopping Centre. The report of the psychologist states that during periods of heavy methamphetamine use, you have displayed a marked and careless indifference to the consequences of your conduct.

The psychologist concludes that although you do not meet the diagnostic criteria for post-traumatic stress disorder, you experience significant trauma related symptoms arising from your childhood abuse, repeated disruptions through foster care, and chronic exposure to domestic and community violence. The report also says you meet the criteria for Bipolar I Disorder with psychotic features, a substance use disorder, and an adjustment disorder with anxiety.

In addition, Dr Prowse identified significant personality pathology, including antisocial personality disorder, paranoid personality disorder, narcissistic traits, and an unspecified personality disorder with sadistic features.

The psychologist's report ultimately assesses you as presenting a heightened and ongoing danger to the community. You are considered to be at a high risk of future serious violence, substance related offending, and general reoffending.

The psychologist attributes that risk to your personality disorders and traits, lack of empathy, and longstanding behavioral volatility. She suggests the risk may only be reduced over the longer term through sustained abstinence from substances, effective psychiatric treatment for your bipolar disorder, and intensive psychological intervention directed towards accountability, anger management, and the development of victim empathy.

You have a lengthy criminal history throughout the Northern Territory which dates back to 2011 when you were a youth. The vast majority of your offending seems to involve alcohol. There is, for example, a considerable amount of alcohol-related traffic offending.

Although you do not have an extensive record for violent offending, violence is not out of character for you. There is one conviction from March 2021 for aggravated assault, with the circumstance of aggravation of male-female harm and defenseless. You received a four-month and two-week gaol sentence.

There is also an earlier conviction in 2016 for the same offence, with the same circumstances of aggravation, for which you received a six month term of imprisonment which was partly suspended. Each of those offences involved a different victim to the current offending. There was also a conviction for assaulting workers in 2020 for which you received a term of imprisonment of six weeks. The offending for which you are being sentenced today is therefore a marked escalation in the seriousness of your offending.

Your history also indicates an inability to comply with court orders, with a number of breaches of suspended sentences recorded, and offences involving breaches of court orders such as driving when disqualified.

You are not being sentenced again today for any of your old matters, but you do not come before the court as a person of good character, including so far as violence is concerned, and you are not entitled to any leniency. Your history is also relevant to your rehabilitation prospects.

The maximum penalties are an indication of the seriousness of each of these offences.

The most relevant sentencing principes are punishment, denunciation, deterrence, and community protection. Violent drunken offending against intimate partners is at such high levels in the Northern Territory and around Australia, that to describe it is as prevalent is to understate the scale of the problem. This sentence must do what it can to uphold the dignity of the victim, to register the community's

outrage and disapproval of the behaviour, and to deter others from behaving in this way. There is, as I have said, also a need to protect the community from you.

Count 2 is a particularly egregious crime in which the defining feature is the seriousness of the harm which was inflicted. The injuries could properly be described as catastrophic so far as the victim's quality of life is concerned.

You come from a background of profound disadvantage, as I have described, which can be summarised as having significant instability, violence, and criminality. The secondary effect of having been in the care system as a child is also that you are disconnected from family and culture and isolated from both.

The effects of your background do not diminish over time. There is some reduction in your moral culpability for the offending because you come from a background where alcohol abuse, drug abuse, and violence were normalised, but it does not mean that you are not significantly culpable. You knew that you were intoxicated. You knew that the Domestic Violence Order was in place. You have failed to learn from other convictions for violence against other women in the past. In summary, you knew that what you were doing was wrong.

It also appears that you have some psychological conditions which impact your ability to regulate your behaviour. The conclusion of the psychologist, Dr Prowse, was that you have a psychiatric condition, bipolar I disorder with psychotic features, substance abuse disorder, adjustment disorder, and anxiety overlaid with serious personality disorders I have already described.

Your lawyer argued that those psychological conditions and disorder also operate so as to reduce your moral culpability for the offending, and to make denunciation and deterrence a less prominent sentencing objective. It was argued that there is a causal relationship between your mental ill-health and the offending behaviour, in particular because the offending in count 2 occurred in the context of an unreasonable sense of abandonment when you were left outside the Hibiscus Tavern.

The psychologist's opinion was that the polysubstance intoxication, compounded by situational distress, including the perceived abandonment by the victim, provide context, but they were primarily disinhibitory rather than primary causal agents. The primary cause, she said, is your underlying personality and attitudes.

Voluntary intoxication is not mitigating. As to the other factors, while a contribution must be shown, it need not equate to causation in law.

It is not clear from the psychologist's report which condition or conditions may have contributed, or the exact nature of the condition. However, overall, I think there is likely to have been some contribution from the mental health disorders which reduces moral culpability, but the effect upon the weight given to deterrence, both general and specific, is relatively small. As I have already said, I have no doubt that you were well aware that what you were doing was wrong.

I also am of the view that you do have the capacity to learn from the punishments you have received, and there is nothing in your circumstances which indicates to me that you are an altogether unsuitable vehicle for general deterrence.

Community protection must be given significant weight in this matter based on the factors I have already described. Dr Prowse has stated that you present a heightened and ongoing danger to the public. Your underlying conditions, coupled with your entrenched drug and alcohol abuse, in the context of your proven history of offending provide ample evidence of that.

Your rehabilitation prospects can only be described as poor. Dr Prowse states that your interpersonal style is marked by intimidation, severe violence, property destruction, and a persistent disregard for the rights of others. Your lack of emotional empathy is, according to Dr Prowse, your primary risk factor, along with a total absence of insight into your violent behaviour and remorse for your victim.

You have been on remand since 11 July 2024. Time on remand is generally more difficult than time spent as a sentenced prisoner due to the limited access to programs and services, however, I note that you have taken advantage of some courses which were offered to you, which is to your credit. In addition, you have been on remand during a difficult period during which some conditions, including reduced time out of cell, have been more onerous than has historically been the case.

It is also the case that due to your mental health and personality issues, you may find time in custody more difficult than other prisoners. In that regard, I do note that you have been receiving treatment from forensic mental health services whilst in custody. I have seen the progress notes from the service which outline the symptoms and treatment provided. I take those matters into account.

You pleaded guilty on 10 July 2026, ahead of a previously listed trial; therefore, this was not an early plea. The victim was required to undergo an assessment by Dr Friend on 17 June 2026 for three hours to assess her ability to give evidence if the matter were to go to trial.

Nevertheless, the pleas have utilitarian value because they facilitate the administration of justice, they have saved the victim from having to attempt to give evidence, which would have been very difficult for her. I also note, however, that this was a very strong Crown case.

The presentence report said that when you were asked about your offending you said that you were, “Not sure, you weren’t thinking straight,” and went on to say that you want to tell the victim how sorry you are. Your lawyer submitted that you were genuinely remorseful, but I do not accept that. I think it is more likely that you are sorry for the situation you now find yourself in. Dr Prowse’s clear opinion was that you are not remorseful. She also said that you have a history of only seeking

assistance for your issues when you are in gaol, and your statements about reform should be seen with that history in mind.

I will, however, reduce the sentence I would otherwise have imposed upon you by approximately 15 percent to reflect the value of your plea.

This is a matter where a term of imprisonment with a non-parole period is the only appropriate sentence.

You have been in custody since your arrest on 11 July 2024. Your sentence will be backdated to that date.

Stand up, please, Mr Campion.

I find each of the offences on the indictment proven. You are convicted of each offence, and sentenced to an aggregate term of imprisonment of 7 years' commencing on 11 July 2024.

The indicative sentences are:

Count 1, 12 months;

Count 2, 6 years; and

Count 3, 2 years;

The non-parole period is 4 years.

I set that non-parole period slightly over 50 percent to reflect the seriousness of the offending, and your need for additional rehabilitation whilst in prison. I hope that you are given the opportunity to undertake the further programs in prison which have been identified in the presentence report. Of course, it is entirely a matter for the parole board if you are granted early release and on what conditions. Take a seat, please.

I am told there is domestic violence order in place which expires in 2028. I understand that it has non-intoxication conditions, in addition to standard conditions.

In my view, in view of the facts in this matter, I should exercise the court's power under s 83 of the *Domestic and Family Violence Act*, to vary the terms of that Domestic Violence Order. The Domestic Violence Order should, in view of the age of the parties, the age of the children, the significant vulnerability of the victim, be for an indefinite period.

I do not see why there should be any need for this victim to be contacted by the offender. However, because there are children of the relationship who have a right to know their father if the Family Court or another court decides that is proper, I will

include a family law exception. That means that the offender may, via a solicitor, contact the victim in relation to a family law proceedings, and if a court grants access, he may of course see the children, subject to the terms of any court order.

You need to understand, Mr Campion, that the Domestic Violence Order means that you must not contact the victim or the children, either directly or indirectly. That includes by telephone, et cetera, from the gaol. However, a lawyer can contact the victim on your behalf if you wish to take family law action in relation to seeing your children at some stage in the future, for example, when you are released. If you get an order to spend time with the children, you would need to follow the terms of that order, but you need to understand that I am not making that order today, that is a matter which you need to deal with on a sperate occasion.

If you wish to change the terms of the Domestic Violence Order, you have to go back to court. It is not something the victim can agree to. So it is a full non-contact order in the standard terms, with a family law exception.

Do counsel wish to say anything further about that?

MR PHILLIPS: No, your Honour.

HER HONOUR: All right. You need to understand, Mr Campion, that the terms of that Domestic Violence Order, those rules, they apply everywhere in Australia and not just here in the Northern Territory. A breach of the rules of the Domestic Violence Order is a criminal offence, and depending on the circumstances the punishment can be up to five years in gaol. Do you understand that?

All right. Was there anything arising?

MS DART: No, your Honour.

MR PHILLIPS: No, your Honour.

HER HONOUR: Thank you, counsel, for your assistance. We will adjourn.
