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**UNLESS INDICATED OTHERWISE, ALL LEGISLATION REFERRED TO IS VICTORIAN.**

## **11.1 Sentencing principles & sentencing orders**

**"Juveniles are less mature - less able to form moral judgments, less capable of controlling impulses, less aware of the consequences of acts, in short they are less responsible and therefore less blameworthy than adults. Their diminished responsibility means that they 'deserve' a lesser punishment than an adult who commits the same crime…Lesser punishment means not only more sparing use of detention but it also means significantly shorter terms of detention, bonds and periods of licence disqualification, because time has a wholly different dimension for children than it does for adults."**

Judge Newman (South Australian Youth Court)

South Australian Youth Court Advisory Committee, Annual Report 1983, pp.6-7

**"The risk that a period of detention will be counter-productive for an offender – and hence for the community – is never higher than in relation to a young offender who has not previously been in custody. Research to which the Chief Scientist of New Zealand has recently drawn attention has highlighted the potential for the immature brain to respond to punitive punishments in such a way as to make recidivism more rather than less likely."**

Victorian Court of Appeal in *CNK v The Queen* (2011) 32 VR 641; [2011] VSCA 228 at [77]

per Maxwell P, Harper JA & Lasry AJA citing Laurence Steinberg, ‘Adolescent Development and Juvenile Justice’ (2009) *Annual Review of Clinical Psychology* 47, 65–68, cited in *Improving the Transition: Reducing Social and Psychological Morbidity During Adolescence*, Report to Prime Minister of New Zealand by Chief Scientific Advisor (May 2011), 28.

**"[S]entencing is not a process that leads to a single correct answer arrived at by some process admitting of mathematical precision.”**

High Court of Australia in *Pearce v The Queen* (1998) 194 CLR 610, 624 per McHugh, Hayne & Callinan JJ cited with approval in *DPP v Yeomans* [2011] VSCA 277 at [66]

Only a small percentage of offences involving accused children are contested and a significant proportion of these are found proved in any event. It follows that the major task for a judge or magistrate in the Criminal Division of the Children’s Court is the sentencing of juvenile offenders. In *R v Lanteri* [2006] VSC 225 at [6] Gillard J explained the sentencing process for adult offenders:

“My task is to determine the facts and, applying the principles of sentencing law, to determine in the exercise of my discretion, what is a proportionate and appropriate sentence in all the circumstances. In relation to the sentencing process, I refer to what the Court of Appeal said in *R v Storey* [1998] 1 VR 359 at 366:

“Sentencing is not a mechanical process. It requires the exercise of a discretion. There is no single ‘right’ answer which can be determined by the application of principle. Different minds will attribute different weight to various facts in arriving at the ‘instinctive synthesis’ which takes account of the various purposes for which sentences are imposed - just punishment, deterrence, rehabilitation, denunciation, protection of the community - and which pays due regard to the principles of totality, parity, parsimony, and the like.”

The process for sentencing juvenile offenders is the same although the weight given by the sentencing judge to the various factors involved in the ‘instinctive synthesis’ is likely to be quite different in most juvenile cases.

### **11.1.1 Sentencing models**

There are two sentencing models which, in one combination or another, underpin the sentencing of persons, whether adult or juvenile, in most jurisdictions. In his Keynote Address at the Youth Justice Conference in September 2000: "Managing a New World in Transit", the Chief Justice of Singapore said of these models in relation to youth sentencing:

"National responses in many countries to youth offending throughout the 20th century have fluctuated between the 'welfare' and the 'justice' models: broadly whether young offenders are seen as being primarily in need of care and rehabilitation, or deserving of correction or punishment. Both approaches have received their share of criticism."

### **11.1.2 Sentencing of adults**

In sentencing an **adult** offender a court is required, by s.5(1) of the *Sentencing Act 1991*, as far as practicable-

➊ to punish the offender;

➋ to deter the individual offender ['specific deterrence'];

➌ to deter the community generally ['general deterrence'];

➍ to rehabilitate the offender;

➎ to denounce the offender; and

➏ to protect the community.

This is predominantly a 'justice' model, only item ➍ falling squarely within the 'welfare' model. In *R v Tuan Quoc Truong* [2005] VSCA 147 at [17]-[18] the Court of Appeal emphasized that the principle of general deterrence {item ➌} was not to be used to convey a message to a specific ethnic community but to members of the community generally. See also *R v Reth Mao* [2006] VSCA 36 at [38]-[42].

In relation to general deterrence {item ➌} as a sentencing principle for adult offenders, Champion J – in sentencing a 23 year old offender on a charge of manslaughter – held in *R v Deng* [2023] VSC 257 that general deterrence and just punishment were important. His Honour said at [169], citing a large number of relatively recent cases in support of propositions [1] to [6]:

“Regarding general deterrence, this principle takes priority in circumstances where public safety is put at risk [1], such as cases involving street violence [2], drugs [3], alcohol [4] or unprovoked attacks [5]. General deterrence will also be of particular importance if the offending is committed in breach of a court order such as bail [6]. All of these factors are, to varying degrees, present in your case. I therefore consider general deterrence to be important in the circumstances.”

In relation to item ➍ Maxwell P, with whom Chernov JA & Habersberger AJA agreed, said in *R v Merrett, Piggott & Ferrari* (2007) 14 VR 392; [2007] VSCA 1 at [49]:

“As I said in *The Queen v Tiburcy* [2006] VSCA 244, the sentencing court looks to the future as well as to the past. There is very great benefit to the community at large, as well as to the individuals themselves and their immediate families, if future criminal activity can be avoided. It is important that this Court, by its own sentencing decisions, recognise and reward efforts at rehabilitation, just as we should support trial judges who do so. It is important to reinforce in the public mind the very considerable public interest in the rehabilitation of offenders. The preoccupation with retribution which characterises much of the public comment on sentencing is understandable, but it focuses on only one part of what the sentencing court does.”

In *DPP v Samarentsis* [2007] VSCA 20 a very experienced judge had sentenced an offender who had demonstrated “a complete turn around” in his life in a way that gave much greater weight to the offender’s prospects of rehabilitation than it did to factors such as denunciation and deterrence. In refusing the DPP appeal Eames JA at [5] and Kellam AJA at [34] approved and applied dicta of King CJ in *R v Osenkowski* (1982) 30 SASR 212 at 212-213:

“Prosecution appeals should not be allowed to circumscribe unduly the sentencing discretion of judges. There must always be a place for the exercise of mercy where a judge’s sympathies are reasonably excited by the circumstances of the case. There must always be a place for the leniency which has traditionally been extended, even to offenders with bad records, when a judge forms the view, almost intuitively in the case of experienced judges, that leniency at that particular stage of the offender’s life might lead to reform.”

In *DPP v Milson* [2019] VSCA 55 at [71] Priest & Weinberg JJA said in relation to the 31 year old respondent:

“In a climate when sentences for many (if not most) crimes are increasing, it is easy to forget that the protection of the community ultimately is best served by the rehabilitation of an offender: see *Sentencing Act 1991*, ss.5(1)(c) and (e). If an offender, whether young or recidivist, can be steered away from a life of crime, the public interest is best served. That notion, it seems to us, informed what Young CJ said about the sentencing of youthful offenders in *AG v Chmil, Zanoni & Ross* (Unreported, 1 August 1977, Vic, CCA):

‘I think it should be remembered that in the long run the community is better served and better protected if a young offender is rehabilitated and led away from a life of crime than if after a short or long gaol sentence, imposed to satisfy a public clamour for retribution, he is taught the ways of the criminal.’

[It] also underpinned the observations that King CJ made in *Osenkowski* (1982) 30 SASR 212 at 212-213 with respect to the sentencing of seasoned offenders. Indeed, although it is often taken for granted leniency extended by a judge for the purposes of rehabilitation bestows a benefit on the prisoner alone, commentary in social and news media frequently ignores the fact that the community’s interest is best served if well-placed leniency in sentencing may (and often does) lead to reformation: *R v Williscroft* [1975] VR 292, 303 (Starke J).”

See also *Jiaming Gui v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 273 at [29] where Priest & Weinberg JJA repeated the above observations of Sir John Young in *Chmil’s Case* and *DPP v Smith* [2022] VSCA 4 at [82] where Emerton JA (with whom Priest & Niall JJA agreed) also repeated Sir John Young’s dicta in dismissing a DPP appeal in relation to the 20 year old respondent.

### **11.1.2.1 Sentencing of adults for offences committed as a child**

In *Whitecroft (a pseudonym) v The King* [2025] VSCA 143 the applicant – who had no prior or subsequent criminal convictions, had a stable family background and had been employed in a number of roles since graduating school – had been sentenced to IMP2y6m/18m on multiple counts of incest committed by the applicant 24-26 years previously against his younger sister when he was aged 15‑17. In refusing leave to appeal the Court of Appeal (Niall CJ & Kidd JA) held that the sentencing judge had not erred in the application of the sentencing principles for adult offenders when they fall to be sentenced for offences committed as a child, their Honours holding at [37]-[38]:

[37] “The applicable approach for sentencing an adult offender for offences committed as a child is encapsulated in Nettle JA’s observations in *R v PJP* (2007) 17 VR 300, 304 [16]; [2007] VSCA 242 (Ashley and Dodds-Streeton JJA agreeing): There is good reason to mitigate penalty or at least to do so where the offender has achieved a significant degree of rehabilitation and there has been no further offending. Although such offender falls to be sentenced as an adult, common sense and fairness dictate that the assessment of the nature and gravity of the crime, and of the offender’s moral culpability take into account that what was done was done as a child, or as a person of immature years and not as an adult or a person of greater maturity.

[38] The sentencing judge accurately recited this principle. The issue was ‘front and centre’ during the plea discussions. In the Reasons, her Honour went to great lengths to emphasise that she was sentencing the applicant for offending that he committed as a child, decades ago.”

### **11.1.3 Sentencing of children**

By contrast, the focus of the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* [No.96/2005] ['CYFA'] – like its predecessor the *Children and Young Persons Act 1989* [No.56/1989] [‘CYPA’] – in relation to the sentencing of Victorian **young offenders** is predominantly rehabilitative. In Fox and Freiberg, Sentencing: State and Federal Law in Victoria, 2nd ed. 1999, Oxford University Press South Melbourne, the authors characterize Victoria's legislative scheme as an attempt to blend the two sentencing models: 'welfare' and 'justice'. In the Second Reading Speech the objectives of the CYPA were said (at p.1150) to include the provision of:

* an adequate and constructive response to children and young people who have been charged with and found guilty of committing offences;
* an extended and more flexible range of dispositions in each of the divisions of the Court, which seek to enable children to remain at home wherever practicable and appropriate.

The rehabilitative focus is reinforced by the requirement (at p.1151) to give priority to child protection where there are both protective and criminal matters in respect of the one child: see s.18(2) of the CYPA [now s.522(2) of the CYFA]. It is clear that when enacting the sentencing principles in s.139 of the CYPA & s.362 of the CYFA, Parliament - like its counterparts in most other countries in the world – did not consider children and young persons merely to be little adults. In *CNK v The Queen* (2011) 32 VR 641; [2011] VSCA 228 at [76] the Court of Appeal – referring to the cases of *Merrett* & *Tiburcy* – treated the young applicant’s rehabilitation as “a primary consideration”. See also *R v Azzopardi, R v Baltatzis, R v Gabriel* [2011] VSCA 372 at [34]-[44]; *DPP v McGuigan* [2012] VSCA 121.

The philosophies of "**home & family preservation**" & "**stigma minimisation**" differentiate the sentencing of children from that of adults. The philosophies are included in the principles in s.362(1) of the CYFA to which the Court **must** have regard, as far as practicable, in determining what sentence to impose on a child. This is predominantly a 'welfare' model of sentencing, only principles (e), (f), (g) & (h) having a 'justice' component. Principles (a) & (c) have parallels in the Family Division in ss.10(3)(b) & 10(3)(o) of the CYFA.

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|  | **PRINCIPLE** | | **MODEL** |
| (a) | **STRENGTHENING**  **FAMILIES** | The need to strengthen and preserve the relationship between the child and the child's family. | WELFARE |
| (b) | **LIVE AT HOME** | The desirability of allowing the child to live at home. | WELFARE |
| (c) | **EDUCATION ETC UNDISTURBED** | The desirability of allowing the education, training or employment of the child to continue without interruption or disturbance. | WELFARE |
| (d) | **MINIMISE**  **STIGMA** | The need to minimise the stigma to the child resulting from a court determination. | WELFARE |
| (e) | **SUITABILITY OF SENTENCE** | The suitability of the sentence to the child. | WELFARE/  JUSTICE |
| (f) | **ACCOUNTABILITY** | If appropriate, the need to ensure that the child is aware that he or she must bear a responsibility for any action by him or her against the law. | JUSTICE/  WELFARE |
| (g) | **COMMUNITY**  **PROTECTION** | The need to protect the community, or any person, from the violent or other wrongful acts of the child-   1. in all cases where the sentence is for a Category A or Category B serious youth offence; or 2. in any other case, if it is appropriate to do so. | JUSTICE |
| (h) | **GOOD ORDER IN DETENTION FACILITIES** | If appropriate, the need to deter the child from committing offences in remand centres, youth residential centres or youth justice centres. | JUSTICE |

While – unlike s.5 of the *Sentencing Act 1991* and except for s.362(1)(h) – there is no explicit mention in s.362(1) of punishment, denunciation or deterrence (either specific or general), in appropriate cases punishment or specific deterrence may be justified by the "suitability" principle of s.362(1)(e), the "accountability" principle of s.362(1)(f) or the “community protection” principle of s.362(1)(g). However, while stating that "broadly speaking, normal sentencing principles" are also applicable to youthful offenders, the Court of Appeal has emphasised that the sentencing of children is under a very different regime from that of adults. In his judgment in *R v Dwayne Andrew Evans* [2003] VSCA 223 (with which Ormiston & Batt JJA agreed on this issue), Vincent JA said at [44]:

"An elaborate system has been developed to deal with the problem of offending by children and young persons in our community, with a separate court, separate detention facilities, supervision systems and so forth. Whilst broadly speaking, normal sentencing principles can be said to remain applicable when dealing with youthful offenders, as a matter of law and practice it is recognised that the respective weight to be given to relevant factors will vary. In addition the *Children and Young Persons Act* 1989 sets out [in s.139] a number of matters to which a sentence in the Children’s Court must have regard and which differ in kind and emphasis from roughly similar provisions in s.5 of the *Sentencing Act 1991* . Underlying this system is the attribution of considerable significance to the generally accepted immaturity of the young people who appear before the Children’s Court and the need, in the interests of the community and the young persons concerned, to endeavour to divert them from engagement in anti-social conduct at that early stage of their lives: see *R v Homer* (1976) 13 SASR 377. These considerations can and do lead to dispositions which would be regarded as entirely inappropriate in the case of older and presumably more mature individuals."

See also the judgment of Southwell AJA (with whom Phillips CJ & Callaway JA agreed) in *R v Angus* [unreported, 01/02/1996] at pp.6-7, citing with approval dicta of Lush J in the Court of Criminal Appeal in *R v Wilson* [unreported, 28/02/1983].

In *CNK v The Queen* (2011) 32 VR 641; [2011] VSCA 228 the Court of Appeal (Maxwell P, Harper JA & Lasry AJA) at [38]-[39] summed up the principles involved in sentencing a child under the CYFA:

[38] “[O]ur conclusion [that general deterrence is not applicable] does not depend upon s.362(1) being treated as an exhaustive statement of the sentencing considerations to be applied where a child is being sentenced. Rather, the analysis turns on the singularity of general deterrence as a sentencing consideration and what we see as its incompatibility with the clear objectives and plain language of s.362(1).

[39] We respectfully agree with [the sentencing judge] that a court sentencing a child would – as in any other sentencing process – be required to consider the gravity of the offence, the remorse of the offender, whether or not the offender had pleaded guilty, the offender’s character and antecedents and the impact of the offence on the victim. Unlike general deterrence, however, those considerations are all directed at an assessment of the particular offending, and of the particular offender, and they inform the determination of a sentence which is properly reflective of all of those features. The statutory directive in s.362(1) [to take the specified matters into account ‘as far as practicable’] is an acknowledgment that the Court’s ability to do so may be affected by those various factors.”

In *Bradley Webster (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2016] VSCA 66 the 17 year old offender had been found guilty of seven charges of rape arising from a single episode. A number of other charges were dismissed. BW was sentenced in the Children’s Court to a 12 month youth supervision order. On a Director’s appeal – in which BW pleaded guilty – he was sentenced in the County Court to 2 years YJC detention. In the Court of Appeal the majority allowed BW’s appeal and sentenced him to a 12 month youth attendance order. In dissent, Beach J granted leave to appeal but dismissed the appeal. In their majority judgment Maxwell P & Redlich JA referred wiith strong approval to the decision of the Court of Appeal in *CNK v The Queen* (2011) 32 VR 641 and the decision of Vincent JA in *R v Evans* [2003] VSCA 223 [44]. At [6]-[10] & [28] their Honours summarized the significant distinction between sentencing of adults and sentencing of young offenders as follows-

“[6] This appeal highlights, once again, the difficult task which confronts a sentencing court when imposing sentence for serious crimes committed by a young offender. In such a case there is – or at least there appears to be – an acute conflict between sentencing considerations. On the one hand, conventional considerations of just punishment and denunciation point towards a custodial penalty, because serious offences are seen to require the uniquely punitive sanction of loss of liberty: See *Boulton v The Queen* [2014] VSCA 342 [104]-[105]. On the other hand, the public interest in the rehabilitation of an offender is never greater than in the case of a young offender.

[7] In fact...the conflict is more apparent than real. **What is so distinctive, and so important, about juvenile justice is that it requires a radically different balancing of the purposes of punishment. The punitive or retributive considerations which are appropriately applied to adults must be largely set aside.**

[8] There are three reasons for this. First, the young offender’s immaturity is seen as markedly reducing his/her moral culpability; secondly, custody can be particularly criminogenic for a young person, whose brain is still developing; and, thirdly, the very process of development and maturation which is under way is seen as providing a unique opportunity for rehabilitation and – hence – for minimizing the risk of reoffending.

[9]...[T]he primacy of rehabilitation in the sentencing of young offenders is well established, both at common law and by the principles of the *CYFA*. In our view, this was a case where BW’s culpability was much less than would have been the case for an adult offender, and where the importance of promoting his rehabilitation meant that a non-custodial order was called for.

[10] One of the consequences of this approach to sentencing is that the victim of serious offending like this (and her family) may feel that the harm they have suffered because of the offending is given insufficient weight in the sentencing process. The victim impact statement reveals the profound impact of this offending on J and her family. Our conclusion on resentencing should not be taken as implying that these impacts have been overlooked or undervalued…

[28] The position may be summed up as follows. First, the statutory framework for juvenile justice compels the court sentencing a young offender (almost always the Children’s Court) to adopt the offender-centred (or ‘welfare’) approach, rather than the ‘justice’ or ‘punishment’ approach. For an example of this terminology, see K.Richards, ‘What makes juvenile offenders different from adult offenders?’, *Trends and Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice* No 409 (Australian Institute of Criminology, February 2011) p.6. Secondly, and just as importantly, this strong legislative policy is well supported by the extensive research into adolescent development conducted over the past 30 years: C M Chu and J R P Ogloff, *‘Sentencing of Adolescent Offenders in Victoria: A Review of Empirical Evidence and Practice’* (2012) 19 Psychiatry, Psychology and the Law 32.

The dicta of Vincent JA in *R v Dwayne Andrew Evans* [2003] VSCA 223 at [44] and of Maxwell P & Redlich JA in *Webster v The Queen* [2016] VSCA 66 at [7] was quoted and applied by Judge Chambers in *DPP v SI (a child)* [2018] VChC 3 at [37]-[39].

In *DPP v JK (Sentence)* [2020] VSC 510 Hollingworth J, in imposing a sentence of 3y detention on a 17 year old who had pleaded guilty to home invasion and recklessly causing serious injury, said at [49]:

“Very different sentencing principles apply to children, and very different sentences are imposed on children, in recognition of the fact that they are less mature, less able to form moral judgments or control their impulses, and less aware of the consequences of their actions. The Court of Appeal has acknowledged that these considerations can and do lead to dispositions which would be regarded as entirely inappropriate in the case of older individuals.”

In *DPP v JN* [2023] VSC 500 the offender – who was aged 17 at the time of the offence and 18 at the time of sentence – had pleaded guilty to manslaughter by unlawful and dangerous act. In imposing a sentence of IMP6y/4y Hollingworth J said at [48]-[51]:

[48] “Your age is another very relevant sentencing consideration. Because you were 17 at the time of offending, you are to be sentenced as a child offender. Very different sentencing principles apply to children, and very different sentences are imposed on them, in recognition of the fact that they are less mature, less able to form moral judgments or control their impulses, and less aware of the consequences of their actions.

[49] The law says that the youth of an offender should be a primary consideration for a sentencing court, where the matter properly arises. In the case of such an offender, rehabilitation is usually more important than general deterrence; rehabilitation benefits the community as well as the offender.

[50] However, those principles are not absolute; due regard must be had in each case to other relevant matters, including the seriousness of the offending, and whether there has been any prior offending. Generally speaking, the more serious the offending, the less the weight to be attached to youth. But the mitigatory effect of youth will be extinguished only in circumstances of the gravest criminal offending, and where there is no realistic prospect of rehabilitation.

[51] All of these considerations can and do lead to children receiving sentences which would be regarded as entirely inappropriate in the case of older individuals.”

In *DPP v JA & Ors* [2023] VSC 531 the three young offenders had pleaded guilty to different offences arising out of their involvement – as part of a large group of youths – in a frenzied attack with multiple knives on an unarmed youth [V], culminating in V’s death. Hollingworth J described the attack as follows:

[9] “When [your stolen] car reached [V], all [the occupants] got out of the car and started to chase him. [V] tried to run away, but was dragged by his jumper onto the nature strip. Two of your co-accused immediately started stabbing him, while somebody else kicked and stomped on him. The rest of your group soon joined in the attack, by repeatedly stabbing, stomping on or kicking [V]. [V] was lying on his back, trying to fend off the vicious attack.

[10] After the initial attack, all…of you returned briefly to the car. Then AM and three of your other co-accused returned to attack [V] again. This involved repeated stabbing, kicking and stomping, as well as taking [V’s] shoes. Soon afterwards, all group members got back in the car and drove off, leaving [V] dead or dying by the side of the road.

[11] The entire attack lasted a little over 2 minutes, and involved the use of four knives by five offenders, as well as kicking and stomping by all participants. The attack was frenzied, savage and totally unprovoked. The incident was captured on a neighbour’s CCTV camera. The footage is absolutely shocking in its brutality…

[17] [V] suffered 66 blunt force injuries, 56 sharp force injuries, and 30 puncture wounds, all over his head, body and limbs. His cause of death was stab wounds to the chest.”

At [25]-[29] her Honour discussed the sentencing principles for children:

[25] “Very different sentencing principles apply to children, and very different sentences are imposed on children, in recognition of the fact that they are less mature, less able to form moral judgments or control their impulses, and less aware of the seriousness and consequences of their actions. That is especially so in the case of offences committed impulsively, such as this one.

[26] The law says that the youth of an offender should be a primary consideration for a sentencing court, where the matter properly arises. In the case of such an offender, rehabilitation is usually more important than general deterrence; rehabilitation benefits the community as well as the offender. There is a significant public benefit in rehabilitating a young offender, and maximising the prospect that they will go on to live a peaceful, productive and law-abiding life.

[27] However, those principles are not absolute; due regard must be had in each case to other relevant matters, including the seriousness of the offending, and whether there has been any prior offending. Generally speaking, the more serious the offending, the less the weight to be attached to youth. But the mitigatory effect of youth will be extinguished only in circumstances of the gravest criminal offending, and where there is no realistic prospect of rehabilitation.

[28] AM has pleaded guilty to murder, which is a standard sentence offence. However, the standard sentence provisions do not apply to child offenders. Similarly, because JA and MM were also children at the time of their offending, the principles relating to custodial sentences for their respective offences do not apply.

[29] All of these considerations can, and do, lead to children receiving sentences which would be regarded as entirely inappropriate in the case of older individuals.”

Her Honour imposed the following sentences, noting at [32]:

“Although the three of you were involved in the same attack, you have pleaded guilty to very different offences, and each had varying degrees of involvement. There are also relevant differences in your ages and personal circumstances. That means the sentencing principle of parity has little role to play in this case.”

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| **OFFENDER & AGE AT THE TIME OF OFFENDING** | **PLEA GUILTY TO** | **SENTENCE** |
| AM [14] | Murder | IMP15y/10y with a recommendation to the Adult Parole Board that he be transferred to the youth justice system until age 21 pursuant to s.471 CYFA. |
| JA [16] | Manslaughter | 4y detention in a youth justice centre |
| MM [16] | Intentionally causing serious injury in circumstances of gross violence | 3y6m detention in a youth justice centre |

Each of the offenders was sentenced under the *Sentencing Act 1991*, not under the CYFA. This meant that unlike *CNK v The Queen* (2011) 32 VR 641 – where the Court of Appeal had held that general deterrence was not an available sentencing consideration when sentencing under s.362(1) of the CYFA – general deterrence was a relevant sentencing consideration as Hollingworth J noted at [31]:

“General deterrence is still an important sentencing consideration in this case. The offending was carried out in company with others, late at night, with knives, as a result of tensions and perceived slights between groups of youths. It involved unprovoked and brutal violence against an unarmed teenager, who was trying to run away at the time. Unfortunately, violent knife crimes committed by young offenders have become far too common. The consequences that flow from such attacks can be devastating, for victims, their families and friends, and those who witness such incidents. It is also a real concern for the wider community, who need to be protected and to feel safe. There is a clear need for general deterrence (as well as denunciation and just punishment) in respect of such offending.”

In *FD v DPP* [2025] VSC 519 the 17 year old offender had pleaded guilty to intentionally causing serious injury in circumstances of gross violence and had been sentenced in the Children’s Court to YJC28m with 175d declared as pre-sentence detention. He subsequently appealed. In the circumstances detailed at [6]-[13], the 16 year old victim – who was not known to the offender – had sustained a stab wound to the right posterior thigh, significant internal bleeding in the pelvic region, a likely bladder or urethral injury and clot in the bladder, and lacerations to the scalp, arms and hands. At [17] Incerti J said: “The victim impact statements provide insight into the harrowing nature of the attack and its physical and emotional consequences on both the victim and his mother. It is difficult to comprehend how terrifying it was for the victim and the ongoing, possibly lifelong, effects he now faces.” FD had started using cannabis regularly at around 13 or 14, and by 16 he was experimenting with MDMA and drinking alcohol daily. He had consumed seven capsules of MDMA in the hours leading up to the attack. His mental health and substance use had worsened after the loss of a close friend in a car accident in April 2022. He had recently been diagnosed with a number of neurodevelopmental conditions, including Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Level 1 and Severe Developmental Language Disorder. At [66] Incerti J rejected a submission that limb 1 of *Verdins* was enlivened, saying:

“I accept that FD’s has significant underlying mental health vulnerabilities. However, I am not satisfied that there was a realistic connection between his actions and his mental health vulnerabilities that justifies any reduction in his moral culpability. FD willingly consumed a large amount of drugs; there is no doubt that this significantly affected him. Even if I could disentangle the impact of FDs’ mental health vulnerabilities on his conduct, given his drug use I would give it little or no weight in assessing his moral culpability.”

At [76]-[85] Incerti J discussed the relevant legislative considerations contained in ss.360-362 of the CYFA, noting at [77] the “principle of parsimony” contained in s.361 CYFA, at [79] that “general deterrence and denunciation are not relevant sentencing considerations” under the CYFA and at [80]:

“While community protection is an important consideration, in my view it is firmly linked to FD’s rehabilitation, which I consider can be achieved through targeted programs and protective factors.”

Her Honour concluded at [84]-[85]:

[84] “Foremost in the statutory list of factors to be considered in sentencing children are the needs of the child. Sections 362(1)(a)-(c) of the Act expressly mention the child’s need to maintain a relationship with their family; the desirability of living at home; and the benefit of continuing in education, training, or employment. This cluster of ‘needs’ is associated with the social development and educational development of the child. The priority given to this cluster of needs in the legislation supports the contention that non-custodial sanctions are to be preferred to custodial ones. This proposition is supported by the hierarchy of sentencing orders found within the legislation itself. Of course, the cluster of needs is to be considered alongside the nature and gravity of the offending, but the latter should not prevail.”

[85] The suitability of any sentence imposed on a child needs to consider the developmental level of the child and their needs.”

Applying these principles, Incerti J allowed FD’s appeal, set aside the sentence and resentenced him to a youth supervision order for a period of 16 months, noting at [82]: “FD has been in custody now for over eight months and I accept that this has had a salutary effect on him.”

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### **11.1.4 Some general sentencing principles**

In *R v Jongsma* [2004] VSCA 218 Gillard AJA said at [47]: "The sentencing process involves an exercise of a discretionary judgment. The principles have been stated often and I refer to the leading authority of *House v The King* (1936) 55 CLR 499 at 504-5. As it is an exercise of discretion, there is room for difference of opinion as to what is the appropriate sentence…I discussed the principles in *R v. David Matthew Langdon* [2004] VSCA 205 at [60]-[76]." In *Pandevski* [2007] VSCA 84 at [36], Maxwell P reiterated the discretionary nature of sentencing: “It is obvious that on particular matters different judges might come to slightly different views. That is the nature of the sentencing process. That is why it is done by judges, not by machines.”

A convenient starting point in the determination of an appropriate sentence for both adult and child offenders is the seriousness of the offence and the level of culpability of the offender, as discussed by Vincent & Weinberg JJA and Mandie AJA in *DPP v Weidlich* [2008] VSCA 203 at [17]-[18]:

[17] “The seriousness to be attributed to a breach of the criminal law in any given case is, of course, dependent upon a number of factors including the intention of the perpetrator and the consequences of its commission: see *Mallinder v R* (1986) 23 A Crim R 179; *R v Pota* [2007] VSCA 198 at [28]; *DPP v Fevaleaki* [2006] VSCA 212 at [15] and *R v Buckle* [2005] VSCA 98 at [25]…

[18] Generally, the measure of culpability of an offender under the criminal law rests upon the extent to which the individual can be seen to be personally responsible for both the prohibited acts and their consequences. Little thought is required to appreciate that the greater the level of insight and understanding possessed by him or her concerning the act and its potential harm, the higher becomes the level of culpability for then deliberately engaging in the conduct involved.”

In *Muldrock v The Queen* [2011] HCA 39; (2011) 244 CLR 120 at [18] French CJ, Gummow, Hayne, Heydon, Crennan, Kiefel and Bell JJ said: “At common law the exercise of the sentencing discretion is the subject of established principles. These include proportionality {*Veen v The Queen [No 2]* (1988) 164 CLR 465}, parity {*Lowe v The Queen* (1984) 154 CLR 606}, totality {*Mill v The Queen* (1988) 166 CLR 59} and the avoidance of double punishment {*Pearce v The Queen* (1998) 194 CLR 610}.”

The principles of **"proportionality"** & **"totality"** are primarily discussed below in the case law in relation to adults but are equally applicable to children and young persons. The Court of Appeal has held that the principle of **“general deterrence”** has no relevance to the sentencing of young persons under the CYFA.

### **11.1.4.1 General deterrence is not applicable as a sentencing principle in Children’s Court**

The sentencing principle of ‘**specific deterrence**’ aims to prevent future crimes by a particular individual through their own experience of punishment. By contrast, the sentencing principle of ‘**general deterrence**’ aims to prevent crime by the broader public by making an example of an offender's punishment. A neat example of the contrast between these two principles is to be found in the judgment of Gorton J in *DPP v Nordic Elevators & Anor* [2025] VSC 379 where the accused companies had pleaded guilty to failing to ensure electrical work was only carried out by licensed electricians. The accused companies’ director was the father of the deceased. In imposing aggregate fines on the companies, Gorton J said at [28]:

“It is tempting to consider that imposing a fine will serve no real purpose because the person who died was the son of the controlling mind of the two companies, and because that person has suffered enormously from both the death and his role in the death of his son. As noted above, I accept this line of reasoning insofar as it means that there is little to no need for specific deterrence. However, as with most breaches of the laws to do with industrial safety, general deterrence is the most significant sentencing consideration. It remains necessary to impose fines of a level that deter other persons from committing crimes of the same or similar character, that reflect the objective seriousness of the breaches, and that manifest the denunciation by the court of the actions or inactions of [the companies] that exposed their employees and other persons to unnecessary risk of injury or death.” [citations omitted]

In *R v Angelopoulos* [2005] VSCA 258 the Court of Appeal raised – without deciding – whether general deterrence was relevant to the sentencing of young offenders under the CYPA even though it is not specifically mentioned in s.139(1): per Callaway JA at [2] & Eames JA at [56]. However in the *Appeal of JD* (unreported, County Court of Victoria, 22/02/2008) Judge Strong held at [12]:

“[T]here is nothing in s.362 which appears to sanction general deterrence as a sentencing consideration. The courts are reluctant to make an example of those under a disability, and children are so regarded. The South Australian courts have said that general deterrence has no part to play in the sentencing of children and, in the absence of specific guidance to the contrary from a superior court in this State, I approach the matter in that way.”

In so holding His Honour adopted two decisions of the South Australian Full Court - *R v S* (1982) SASR 263 and *R v Wilson* (1984) 35 SASR 200 – involving legislation listing factors “very similar” to those in s.362(1) of the CYFA. In his leading judgment in *R v S* at 266 King CJ had made it clear that the principles of general deterrence and retribution have no part to play in the sentencing of children:

“Where it is appropriate to have regard to the protection of the community, it must be the protection of the community ‘from the violent or other wrongful acts of the child’, not the criminal acts of others who might be deterred by the treatment accorded to the child before the court. The legislature has quite clearly eschewed the concept of general deterrence in the treatment of persons under the age of 18 years. Similarly…the concept of retribution, that is to say ‘the observance of a proper proportion between the gravity of the crime and the severity of the punishment’ has no place in the treatment of a person under the age of 18 years.”

In *H v R & Ors* [2008] VSC 369, an unsuccessful appeal against a sentence of the then President of the Children’s Court, Forrest J said at [11]-[12]:

“Considerations relevant to a sentence imposed under the CYFA are set out in s.362(1)…

The term ‘rehabilitation’, whilst not appearing within the section, nevertheless underpins those matters set out in s.362(1)(a) to (d). The principle of specific deterrence is incorporated within s.362(1)(g) of the CYFA; general deterrence is not a relevant sentencing principle: see *R v Angelopoulos* [2005] VSCA 258 at [52]-[56].”

In *CNK v The Queen* (2011) 32 VR 641; [2011] VSCA 228 (applied in many cases including *R v JH* [2012] VSC 13 at [7], *Bradley Webster (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2016] VSCA 66 [12], [24], [27] & [76] and *DPP v SI (a child)* [2018] VChC3 at [37]-[39]) the applicant – who had just turned 15 at the time of the offending – had been tried in the Supreme Court on a count of attempted murder. He was acquitted of that charge but convicted of aggravated burglary, kidnapping, recklessly causing serious injury and reckless conduct endangering a person – all of these being capable of being heard and determined summarily in the Children’s Court. On the plea in the Supreme Court, counsel for the applicant submitted – and the sentencing judge accepted – that the sentencing should be done in accordance with the provisions of the CYFA. Counsel submitted that general deterrence was not a factor to be taken into account in sentencing children, alternatively that *CNK* was not an appropriate vehicle for general deterrence. The sentencing judge disagreed. At [7]-[15] the Court of Appeal decided otherwise, saying [emphasis added]:

[7] “**In our view, the language of s 362(1), and the nature of the matters to which regard must be had, are such as to preclude any consideration of general deterrence.** Our reasons are as follows.

[8] We start with the opening words of the subsection. Not only is the language imperative (‘the Court must’) but the words ‘as far as practicable’ operate, in context, as words of emphasis. Since the word ‘practicable’ means ‘feasible’ or ‘able to be done or accomplished,’ the phrase ‘as far as practicable’ means as far as it is possible to go: *Owen v Crown House Engineering Limited* [1973] 3 All ER 618,622-3. Hence the sentencing court must have regard to each of the specified matters to the maximum extent possible. And the statutory obligation to ‘have regard to’ a specific matter requires the Court to give the matter weight ‘as a fundamental element in the decision-making process’: *Commissioner of Police v Industrial Relations Commission of New South Wales* (2009) 185 IR 458, 469 [73] and the authorities there cited. Moreover, as explained below, the specified matters are not matters of fact but statements of policy. They identify the policy objectives which must – to the maximum extent possible – govern the sentencing of young offenders.

[9] Secondly, the matters to which regard must be had are – without exception – directed at a consideration of the effect of the proposed sentence on the child. This is true even of para (g) which, although expressly referring to the need to protect the community, directs attention to what will deter, or prevent, the particular child from engaging in ‘violent or other wrongful acts’.

[10] The language of para (g) is particularly significant. Plainly enough, this paragraph is concerned with the protection of the community through specific deterrence, that is, deterrence of the particular child offender. General deterrence has traditionally been regarded as an important sentencing consideration at common law precisely because it, too, is conducive to community protection. The deliberate use of language in para (g) which deals only with specific deterrence, and which says nothing about the need to deter others from committing ‘violent or other wrongful acts’, is a clear indication of legislative intention, in our view. As will appear, the same conclusion was reached by the Full Court of the Supreme Court of South Australia, in construing almost identical legislation: *R v S (A Child)* (1982) 31 SASR 263.

[11] Thirdly, what s 362(1) obliges the sentencing court to do ‘as far as practicable’ is to impose a sentence which fits the young offender as much as – or perhaps even more than – it fits the crime. Thus the Court must, as far as practicable, impose a sentence which is suitable to the child (para (e)) and must, as far as practicable, impose a sentence which will achieve the following policy objectives:

* strengthen and preserve the child’s relationship with his/her family;
* allow him/her to live at home;
* allow him/her to continue with education, training or employment; and
* result in the minimum stigma to the child.

[12] General deterrence as a sentencing consideration is entirely foreign to a scheme of this character. For, unlike all other sentencing considerations, general deterrence is unconnected with the particular offender. Rather, the principle of general deterrence treats the offender as a means to an end, as an instrument for effecting a broader community interest: Jeremy McGuire, ‘*Deterrence in sentencing: Handle with care*’ (2005) 79 *Australian Law Journal* 448, 457. The Court must ask itself what sentence should be imposed on the offender in order to deter other persons who might be minded to engage in similar offending.

[13] It is accepted that, where the principle of general deterrence applies, it may necessitate the imposition of a higher sentence than would be necessary if that principle were not applicable. (As will appear, the sentencing judge in the present case felt constrained by the need for general deterrence to reject a less stringent sentencing option put forward by the defence.) By contrast, the unambiguous command of s 362(1) is that no greater sentence should be imposed on the child than the nature and circumstances of the child’s offending require. It would, in our view, be wholly inconsistent with this intention were the sentencing court to be obliged – where necessary – to impose a heavier sentence, not because of any aspect of the child’s offending or personal circumstances but because of the need to deter others from engaging in similar conduct.

[14] Put another way, if a sentence were increased – for the purpose of general deterrence – beyond what would otherwise have been imposed on the child, the sentencing court would have breached its obligation to secure ‘as far as practicable’ the objectives set out in s 362(1). More particularly, to treat a child as a vehicle for general deterrence would amount to ‘making an example’ of the child, for the purpose of deterring others. This would, in our view, be in direct conflict with the Court’s obligation under s 362(1)(d) to ‘minimise the stigma to the child’ resulting from the Court’s determination.

[15] For the reasons we have given, the language of the statute conveys a clear legislative intention to exclude general deterrence. Whilst that intention is not made explicit, it is necessarily implied by the terms in which s 362(1) prescribes the sentencing court’s task: *Minister for Aboriginal Affairs v Peko-Wallsend Ltd* (1986) 162 CLR 24, 39–40.”

The Court of Appeal set aside the sentence of YJC3y and resentenced CNK to YJC194d plus a YSO for 18m, noting at [70] that had it been resentencing him as at the date of sentence it would have released him on a YSO immediately.

In *CDPP v TK* [2018] VChC 4 Stylianou M held that general deterrence had no application in sentencing a young offender under the CYFA for a Commonwealth offence. In *LS (a pseudonym) v CDPP* [2020] VSC 484 Beale J also held that he was not required to take general deterrence into account in sentencing a child for federal offences. For details see 11.1.13 below.

### **11.1.4.2 Powers of the Supreme Court and County Court in sentencing a child**

Section 521 of the CYFA provides:

“Except for the purposes of appeals this Act applies, with any necessary modifications, in relation to an order made by the Supreme Court or the County Court of a type that could be made by the Children’s Court under this Act, whether the order was made on appeal or under s.586 or otherwise, as if it were an order made by the Children’s Court.”

On its face, s.521 does not read like a conferral of sentencing power on the Supreme Court or County Court. Rather, it reads like a deeming provision which would have the effect, for example, of ensuring that the provisions for breach of a sentencing order [see e.g. CYFA/ss.384, 392, 408, 409Q] apply equally whether the order had been made by the Children’s Court or by a higher court.

It is s.586 of the CYFA in combination with s.360 which is a major source of power for the higher courts in sentencing a child. The other source of power is in the *Sentencing Act 1991* [‘SA’]. CYFA/s.586 provides:

“(1) The powers that the Supreme Court or the County Court may exercise in sentencing a child for an indictable offence include the power to impose any sentence which the Children’s Court may impose under this Act but an order that the child be detained in a youth residential centre or a youth justice centre must be made in accordance with Subdivision (4) of Division 2 of Part 3 of the *Sentencing Act 1991*.

(2) In sentencing a child aged 16 years or more but under 18 years at the time of the commission of an indictable offence, the Supreme Court or the County Court must have regard to any requirement in the *Sentencing Act 1991* that a specified minimum non-parole period of imprisonment be fixed or a specified minimum term of imprisonment be imposed, had the offence been committed by an adult.”

In *DPP v Anderson* [2013] VSCA 45 the respondent child had pleaded guilty to a count of intentionally causing serious injury and had been sentenced in the County Court to IMP4y/2y. The Children’s Court had found that exceptional circumstances existed which made it appropriate to refuse to hear and determine the charge summarily [see the summary detailed in case **(5)** in **section 10.1.5**]. The Court of Appeal (Maxwell P, Neave JA & Kaye AJA) allowed the Director’s Appeal and re‑sentenced the respondent to IMP 6y/3y6m. At [45]-[46] the Court said [emphasis added]:

[45] “There was debate on the plea about whether general deterrence was a relevant sentencing consideration. Reference was made to the decision of this Court in *CNK v The Queen* [2011] VSCA 228, {15} where it was held that in a case where a young offender was being sentenced under the provisions of the CYFA, general deterrence was excluded as a sentencing consideration. Where, on the other hand, a person is sentenced in accordance with the *Sentencing Act 1991*, general deterrence is expressly identified by s.5(1)(b) as a purpose for which sentence may be imposed.

[46] **In the present case, her Honour pointed out – correctly – that, once she had concluded that sentencing dispositions under the CYFA were inadequate and that a sentence of adult custody was necessary, the provisions of the CYFA had no application and, accordingly, general deterrence was applicable.** At the same time, her Honour accepted the defence submission that, under these circumstances, general deterrence should play ‘an ameliorated role, taking into account [Anderson’s] youth’, and that rehabilitation was still a significant consideration.”

In *Erik Fuller (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2013] VSCA 186 the Court of Appeal (Ashley & Hansen JJA) sentenced a boy for an offence of culpable driving when he was 14 years 10 months old, an offence which cannot be heard and determined summarily in the Children’s Court. The sentence on this charge was thus imposed under the *Sentencing Act 1991*. However, the Court was also required to re-sentence EF on associated charges of theft and negligently causing serious injury which the Children’s Court can hear and determine summarily. This gave rise to an interesting question about the applicability of s.362(1) of the CYFA to the sentencing, a question which the Court of Appeal ultimately found unnecessary to decide. At [31]-[35] Ashley JA said [emphasis added]:

[31] “In this case, s.362(1) would have applied had the charges (that is, other than the offence of culpable driving) been dealt with in the Children's Court.

[32] A question arises whether the preclusion against taking account of general deterrence applies to the charges which might have been dealt with in the Children’s Court, but which were in fact dealt with by the County Court.

[33] Section 362(1) refers to matters to which the Children’s Court is to have regard. But it has been held that, in some circumstances, provisions in the [CYFA] relating to sentences are to be applied when an offender is sentenced in a superior court: *CNK v The Queen* [2011] VSCA 228 [82], *JPR v The Queen* [2012] VSCA 50 [32]-[33] (Hollingworth AJA). Compare *DPP v Anderson* [2013] VSCA 45 [47].

[34] It is not clear to me that s.362(1) will apply to an exercise of jurisdiction by the Supreme Court or the County Court in a case in which the child has objected to the exercise of jurisdiction by the Children’s Court. **Moreover, *Anderson* suggests that the section will not apply once a superior court decides that punishment exceeding that available under the CYFA, or under s.32(3)(b) of the *Sentencing Act*, is necessary.**

[35] It is unnecessary, however, for me to resolve what I perceive to be that uncertainty in this case. By reason of the appellant’s age at time of offending, his level of intellectual and psychological disability at that time, and the injuries which he sustained, general deterrence cannot be regarded as a factor of any significance in the sentencing synthesis.”

In *Dale Cairns (a Pseudonym) v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 333 the Court of Appeal (Priest, Beach & Weiberg JJA) allowed an appeal against a sentence of IMP8y/5y imposed on the appellant (who had an IQ of 63 and was aged 17 at the time of the offending) on charges of culpable driving causing death and 9 associated offences in circumstances where he was drug affected and was driving at high speed to evade police. He was sentenced in lieu to IMP6y/4y. The sentences of imprisonment imposed at first instance and on appeal are set out in the following table:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Charge** | **Offence** | **Sentence at 1st instance** | **Cumulation at 1st instance** | **Sentence on appeal** | **Cumulation on appeal** |
| 1 | Theft | 6m | 2m | 2m | Nil |
| 2 | Theft | 3m | Nil | 7d | Nil |
| 3 | Driving dangerously or negligently while pursued by police | 6m | 2m | 3m | Nil | |
| 4 | Conduct endangering persons | 9m | 2m | 6m | Nil | |
| 5 | Culpable driving causing death | 7y | Base | 6y | Nil | |
| 6 | Failing to stop and render assistance | 18m | 4m | 3m | Nil | |
| 7 | Theft | 6m | 2m | 2m | Nil | |
| **RELEVANT SUMMARY OFFENCES** | | | | | | |
| 9 | Failing to stop | 7d | Nil | 7d | Nil | |
| 13 | Unlicenced driving | 3m | Nil | 1m | Nil | |
| 17 | Dangerous driving | 1m | Nil | 1m | Nil | |
| **TOTAL EFFECTIVE SENTENCE** | | **IMP8y/5y** |  | **IMP6y/4y** |  | |
| **DISQUALIFICATION FROM DRIVING** | | **7y** |  | **7y** |  | |

By way of *obiter dicta* the Court of Appeal in *Cairns* raised a question about the rationale adopted by the Court of Appeal which had decided *CNK v The Queen* (2011) 32 VR 641; [2011] VSCA 228, stating at [30]:

“In determining that s 362 was applicable, and in construing s 362 so as to exclude general deterrence as a relevant sentencing principle, the Court made no express reference to definition of ‘Court’ in s 3(1) of the CYFA: ‘In this Act … ***Court*** means The Children’s Court of Victoria’. And although the Court made distinct reference to s 586 of the CYFA, there was no reference to s 521…”

For the reason stated above, the writer questions whether CYFA/s.521 has any relevance in this context.

In *Cairns*, after discussing *CNK v The Queen*, *R v KMW* [2002] VSC 93 at [57], *JPR v The Queen,* *DPP v Anderson* and *Erik Fuller (a pseudonym) v The Queen*, the Court of Appeal said at [36]-[38]:

[36] “[W]e note that both the CYFA (see e.g. ss.475(3), 477(2)) and the *Sentencing Act 1991* (see e.g. s.33(3)) contemplate that a sentence of detention in a youth justice centre may, depending on the circumstances, be served concurrently or cumulatively with a sentence of imprisonment. Plainly, however, once the sentencing judge resolved to impose a sentence of imprisonment on the culpable driving charge in excess of three years — the maximum period of detention in a youth justice centre that the County Court could then impose — it would have been somewhat impractical to have sentenced the applicant to be detained in a youth justice centre on any of the other charges.

[37] [I]n sentencing the applicant on all but the culpable driving charge the judge purported to apply the principles in s 362 of the CYFA. Notwithstanding that this is so, however, he imposed periods of imprisonment on those charges of a length exceeding that of equivalent periods of detention that the Children’s Court might have been expected to impose. Moreover, the imposition of a sentence of imprisonment would appear to us to be incompatible with the application of s 362, since, first, the County Court is not ‘the Court’ as contemplated by s.362; and, secondly, even if it be assumed for the sake of argument that s.521 of the CYFA might in some circumstances pick up a sentencing order made by the County Court (or Supreme Court) — and thus the considerations in s.362 — a sentence of imprisonment is not an order ‘of a type that could be made by the Children’s Court under this Act’ [as to which see s.360 of the CYFA].

[38] It is difficult to conclude other than that the sentencing discretion miscarried in this case. As we have said, the judge purported to sentence on all of the charges apart from charge 5 as if — because of the operation of s 362 — general deterrence was not a relevant sentencing consideration, yet a number of the individual sentences are at odds with that expressed intention. As we have noted, imprisonment is not an option available to the Children’s Court. And we acknowledge that detention in a youth justice centre cannot readily be compared to confinement in an adult prison. But we consider the conclusion inescapable that, had the applicant been sentenced in the Children’s Court on those charges otherwise within that Court’s jurisdiction, he would not have attracted sentences of detention of anything like the same length as the sentences of imprisonment imposed on him by the sentencing judge.”

It is not easy to reconcile some of the dicta in the judgments discussed above or some of the legislative provisions. With respect, it is difficult to see any rationale for prohibiting a higher court from imposing a Children’s Court sentencing order in reliance on the plain words of CYFA/s.586 merely because the matters to be taken into account in CYFA/s.362 are expressed to be an obligation on the Children’s Court. Implying an expanded operation for CYFA/s.362 rather than giving CYFA/s.586 a more restricted operation seems to accord better with long-established notions of child sentencing and with the legislative history of s.362 detailed in *CNK v The Queen* at [16]-[26]. Separate Courts of Appeal in *CNK, JPR* & *Anderson* were untroubled to imply that CYFA/s.362 could also apply in the respective higher sentencing courts. The doubts about this interpretation arose from a fourth Court of Appeal in *Cairns* in dicta which was not central to its determination and from a fifth Court of Appeal in *Fuller* which ultimately found the question unnecessary to decide.

Accordingly, it is likely that CYFA/s.586(1) empowers a higher court sentencing a child to impose any sentencing order referred to in CYFA/ss.360(1)(a) to 360(1)(j) [dismissal, undertaking, bond, fine, probation, YSO, YAO, YCO, YRC or YJC], in which case CYFA/s.362 applies, SA/s.5 does not apply and general deterrence is not a relevant consideration. In this connection it should be noted that a sentence of imprisonment is not an order available under the CYFA, only under the SA.

It seems that in *CNK v The Queen* at [86] the specific exception in CYFA/s.586(1) requiring a YRC or YJC order made by a higher court to be made in accordance with SA/Subdivision (4) of Division 2 of Part 3 rather than under CYFA/ss.410-413 was treated as a purely mechanical provision which does not oust the operation of CYFA/s.362. In that case the sentence imposed by the Court of Appeal was YJC194d plus a YSO for 18m yet it was central to that Court’s extensively reasoned decision that CYFA/s.362(1) applied.

It is clear that a higher court sentencing a child for an indictable offence – whether or not the charge is one for which the higher court has exclusive jurisdiction – may impose any of the sentencing orders available for an adult under the SA. In that event CYFA/s.362 does not apply, SA/s.5 applies and general deterrence is a relevant sentencing consideration. However, it is likely that before turning to the SA the higher court must first have concluded that all available sentencing dispositions under the CYFA were inadequate: see *Anderson* at [46] referred to in *Cairns* at [34] and in *Fuller* at [34].

Where a child is sentenced by a higher court under the SA, general deterrence is one of the five possible purposes for which the sentence may be imposed: see SA/s.5(1)(b). There was discussion in *Anderson* & *Cairns* about whether general deterrence should play ‘an ameliorated role, taking into account [the child’s] youth’ but that question was not ultimately decided. However, it is noteworthy that in *DPP v Eade* [2012] VSCA 142 at [42] another Court of Appeal (Maxwell P, Neave JA & Lasry AJA) referred with approval to the DPP’s concession that “it is a rare case in which a judge is permitted to materially increase sentence imposed on a young offender by dint of general deterrence”.

There is no legislative bar to a child being sentenced to imprisonment for one indictable offence and a term of detention for another indictable offence. However, in the circumstances of *Cairns* the Court of Appeal described such an outcome as “somewhat impractical”: see [2018] VSCA 333 at [36].

### **11.1.4.3 Principle of Proportionality – Relevance of other convictions**

A authoritative statement of the principle of **proportionality** is to be found in *Hoare v The Queen* (1989) 167 CLR 348 at 354 where a 5-member bench of the High Court, led by the Chief Justice, said:

"…a basic principle of sentencing law is that a sentence of imprisonment imposed by a court should never exceed that which can be justified as appropriate or proportionate to the gravity of the crime considered in the light of its *objective* circumstances."

The significance of this principle as a common law restraint on excessive punishment had earlier been confirmed by the High Court in *Veen v The Queen [No 1]* (1979) 143 CLR 458 and re-affirmed by that court in *Veen v The Queen [No 2]* (1988) 164 CLR 465. See Fox and Freiberg, *op.cit.*, pp.219-220; *Postiglione* *v The Queen* (1997) 189 CLR 295 at 308 per McHugh J; *R v Samia* [2009] VSCA 5 at [6]-[15] per Nettle JA; *R v Harris* [2009] VSCA 189 at [19]-[24] per Lasry AJA; *R v Coombes* [2011] VSC 407 at [56]-[58] & [93] per Nettle JA; *Nelson v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 219 at [38]-[39]; *Vida (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 357 at [87]-[88].

The principle applies not only to the offences for which the offender is being sentenced, but also to any offences for which the offender is currently serving a sentence: *R v Berkelaar* [2001] VSCA 143 at [22]; *R v Bakhos* (1989) 39 A Crim R 174; *R v Harrison* (1990) 48 A Crim R 197; *R v Gordon* (1994) 71 A Crim R 459.

In *R v McNaughton* (2006) 66 NSWLR 556 per Spiegelman CJ at [24]-[25], McLellan CJ at CL at [60], Grove J at [76], Barr & Bell JJ at [81], the view was expressed that prior convictions are not part of the objective circumstances of a crime so they cannot inform the upper limits of the sentence. Commenting on this in *DPP v Zucko* [2008] VSCA 270 at [18], Redlich JA, with whom Maxwell P & Nettle JA agreed, said:

“It is true that there is no sentencing principle that requires a more severe sentence to be imposed because of an appalling criminal history. The sentence should never exceed what is proportionate to the gravity of the crime viewed objectively… Be that as it may, the relevance of an extensive criminal history is not confined to denying an offender leniency…An offender’s antecedents provides an indication of moral culpability, prospects of rehabilitation, the existence of any dangerous propensity, the need for community protection, and the increased need for specific deterrence having regard to the failure of previous penalties to moderate his behaviour: see *R v O’Brien & Gloster* [1997] 2 VR 714, 718 per Charles JA.”

In *Wilson v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 2 at [20] the Court of Appeal expanded on the use that a sentencing judge or magistrate may legitimately make of convictions for prior and subsequent offences:

“Principle dictates that convictions which occur both prior to {*Veen v The Queen (No 2)* (1988) 164 CLR 465; *R v O’Brien and Gloster* [1997] 2 VR 714; *Weininger v The Queen* (2003) 212 CLR 629; *R v Bui; R v Beedar* (2002) 137 A Crim R 220; *R v McNaughton (*2006) 66 NSWLR 566; *Rootsey v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 108, [8]} and subsequent to {*R v Poulton* [1974] VR 716; *R v Kane* [1974] VR 759; *R v Rumpf* [1988] VR 466; *R v Bui; R v Beedar*} an offence for which a person is to be sentenced are relevant to the imposition of sentence. As was made clear in *O’Brien* at 718, although no principle of sentencing requires that more severe sanctions be imposed upon those who persist in criminal behaviour, an adverse criminal record may nevertheless have an impact on the sentencing process in a number of ways: as an indicator of the offender’s moral culpability; his or her prospects of rehabilitation; his or her dangerous propensity (and the community’s need for protection); and the increased importance of specific deterrence as a factor in sentencing, having regard to the failure of more moderate penalties as a means of deterrence. Moreover, subsequent convictions affect the credit that might otherwise have flowed to the person to be sentenced for having lived a law abiding life in the period between the relevant crime and sentence. The applicant’s subsequent convictions for offences against SF clearly were relevant to an assessment of his prospects for rehabilitation. It could not be said that, following his offending in December 2015, the applicant had undertaken a process of reform {*R v Rumpf* at 475; *DPP v Rongonui* (2007) 17 VR 571 at [37] & [41]; *Rootsey v The Queen* at [8]}.

### **11.1.4.4 Principle of Totality**

The principle of **totality** allows custodial sentences to be reduced, by applying rules of concurrency or part concurrency, to avoid an offender being subject to a crushing sentence: Fox and Freiberg, *op.cit.*, p.356. The principle is best articulated in the following passage from *Mill v The Queen* (1988) 166 CLR 59 at 62-63:

“The totality principle is a recognized principle of sentencing formulated to assist a court when sentencing an offender for a number of offences. It is described succinctly in *Thomas, Principles of Sentencing, 2nd ed. (1979), pp. 56-57*, as follows (omitting references):

‘The effect of the totality principle is to require a sentencer who has passed a series of sentences, each properly calculated in relation to the offence for which it is imposed and each properly made consecutive in accordance with the principles governing consecutive sentences, to review the aggregate sentence and consider whether the aggregate is "just and appropriate". The principle has been stated many times in various forms: "when a number of offences are being dealt with and specific punishments in respect of them are being totted up to make a total, it is always necessary for the court to take a last look at the total just to see whether it looks wrong["]; "when ... cases of multiplicity of offences come before the court, the court must not content itself by doing the arithmetic and passing the sentence which the arithmetic produces. It must look at the totality of the criminal behaviour and ask itself what is the appropriate sentence for all the offences”.’”

In *Postiglione v R* (1997) 189 CLR 295 at 308 McHugh J described how the principle of totality is to be applied:

“The application of the totality principle therefore requires an evaluation of the overall criminality involved in all the offences with which the prisoner is charged. Where necessary, the Court must adjust the prima facie length of the sentences downward in order to achieve an appropriate relativity between the totality of the criminality and the totality of the sentences. Recent decisions in the Court of Criminal Appeal have extended the ambit of the totality principle. Those decisions hold that, in order to comply with the totality principle, a sentencing judge must consider the total criminality involved not only in the offences for which the offender is being sentenced, but also in any offences for which the offender is currently serving a sentence.”

In *R v Sullivan* [2005] VSCA 286 at [20] Eames JA, with whom Charles & Buchanan JJA agreed, applied this dicta of McHugh J. In *R v Hunter* [2006] VSCA 129 at [28]-[31] the Court of Appeal referred with approval to *R v Sullivan* in holding that the principle of totality required:

* the sentencing judge to take into account periods of imprisonment consequent upon cancelled parole: see *R v Masterson* (unreported, Court of Criminal Appeal, 31/08/1982); *R v Youil* (1995) 80 A Crim R 1; *R v Cutajar* (unreported, Court of Appeal, 20/07/1995); *R v Brock* (unreported, Court of Appeal, 22/02/1996); *R v Gorman* (unreported, Court of Appeal, 10/08/1995); *R v Ulla* (2004) 148 A Crim R 356 at 366; *R v Berkelaar* [2001] VSCA 143; and
* a period of imprisonment being served at the time of sentencing to be taken into account in the exercise of the sentencing discretion: *R v Renzella* [1997] 2 VR 88 at 98 per Winneke P with whom Charles & Callaway JJA agreed; *R v Stares* (2002) 4 VR 314 at 321, 324 per Charles JA with whom Phillips CJ & Chernov JA agreed; *R v Smith* [2006] VSCA 23 at [8] per Chernov JA with whom Warren CJ & Charles JA agreed.

In addition, the Court of Appeal noted at [29] that “the judge was bound to assume that the full term of the original sentence would be served. Any possibility that Hunter might again be released on parole had to be disregarded.”

In *R v Piacentino; R v Ahmad* (2007) VR 501; [2007] VSCA 49 Eames JA, with whom Buchanan, Vincent, Nettle & Redlich JJA agreed, said at [37]:

“The totality principle, then, is concerned to ensure that sentencing for an offender facing multiple offences is, as McHugh J held in *Postiglione*, a ‘just and appropriate measure of the total criminality involved’. As Fox and Freiberg observe {*“Sentencing – State and Federal Law in Victoria”* 2nd Ed, at 725 [9.623]}, the principle will generally apply, unless denied by statute.”

In his judgment in *H v R & Ors* [2008] VSC 369, affirming on appeal a sentence of the President of the Children’s Court, Forrest J applied *R v Piacentino; R v Ahmad* in saying at [83]: “I have also taken into account the totality of the offending in the light of the total effective term. In my view, a period of 27 months’ detention is appropriate to H’s overall criminality over a period of two years.”

In *R v Piacentino; R v Ahmad* the 5 bench Court of Appeal also made it clear – disapproving a contrary decision of a 3 bench Court of Appeal in *R v Orphanides* (2002) 130 A Crim R 403; [2002] VSCA 86 – that where an adult offender falls to be sentenced for offences constituting breach of parole but is to be sentenced at a time when he has not had his parole revoked by the Adult Parole Board, then the sentencing judge may not have regard to the possibility that he might be later called upon by the Parole Board to serve some or all of the balance of his parole sentence.

The case of *DPP v Bowen* [2021] VSCA 355 raised a point of general importance about the application of the principle of totality in a case where the offending before the sentencing court breached the parole which the offender was undergoing at the time, resulting in a cancellation of parole and a return to custody. When the court comes to impose sentence for the breach offending, the question is whether the principle of totality requires the court to take into account the entire period which the offender has served (or will have served) under the original sentence or just the reclaimed period. In similar circumstances in *McCartney v The Queen* (2012) 38 VR 1; [2012] VSCA 268 and *Waugh v The Queen* (2013) 38 VR 66; [2013] VSCA 36, the Court of Appeal had held that regard could only be held to the reclaimed period. In *DPP v Bowen* a full bench of the Court of Appeal (Maxwell P, Priest, McLeish, T Forrest & Walker JJA) held at [41]-[42] that “the ‘full proprtionality’ test from *Postiglione* (1997) 189 CLR 295; 308… should be applied in all such cases. That is, the sentencing court must ask itself whether the combined effect of the original sentence and the proposed breach sentence is (dis)proportionate to the total criminality involved in the two sets of offences. Adopting this approach also removes the artificiality of comparing only part of the original sentence (the reclaimed period) with the full criminality involved in the prior offending”. Accordingly, the Court said at [6] that the decisions in *McCartney v The Queen* and *Waugh v The Queen* “should no longer be followed”, a particularly strong statement given that Maxwell P was involved in all three judgments. At [6]-[8] the Court continued:

“Considerations of both principle and practicality demonstrate that the approach adopted by the sentencing judge is correct, that is, to have regard to the entire period of custody served under the original sentence.

The principle of totality is, essentially, a principle of proportionality. Put another way, totality is a particular expression of the foundational sentencing principle that a sentence should be proportionate to the criminal conduct for which it is imposed: *Boulton v The Queen* (2014) 46 VR 308, 325 [64]; [2014] VSCA 342. In the ordinary case where sentence is to be imposed for multiple offences, the principle of totality requires the court to ask itself whether the proposed total effective sentence is proportionate to the aggregate criminality involved in all of the offending: *Azzopardi v The Queen* (2011) 35 VR 43, 59 [57] (Redlich JA, Coghlan and Macaulay AJJA agreeing); [2011] VSCA 372.

In a case like the present, where a breach of parole is involved, totality requires the sentencing judge to consider two sentences: the sentence to be imposed for the breach offending and the original sentence imposed for the prior offending. The court needs to satisfy itself that the combined effect of those two sentences will not be disproportionate to the aggregate criminality involved in the breach offending.”

Dicta from *DPP v Bowen* was referred to with approval by the Court of Appeal in *Polos v The King* [2022] VSCA 258 where at [41]-[43] Priest & Niall JJA said:

[41] “The totality principle of sentencing requires a judge who is sentencing an offender for a number of offences to ensure that the aggregation of the sentences appropriate for each offence is a just and appropriate measure of the total criminality involved: *Mill v The Queen* (1988) 166 CLR 59, 63 (Wilson, Deane, Dawson, Toohey and Gaudron JJ); [1988] HCA 70; *Postglione v The Queen* (1997) 189 CLR 295, 308 (McHugh J); [1997] HCA 26. The principle applies not just to an evaluation of the overall criminality involved in the charged offences for which the person is being sentenced but also takes into account sentences being served at the time of sentence: *Postiglione* (1997) 189 CLR 295, 308 (McHugh J); [1997] HCA 26.

[42] In *Bowen*, a five-member Court considered how the totality principle is to apply in circumstances where the person being sentenced was on parole at the time of the offending and, by reason of the offending has his or her parole cancelled and returns to prison. In short, the issue was whether the Court should take into account the total sentence served (including any additional amount relating to the cancellation of parole), or only consider the further period of time the prisoner must serve by reason of the cancellation of parole. This Court unanimously held that it was the former. The Court said that the sentencing court must ask itself whether the combined effect of the original sentence and the proposed breach sentence is (dis)proportionate to the total criminality involved in the two sets of offences: *Bowen* (2021) 65 VR 385, 396 [42] (Maxwell P, Priest, McLeish, T Forrest and Walker JJA); [2021] VSCA 355. The Court endorsed the following observation of Kaye AJA in *Koumis v The Queen*: (2013) 44 VR 193, 195; [2013] VSCA 47 at [9]:

[T]he court must take into account that the cancellation of the offender’s parole means that the offender is required to complete the balance of a custodial sentence to which he or she is already subject, in addition to serving the sentence which is to be imposed on the offender. In doing so, the court must consider the criminality involved in the prior offending, and the period already served in custody in respect of it. Those circumstances are all logically relevant to determining whether, in a particular case, there may need to be some moderation of the sentence which is to be imposed, in order to ensure that, in all the circumstances, it is ‘just and appropriate’.

[43] In this case, the applicant was sentenced to a total effective term of imprisonment of 10 years in 2013. By reason of the cancellation of parole, and the subsequent determination of the Parole Board, he had to serve the entire sentence, and got no credit for the time he spent on parole. When the judge came to sentence the applicant for the present offences, he was required to assess the total amount of time the applicant would spend in custody under both the 2013 sentence and any sentence the judge would impose in the context of the total criminality involved in all of the offending. In this case, that meant the judge had to assess whether a combined sentence of 13 years and 9 months was proportionate to the overall criminality involved.”

In *Grant Berry v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 291 the applicant, who was already serving a sentence of IMP 12m imposed in relation to a large number of summary offences, had been sentenced to IMP 4y/20m on two charges of attempted armed robbery. Holding that the sentencing judge was in error in failing to consider totality, the Court of Appeal resentenced the applicant to IMP3y/18m. At [22]-[24] Maxwell P & Niall JA said:

“As we have said, the respondent conceded that the judge erred in holding that the principle of totality did not apply. That principle requires the sentencing judge to stand back and assess not just the individual sentences but the aggregate sentence and consider whether the aggregate is proportionate to the degree of criminality involved and is ‘just and appropriate’ and ‘not excessive’: *Mill v The Queen* (1988) 166 CLR 59, 63 (Wilson, Deane, Dawson, Toohey and Gaudron JJ), quoting D A Thomas, *Principles of Sentencing* (Heinemann, 2nd ed, 1979) 56–7; *Postiglione v The Queen* (1997) 189 CLR 295, 307–8 (McHugh J); *R v Piacentino* (2007) 15 VR 501, 508 [32] (Eames JA with whom Buchanan JA and Vincent JA agreed).

Relevantly for present purposes, the totality principle applies when the offender being sentenced is already serving a sentence. In *R v Mangelen* (2009) 23 VR 692, 697 [28],Redlich JA said:

‘Historically the principle of totality had been applied in circumstances where an offender fell to be sentenced for multiple offences to ensure that the aggregation of the sentences was a just and appropriate measure of the offender’s criminality. The ambit of the principle was extended to apply where the offences upon which the offender must be sentenced overlap with or will be cumulative upon an existing custodial sentence. In both of these situations the principle requires the court to consider the total criminality involved in all of the offences for which the offender is to be sentenced and the offences for which the offender is currently serving a sentence. The court must evaluate the overall criminality involved in all of the offences so as to ensure that there is an appropriate relativity between the totality of the criminality and the totality of the effective length of the sentences to be and which have been imposed. If the total sentence is an ‘unjust or inappropriate measure of the total criminality involved’ the sentence which the offender is required to serve will be moderated so that the aggregate of sentences imposed by reason of cumulation is not greater than any sentence required to fulfil the totality principle. The principle is to be applied to both the fixing of the head sentence and the non-parole period.’

The concern of the principle is to ensure that a person sentenced for multiple offences receives a sentence that is commensurate with the total criminality involved. It guards against arriving at an unjust sentence derived from the bare accumulation of individual sentences passed on one or more occasion.”

In *Phongthaihong v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 317 the applicant, who was aged 21 at the time of offending, had been sentenced to TES IMP 12y9m/8y9m on charges of culpable driving, negligently cause serious injury x 2 and reckless endangerment. Holding that the sentencing judge was in error on the issue of totality, the Court of Appeal resentenced the applicant to TES IMP11y/7y. At [35]‑[38] Kyrou & T Forrest JJA said:

“In cases where an offender is sentenced for multiple offences the **totality** principle interacts with the **proportionality** principle: *R v Smoker* (2016) 126 SASR 201, 223 [74] (Lovell and Hinton JJ), quoting *AB v The Queen* (1999) 198 CLR 111, 157 [121] (Hayne J). This is because, while individual sentences may be unremarkable, by aggregating those sentences a disproportionate total effective sentence may result unless attention is paid either to moderating orders for cumulation or moderating the actual sentences imposed on individual counts: *Mill v The Queen* (1988) 166 CLR 59, 63 (Wilson, Deane, Dawson, Toohey and Gaudron JJ).

The totality of the offending criminality must be appropriately reflected in the total effective sentence. The preferred approach is for a sentencing court to impose appropriate, proportionate individual terms that satisfy all sentencing purposes, and then, if the principle of totality demands moderation of the overall sentence, to effect this through either complete or partial concurrency: *Ibid*; *DPP v Grabovac* [1998] 1 VR 664, 680, 683 (Ormiston JA, Winneke P agreeing at 665, Hedigan AJA agreeing at 690); *R v Lomax* [1998] 1 VR 551, 563 (Ormiston JA, Winneke P agreeing at 552, Hedigan AJA agreeing at 569); *Azzopardi v The Queen* (2011) 35 VR 43, 61–3 [63]–[68] (Redlich JA, Coghlan JA agreeing at 70, Macaulay AJA agreeing at 70). The need for moderation of cumulation ordinarily will become greater as the individual sentences lean towards the high end of the available range. In this case, the appellant submitted that, while none of the individual sentences are beyond the range of sentences reasonably available to the judge, each of them is towards the high end of that range. We agree with this submission.

In single-episode offending where there are multiple victims, such as this case, some degree of cumulation will be appropriate in recognition of the fact that there were four separate victims of the offending, each of whom, in varying degrees, has suffered loss and hardship. As long ago as 2001, this Court recognised the intersection of the principle of totality with orders for cumulation in cases of multiple offences arising from the one driving episode: So long as the cumulation does not offend the principle of totality it is … properly within the exercise of a sound discretion to recognise the fact that culpable driving has caused multiple deaths by cumulating a sensible portion of the sentence imposed for one offence upon the sentence imposed for the other: *R v Guariglia* [2001] VSCA 27, [21] (Winneke P, Brooking JA agreeing at [25], Charles JA agreeing at [26]).

In the instant case there is no reason why a sensible portion of the sentences imposed on charges 2, 3 and 4 should not be cumulated on the base sentence [on the charge of culpable driving] and upon each other provided the principle of totality is not offended. Balancing the appalling offending conduct in this matter and its dreadful consequences with the appellant’s early guilty pleas, the additional burden of imprisonment arising from the appellant’s immaturity and, particularly, his poor mental health; his undoubted remorse; his prospects for rehabilitation; and the fact that the individual sentences lean towards the high end of the available range, we have concluded that the total effective sentence and non-parole term do offend the principle of totality. We are mindful that youth must yield primacy to concepts of general and specific deterrence in cases such as this – *DPP v Neethling* (2009) 22 VR 466, 477 [55] (Maxwell P, Vincent JA and Hargrave AJA) – but it cannot be overlooked entirely (as her Honour correctly observed).”

In *Rossi* [unreported, Supreme Court of South Australia, 20/04/1988], King CJ said:

"There is a principle of sentencing known as the principle of totality, which enables a court to mitigate what strict justice would otherwise indicate, where the total effect of the sentences merited by the individual crimes becomes so crushing as to call for the merciful intervention of the court by way of reducing the total effect."

In *R v Beck* [2005] VSCA 11 at [19] Nettle JA discussed the concept of a ‘crushing’ sentence:

“It has been said that the notion of a crushing sentence has never been adequately defined in this State {Fox & Frieberg, *Sentencing*, 2nd Ed. at [9.620]}, although it is generally conceived of as one that is imposed in such a way that it would provoke a feeling of helplessness in the applicant if and when he is released or as connoting the destruction of any reasonable expectation of useful life after release: *R v Cowie*, CCA 02/02/1978 unreported; *R v Yates* [1985] VR 41 at 48. It is also accepted that if multiple sentences are so imposed as to make the totality of the prisoner’s liability to incarceration crushing in that sense, some of the sentences should be modified by appropriate orders for cumulation in the application of the totality principle: *R v Adams* (1979) 3 Crim LJ 302, *D.P.P. v Saville* CCA 02/03/1984 unreported, *R v Bowman* (1993) 69 A Crim R 530 at 539; *R v Everett* (1994) 73 Crim R 550. There are of course no hard and fast rules as to how one is to decide whether the totality of multiple sentences imposed at different times is crushing. As in so much of sentencing, each case depends on its own facts.”

In *Mohamed v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 136 the Court of Appeal (Maxwell P, Emerton & Sifris JJA) said at [4]-[6]:

[4] “The question for determination, therefore, is a question of totality. As this Court said recently in *Director of Public Prosecutions v Bowen* [2021] VSCA 355 at [7]:

The principle of totality is, essentially, a principle of proportionality. Put another way, totality is a particular expression of the foundational sentencing principle that a sentence should be proportionate to the criminal conduct for which it is imposed. In the ordinary case where sentence is to be imposed for multiple offences, the principle of totality requires the court to ask itself whether the proposed total effective sentence is proportionate to the aggregate criminality involved in all of the offending.

[5] The applicant also invokes what is said to be a distinct consideration, namely, that the total effective sentence should not be ‘crushing’. As will appear, ‘crushing’ is a term used to capture the notion that a sentence should not be so long as to ‘induce a feeling of helplessness in an offender and destroy any reasonable expectation of a useful life after their release from custody’. See *Sayed v The Queen* (2012) 220 A Crim R 236, 259 [108]; [2012] WASCA 17; *Azzopardi v The Queen* (2011) 35 VR 43, 63 [69].

[6] The preponderance of authority favours the view — with which we respectfully agree — that there is no separate sentencing principle requiring that a ‘crushing’ sentence be avoided. Rather, it is a particular expression of the fundamental sentencing principle of rehabilitation, which requires that the sentence to be imposed should, so far as possible consistently with the other sentencing purposes to be served, promote the rehabilitation of the offender.”

See also *DPP v Rider & Ong* [2023] VSC 466 at [119].

A survey of the totality principle by Wells J in *Attorney-General v Tichy* (1982) 30 SASR 84, 92-3 was approved by Gleeson CJ in *Johnson v R* (2004) 205 ALR 346 at [4] and by the Court of Appeal (Vincent & Weinberg JJA and Robson AJA) in *R v Sebborn* [2008] VSCA 200 at [16]. Wells J stated:

“… [W]hat is fitting is that a convicted prisoner should be sentenced, not simply and indiscriminately for every act that can be singled out and brought within the compass of a technically identifiable conviction, but for what, viewing the circumstances broadly and reasonably, can be characterised as his criminal conduct … The practice of imposing either concurrent or consecutive sentences cannot avoid creating anomalies, or apparent anomalies, from time to time. What must be done is to use the various tools of analysis to mould a just sentence for the conduct of which the prisoner has been guilty.”

In *R v Harrison* [2008] VSCA 65 Forrest AJA, with whom Buchanan & Ashley JJA agreed, said at [34]:

“It is settled that the principle of totality applies to both the head sentence and the non-parole period. It also applies where a sentence has been imposed by a different court to that which later sentences the offender [*Mill v The Queen* (1988) 166 CLR 59].”

There is a good deal of case law providing guidelines as to how concurrency and/or cumulation ought generally be applied in order to achieve an outcome which is in accord with the principle of totality. Though any case law based on the *Sentencing Act 1991* does not strictly apply to children sentenced under the CYFA, it may nevertheless provide a useful guide in an appropriate case.

In *R v VN* [2006] VSCA 111 Redlich JA, with whom Maxwell P & Buchanan JA agreed, said at [144]:

“In the recent decision of *R v Flavall* [2006] VSCA 32 at [6] per Chernov JA this Court had occasion to refer again to the approach required when making an order for cumulation. Ordinarily cumulation is ordered to reflect separate events, episodes or transactions: *DPP v Grabovac* [1998] 1 VR 664 at 676 per Ormiston JA. That is not to say that an order for cumulation cannot be supported when there are two consequences of a single event: *R v Musson* [1997] 1 VR 656 at 660. When an offence arises out of substantially the same act, circumstance or series of occurrences, the presumption at common law was that concurrency should run its course: Fox & Freiberg, *Sentencing State and Federal Law in Victoria* (2nd ed., para. 9.612). Such a principle is in harmony with s.16 of the *Sentencing Act 1991* which establishes a prima facie rule that any terms of imprisonment imposed on a person ought be concurrent: *R v Mantini* [1998] 3 VR 340 at 348 per Callaway JA. Total cumulation is not the normal rule at common law even between different episodes: *R v Fuller-Cust* (2002) 6 VR 496 at 510; *R v Jongsma* (2004) 150 A Crim R 386 at [20] per Batt JA.”

In *R v Hunter* [2006] VSCA 129 at [29] the Court of Appeal stated:

“[T]here must in the absence of exceptional circumstances be cumulation in respect of offences committed whilst on parole. See s.16(3B) *Sentencing Act 1991*. At the same time, viewed as a whole the aggregate of sentences imposed by reason of cumulation cannot be greater than any sentence required to fulfil the totality principle and all the appropriate aims of sentencing in the case: *R v Greenslade* [2004] VSCA 213 per Batt JA at [30]; *R v Hennen* [2004] VSCA 42 per Bongiorno AJA at [31]. There must be relativity between the totality of the criminality and the totality of sentences (*R v Holder* [1983] 3 NSWLR 245 at 260), not only for the offences for which the person is being sentenced, but for the sentence which the person is currently serving (*R v Bakhos* (1989) 39 A Crim R 174; *R v Harrison* (1990) 48 A Crim R 197 and *R v Gordon* (1994) 71 A Crim R 459).”

In *DPP v Grabovac* [1998] 1 VR 664 the Court of Appeal, referring *inter alia* to *Mill v R* (1988) 166 CLR 59, *Ryan v R* (1982) 149 CLR 1 & *R v Lomax* [1998] 1 VR 551, held:

[p.680] "In general a court should avoid imposing artificially inadequate sentences in order to accommodate the rules relating to cumulation. In other words, as the High Court said [in *Mill's Case* at 62-63], where practicable when applying accepted rules of sentencing as to totality, proportionality and the like and in order to fashion an appropriate total effective head term in relation to a series of offences, it is preferable to achieve a satisfactory result by passing appropriate individual sentences and to make those sentences wholly or partially concurrent, rather than by an order or orders for the cumulation of unnecessarily reduced individual sentences. Nevertheless, a rule of this kind can only be a precept or guideline to be applied as and when practicable. In particular, though concurrency is to be preferred, a degree of cumulation ought to be ordered where sentences represent separate episodes or transactions which ought to be recognised, though at all times avoiding the imposition of a 'crushing' sentence.”

[p.683] “What the judge should have done was to fix the appropriate term for each offence, then to direct such accumulation and concurrency as would likewise reflect the criminality of each episode of offending and finally to look at the end result to see if the principle of totality had been breached and to see otherwise whether it was a crushing head sentence. I would not suggest that this should be a mechanical process. Obviously a judge could fairly fix on a degree of concurrency and cumulation with an eye to what would not offend against the principle of totality; after all that is the object of the rules relating to both concurrency and cumulation. But the starting point should be sentences which are proportionate to and appropriate for each offence.”

In *DPP v Eagles* [2012] VSCA 102 at [61] the Court of Appeal described how a total sentence was to be constructed in accord with the principle of totality:

“If the total sentence is too severe, a more appropriate sentence can be constructed either by altering the orders for cumulation and concurrency, or by lowering the sentences for individual counts. In *Mill*, the High Court approved either approach, but expressed preference for the former; that accords with the approach of this court in *DPP v Grabovac*.”

In *R v Hogan* [2008] VSCA 279 the Crown conceded and the Court of Appeal found sentencing error in a case in which the sentencing judge had ordered full cumulation on one count and no order for cumulation on others. At [24]-[29] the judgment of Maxwell P, Redlich JA & Robson AJA referred with approval to the latter afore-mentioned dicta of Ormiston JA in *DPP v Grabovac* [1998] 1 VR 664, 683 and to dicta of the Court of Appeal in *R v Izzard* (2003) 7 VR 480, *R v McCorriston* [2000] VSCA 200 and *R v Coukoulis* (2003) 7 VR 45 and said:

[27] “In our opinion, the sentencing approach discussed in both *R v Izzard* and *DPP v Grabovac* means that, where there are a number of counts each of which should properly be the subject of partial cumulation, full cumulation should not be arbitrarily ordered on only one count to produce a total effective sentence which satisfies the totality principle. There should ordinarily be partial cumulation where discrete episodes are involved in the various counts. The extent of the cumulation on a particular count may have to be tailored, bearing in mind the need for cumulation on other counts, so as to ensure that the totality principle is observed and a crushing effective sentence is not imposed.

[28] There can be no inflexible rules as to how this is done. What is important is that whether or not cumulation is imposed must reflect the criminality of the offences and episodes involved, subject always to the due observance of the totality principle.

[29] The discretion to order cumulation between counts is a very broad one. It should not be unnecessarily circumscribed. Reasonable minds will differ as to whether cumulation should be ordered and if so in what amount.”

In *Hung Anh Vu v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 59, the Court of Appeal upheld sentences of IMP12y for manslaughter and IMP6y for recklessly causing serious injury but held that the period of 3y cumulation was manifestly excessive and breached the principle of totality. In lieu a total effective sentence of IMP13y6m/10y was set. At [52]-[53] Kaye, T Forrest & Osborn JJA said:

“Given our assessment that the sentences on the manslaughter charge and the recklessly causing serious injury charge are both at or close to the top of the available range, we consider that up to this point, the principle of totality has not weighed substantially in the sentencing mix. And yet, it had work to do. Having fixed upon the stern sentences for the individual charges, his Honour then turned to a consideration of a just and appropriate aggregate sentence as an appropriate measure of the total overall criminality. In *DPP v Grabovac* [1998] 1 VR 664, Ormiston JA, with whom Winneke P and Hedigan JA agreed, explained the various ways a sentence for multiple charges could be structured to reflect the sentencing principles of totality and proportionality. The sentences on individual charges could be moderated so as to reach an appropriate total effective sentence, or alternatively, unmoderated sentences could be imposed on individual charges, and moderation (reflecting the principles of totality and proportionality) could be achieved through the moderation of orders for cumulation. Ormiston JA considered that this latter approach was preferable. This Court has agreed with that preference on several occasions {see, eg, *DPP v Green* [2020] VSCA 23, [94]; *DPP v Drake* [2019] VSCA 293, [25]; *Lim v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 64, [25]; *DPP v West* [2017] VSCA 20, [48]–[49]} as do we. After some anxious consideration, we have concluded that the order for cumulation is manifestly excessive and has resulted in a head sentence that is manifestly excessive.”

In *Osman v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 176 the Court of Appeal – while finding no error in sentences of IMP4y on 2 x trafficking and IMP11y on 2 x trafficking in a large commercial quantity of heroin & ‘mixed substance’ by 54 year old applicant at the ‘middle level’ of a drug trafficking syndicate – applied the principle of totality and reduced the TES from IMP19y/13y to IMP16y/12y. At [102] Priest, T Forrest & Emerton JJA said:

“The totality principle imposes a final duty on the sentencing judge to ensure that the totality of consecutive sentences is not excessive. The principle requires the sentencing judge to stand back and assess not just the individual sentences but also to review the aggregate sentence and consider whether the aggregate properly reflects the degree of criminality involved and is ‘just and appropriate’ [D A Thomas, *Principles of Sentencing* (Heinemann, 2nd ed, 1979) 56–7, quoted in *Mill v The Queen* (1988) 166 CLR 59, 62–3; [1988] HCA 70 (Wilson, Deane, Dawson, Toohey and Gaudron JJ)] and ‘not excessive’ [D A Thomas, *Principles of Sentencing* (Heinemann, 2nd ed, 1979) 57, quoted in *R v* *Piacentino* (2007) 15 VR 501, 508 [32]; [2007] VSCA 49 (Eames JA, with whom Buchanan JA and Vincent JA agreed)]. In this case, we consider the total effective sentence requires moderation.”

In *Newton v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 207 the Court of Appeal allowed an appeal against a sentence of IMP9y1m/6y4m imposed following pleas of guilty to charges of aggravated burglary, persistent contravention of a family violence safety notice, intentionally causing injury, damage property and making threats to kill and to inflict serious injury. In lieu a sentence of IMP6y6m/4y6m was imposed. At [69] Niall JA, with whom Priest JA agreed, said:

“Although the charges were, taken individually, serious, many of the factors that made them serious were common and called for a significant degree of cumulation. In my view, although the threats that made up charge 4 were appalling, there remains a need for significant cumulation having regard to the overall criminality involved in the offending. Section 6E impacts but does not fully negate the operation of the principle of totality or obviate the need for the sentencing court to stand back and ensure that the total effective sentence is appropriate: *Zhao v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 267, [94]. As Ashley and Weinberg JJA said in *Bogdanovich v The Queen* [2011] VSCA 388 at [63]-[64]:

‘The totality principle requires that where an offender is sentenced for a number of separate offences, the judge must ensure that the total effective sentence does not exceed that which is a “just and appropriate measure of the total criminality involved”. The totality principle is said to “defy precision either of description or implementation”. Sometimes it is described as a requirement of “just deserts”, and whether the total effective sentence offends that principle is often a “matter of impression”. A convicted offender should be sentenced not simply and indiscriminately for every separate criminal act, but for what in the broad sense can be characterised as his or her overall criminal conduct.

Where a number of technically separate offences have been committed, but they can fairly be described as “parts of a multi-faceted course of criminal conduct”, it will often be appropriate to order substantial concurrency’.”

In *Ahmed Mohamed v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 136 the appellant had been found guilty by a jury of charges of attempting to engage in a terrorist act and engaging in a terrorist act and was sentenced by Tinney J to IMP22y/17y. Several months later in a separate trial he was found guilty by a jury of one charge of conspiring to do acts in preparation for, or planning, a terrorist act. He was subsequently sentenced by Beale J to IMP26y of which 16y was to be served cumulatively on the 22y sentence imposed by Tinney J, resulting in a TES IMP38y/28y6m: see [2019] VSC 775. He did not appeal either of the individual sentences but appealed the order for cumulation made by Beale J. The Court of Appeal (Maxwell P, Emerton & Sifris JJA) allowed the appeal and substituted a TES IMP32y/24y. At [63]-[80] the Court discussed the application of the principle of totality and the related question of a ‘crushing’ sentence:

[63] “As noted earlier, the question of totality directs attention to the aggregate criminality involved in the offences in question. So far as the conspiracy offence is concerned, some guidance is provided by this Court’s decision concerning one of the applicant’s co-conspirators, Ibrahim Abbas, who was sentenced to 24 years’ imprisonment for his participation in the conspiracy. Unlike the applicant, Ibrahim had pleaded guilty at the earliest opportunity. At the same time, he had shown no remorse and there was no sign of renunciation of his extreme beliefs…

[65] The totality enquiry does not, of course, end with an assessment of the aggregate criminality involved in the offending. The total effective sentence will only satisfy the requirement of proportionality if it is a ‘just and appropriate measure of the total criminality involved’: *Postiglione v The Queen* (1997) 189 CLR 295, 307-8 (McHugh J); [1997] HCA 26. That point was made clearly in *Azzopardi v The Queen* (2011) 3 VR 43; [2011] VSCA 372 where this Court said at [61]-[62] & [66]:

‘The rationale underlying the principle is that a ‘just measure’ of an offender’s total criminality is a sentence which satisfies all sentencing objectives applicable to the entirety of that criminal conduct. Only implicitly in all of the statements of the principle of totality in its application is the proposition that a sentencing judge undertaking the adjustment of the sentence does so in order to ensure that the final sentence is no more than is necessary to satisfy the various objectives of sentencing. Considerations of mercy may further influence the sentencing judge to increase any downward adjustment.

…

All of the individual sentences including the largest, usually the base sentence, must reflect all relevant sentencing objectives where the preferred method of adjustment of sentences is followed. Punitive sentencing objectives such as denunciation, deterrence, retribution and community protection as well as matters in mitigation will then ordinarily be satisfied by relatively modest orders for cumulation on the base sentence. An aggregate sentence must be arrived at that is sufficient punishment, but no more than is necessary to satisfy those sentencing objectives. It will then be proportionate to the offender’s overall criminality.’

[66] In the present case, there are other sentencing objectives of great significance. Foremost amongst them, in our view, is the need to maximise the applicant’s prospects of rehabilitation. When attention is directed to rehabilitation, the sentencing court is not — as is sometimes misleadingly suggested — giving priority to the private interests of the offender. Rather, the court is concerned with the community’s interest in minimising the risk of further offending following the completion of the sentence. Self-evidently, that objective — of reducing the risk of reoffending — is of particular importance in a case like the present, where the offender has committed offences of such seriousness.

[67] The judge’s findings about the applicant’s prospects of rehabilitation were, therefore, of great importance. As noted earlier, the applicant took the unusual course of giving evidence at his own plea hearing, renouncing Islamic State and violent jihad. In the course of giving evidence, he admitted his guilt of the offences of which he had been convicted, thus abandoning any possibility of appeal against conviction. Crucially, his Honour found that the applicant was ‘genuinely on the path of de-radicalisation’, was remorseful, had used his time in prison productively and had ‘reasonable prospects of rehabilitation’…

[69] Given that the applicant’s motivation to commit both sets of offences rested entirely on his beliefs about IS, his renunciation of those beliefs is self-evidently of great importance. Accepting the genuineness of the applicant’s renunciation, as the judge did, means that the risk of him reoffending is very greatly reduced. He has not otherwise shown a disposition to engage in serious criminal conduct.

[70] It follows, as senior counsel for the applicant correctly submitted, that considerations of community protection and specific deterrence — ordinarily considerations of great significance in cases such as this — are of very much less importance than they would otherwise be. On the judge’s findings, the applicant is not a person who needs to be ‘incapacitated’ in order to protect the community. As to the link between community protection and incapacitation, see *Elomar v The Queen* [2014] NSWCCA 303, [703]–[704] (Bathurst CJ, Hoeben CJ at CL, Simpson J). His sentence is directed principally to just punishment, denunciation and general deterrence.

[71] We turn, finally, to the related question of whether the total effective sentence of 38 years is ‘crushing’. At the request of the Court, both parties filed very helpful supplementary submissions on how the need to avoid a ‘crushing’ sentence should be understood as fitting within the framework of sentencing principles and, in particular, on how it relates to the sentencing purpose of rehabilitation.

[72] It was common ground that rehabilitation is precisely what is at issue here. Thus, the Director submitted that:

‘The effect of a (typically, very long) crushing sentence is to increase the severity of the sentence on the offender and to destroy or substantially erode, rather than promote, what prospects of rehabilitation they may have or to result in them having no meaningful life after the conclusion of the sentence: *R v MAK* (2006) 167 A Crim R 159, 164 [17] (Spigelman CJ, Whealy and Howie JJ); [2006] NSWCCA 381; *R v Cramp* (2010) 106 SASR 304, 318 [51] (Kourakis J).’

[73] Our attention was drawn to significant South Australian authorities on the point. In *R v Cramp*, Kourakis J said at [51]:

‘Where there are reasonable prospects of rehabilitation, and the requirements of punishment and deterrence otherwise allow, care should be taken not to impose a sentence which leaves the offender in a state of despair in which he abandons any inclination to reform. Where there are prospects of rehabilitation, a sentence that destroys any real capacity for the offender to reform should not be imposed unless the protection of the community demands it.’

See also *Lane v The Queen* [2020] SASCFC 82, [42].

[74] More recently, in *Snodgrass v The Queen* [2021] SASCFC 20 at [73] the South Australian Full Court spoke of the need to avoid a sentence that might have a ‘crushing effect upon the defendant’s motivation to rehabilitate and expectations for his or her life experience following the expiry of the sentence.’

[75] The point is of particular significance in the sentencing of a young offender. Thus, in *R v Poynton [No 4]* [2018] NSWSC 1693 Schmidt J said at [87]:

‘It must also be taken into account that particularly for young people … extremely long total sentences may also be ‘crushing’, in the sense of inducing a feeling of hopelessness or destroying any expectation of a useful life after release. That can both increase the severity of a sentence and destroy such prospects as there may be of an offender’s rehabilitation and reform.’

[76] It follows, in our view, that there is no separate sentencing principle prohibiting the imposition of a ‘crushing’ sentence. Rather, the question arises as part of the sentencing court’s necessary consideration of how best to promote the offender’s rehabilitation. The objective of rehabilitation is central to the sentencing process, albeit that it is often in tension with other sentencing objectives which must also be served by the sentence imposed.

[77] In a case like the present, the need to avoid a crushing sentence is a very significant part of the totality analysis. Their inter-relationship was explained in *Director of Public Prosecutions v Alsop* [2010] VSCA 325, where this Court said:

‘The totality principle has two limbs. First, a sentencing judge must ensure that the aggregation of the sentences appropriate for each offence are a just and appropriate measure of the total criminality involved. Second, the overall sentence should not be ‘crushing’ in the sense that it would destroy any reasonable expectation of a useful life after release. The critical question then is whether after allowing for mitigating circumstances the total sentence, including the parole sentences, reflects what is appropriate for the overall criminality of the convicted person.’

[78] In our view, the total effective sentence of 38 years would almost inevitably ‘induce a feeling of hopelessness’ in this applicant. The prospect of a prison sentence stretching decades into the future must inevitably affect his incentive for rehabilitation. That is, on any view, a powerful consideration.

[79] That factor would not, of course, justify appellate intervention if a sentence of that length were otherwise necessary to serve the relevant sentencing objectives. But, for the reasons we have given, that is not this case. The judge’s findings about the applicant’s de-radicalisation and progress towards rehabilitation are very significant, as we explained earlier.

[80] It follows, with respect to the sentencing judge, that it was not reasonably open to conclude that 16 years of the second sentence had to be cumulated on the original 22 years. In our view, a substantially shorter period of cumulation will be sufficient to meet the sentencing purposes of just punishment, denunciation and general deterrence while, at the same time, promoting the public interest in the applicant’s rehabilitation.”

In *Kulafi v The Queen; Nguyen v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 369 the appellants were co-offenders in the burglary of a car dealership and the theft of multiple vehicles. K had attended the premises on 13 occasions over a 25-hour period, stealing 14 vehicles with an estimated value of $341,000 and one roof rack. N attended on five occasions in the same period and participated in the theft of 9 vehicles with an estimated value of $180,000 and the roof rack. Having pleaded guilty, they were sentenced on each charge of theft to IMP 9m of which 3m was cumulative on the base sentence imposed on a charge of burglary. The Court of Appeal agreed with counsel for K that as a result of adopting this “overly ‘mechanistic’ approach” the sentences breached the principle of totality in that they were disproportionate to the aggregate criminality involved in the burglary and thefts which each appellant committed. The appeals against sentence were allowed and each appellant was resentenced as follows:

* for K: IMP4y8m/3y 🡺 an aggregate IMP 3y4m/2y6m; and
* for N: IMP3y4m/2y 🡺 an aggregate IMP 2y6m/18m.

Priest & Niall JJA said at [46]-[47]:

[46] “In our respectful view, it was not appropriate to view the criminality involved in this offending, and hence the appropriate sentence, as increasing by set increments for each additional car stolen. While the quantum involved will always be relevant in assessing the seriousness of a dishonesty offence, it is only one of the relevant factors and is almost never determinative: *R v Samia* [2009] VSCA 5, [8] (Nettle JA).

[47] In the present case, in our view, the overall criminality was to be assessed by reference to the nature and character of the entire operation over the 24 hour period, rather than measured quantitatively by reference to the number of vehicles. Approaching the sentence in that fashion created the risk of a total sentence which, by comparison with sentences imposed for much more serious offending, was disproportionate to the criminality involved.”

In *Anh Thai Nguyen v The King* [2024] VSCA 290 the Court of Appeal refused leave to appeal against a TES IMP7y/5y imposed on a 43 year old offender who had pleaded not guilty to one count of recklessly exposing an emergency worker to risks by driving and 6 counts of reckless conduct endangering life. The appellant – who had a poor criminal history for driving offences – had driven his vehicle on a pedestrian footpath to evade police, thereby endangering a police officer, pedestrians and workers. In refusing leave Priest & T Forrest JJA rejected the appellant’s submission that the principle of totality had been breached in circumstances where one course of conduct had resulted in multiple victims.

In *Cho Nguyen v The King* [2025] VSCA 3 the Court of Appeal granted leave to appeal but dismissed the appeal against a TES IMP23m/16m imposed on the 47 year old applicant with a ‘dreadful’ criminal history on charges including reckless conduct endangering serious injury and making a false report to police in the context of driving described by the sentencing judge as ‘simply appalling’. At the time the applicant was arrested on these offences he was on parole for earlier offending. His parole was cancelled and he was returned to custody where he spent the remaining 277 days of the original sentence and a further 160 days which were recorded as pre-sentence detention for the current offending. Both Niall CJ at [25] and Walker JA at [48] & [56] considered that no different sentence ought be imposed. Niall CJ at [23] did not regard the principle of totality as the critical issue:

“Whether or not the circumstances fall within the concept of totality as it is presently understood is not the critical question. Rather, in order to succeed, the applicant has to establish that the judge ignored the earlier sentence and its potential to moderate the sentence to be imposed. The applicant has failed to make that good…”

However at [48] Walker JA considered that the sentencing judge had failed properly to take into account the cancellation of the applicant’s parole as an aspect of the principle of totality, her Honour saying at [51]-[53]:

[51] “As Niall CJ explains, the principle of totality operates where a sentencing court is dealing with an offender who has been sentenced on another occasion and is still under sentence. In such cases the principle requires the judge to ensure that the aggregation of the sentences appropriate for each offence is a just and appropriate measure of the total criminality involved and avoids a crushing sentence. In addition, the principle of totality can apply in circumstances where the offender is no longer serving the sentence for the earlier offending. This includes circumstances where the offender was on remand for the present offending, while at the same time serving a term of imprisonment for another offence. Such a period of imprisonment cannot be claimed as pre-sentence detention under s 18, but is nonetheless relevant to the sentencing discretion as an aspect of the principle of totality. See, eg, *Kenyeres v The King* [2023] VSCA 25, [59]-[64]; *Lowell (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 134, [30]–[33]; El‑Waly v The Queen (2012) 46 VR 656, 674 [111]–[112]; [2012] VSCA 184; *R v Renzella* [1997] 2 VR 88, 98. The applicant did not rely on these authorities in this Court, nor were they drawn to the judge’s attention. Nonetheless, the applicant’s case on appeal was consistent with these authorities.

[52] In the present case the judge was required to take into account the 277 days that the applicant was on remand for the current offences while at the same time serving a term of imprisonment for the earlier offending. As explained above, those 277 days did not constitute pre-sentence detention under s 18; nonetheless they raised a distinct issue of totality. I note that there is some debate about whether time spent in custody both on remand and serving an earlier sentence should be regarded as an aspect of the ‘Renzella discretion’, or whether it is better understood as a particular application of the principle of totality: see, eg, *Lowell (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 134, [33]. It is not necessary for me to enter into that debate in the present case.”

[53] In my view, the judge did not have regard to this aspect of the applicant’s circumstances. Although his Honour referred to the sentencing reasons in relation to the applicant’s earlier offending, and although the judge was aware that the applicant’s parole had been cancelled, his Honour made no reference to the 277 days of detention that did not constitute pre-sentence detention.”

In *Vassallo v The King* [2025] VSCA 7 the appellant had pleaded guilty to rape (2 charges), false imprisonment (2 charges), supplying drug of dependence to a child, kidnapping, conduct endangering person, common assault and attempting to pervert course of justice and had been sentenced to TES IMP22y/14y. Holding that the TES was manifestly excessive and breached the totality principle, the Court of Appeal reduced the sentences on the 2 rape charges, resulting in a TES IMP19y/14y. At [104] & [107] Priest & Kaye JJ said:

[104] “The totality principle requires a court, in sentencing an offender for multiple offences, to ensure that the aggregate term of imprisonment (the total effective sentence) is a just and appropriate measure of the total criminality involved in the offending in question: *Postiglione v The Queen* (1996) 189 CLR 295, 307–309 & 340; [1996] HCA 26; *Mill v The Queen* (1988) 166 CLR 59, 62–3; [1988] HCA 70; *DPP v Grabovac* [1998] 1 VR 664, 676–80.

…

[107] Ordinarily, it is desirable that the principle of totality be catered for by adjusting the degree of cumulation between the individual sentences, rather than by adjusting the individual sentences themselves: *Mill v The Queen* (1988) 166 CLR 59, 62–3; *R v Lomax* [1998] 1 VR 551, 564; *DPP v Grabovac* [1998] 1 VR 664, 682. However, in the present case, the orders for cumulation were appropriately modest, and any moderation of them would fail to reflect, at all adequately, the additional offending involved in each charge. In those circumstances, the appropriate mechanism, by which to sufficiently accommodate the principle of totality, would be to moderate the sentences imposed on the two rape charges, which, for the reasons we have discussed, were particularly high.”

For further discussion of the principle of totality and the rules in relation to cumulation see *Pearce v The Queen* (1998) 194 CLR 610 at 623-624 per McHugh, Hayne & Callinan JJ; *DPP v GJL* [2004] VSCA 35 at [29]-[30]; *R v Truong* [2004] VSCA 172 at [18]; *R v McDonald* [2004] VSCA 196 at [21]-[22]; *R v Ly* [2004] VSCA 45 at [28]; *R v Stanisavljevic* [2004] VSCA 144 at [15]; *R v Zaydan & Others* [2004] VSCA 245 at [43]; *R v WMR* [2005] VSCA 59 at [17]-[25]; *R v McIntosh* [2005] VSCA 106 at [16]-[21]; *R v Mann* [2005] VSCA 141 at [7]; *R v Glennon (No.3)* [2005] VSCA 262 at [44]; *R v Verdins* [2005] VSC 479 at [38]-[39]; *R v Welsh* [2005] VSCA 285 at [32]-[35]; *R v Carne* [2006] VSCA 2 at [27]; *DPP v Gany* [2006] VSCA 148 at [30]; *R v Clarke* [2006] VSCA 174 at [64]; *R v Fadisarkis* [2006] VSCA 303 at [22]-[24]; *DPP v Pau* [2007] VSC 4 at [51]; *R v Abela* [2007] VSCA 22 at [85], [87]-[92]; *R v Piacentino - R v Ahmad* [2007] VSCA 49; *R v Cardamone* [2007] VSCA 77 at [43]-[47]; *R v Latina* [2007] VSCA 78 at [20]-[21] & [40]-[42]; *DPP v Mirik* [2007] VSCA 150 at [56]-[57]; *R v DM* [2007] VSCA 155 at [27]; *R v Alashkar – R v Tayar* [2007] VSCA 182; *R v Norris* [2007] VSCA 241 at [48]-[49]; *R v Scholes* [2007] VSCA 303 at [38]-[43]; *R v Ahmed Mourad* [2008] VSCA 4 at [10]-[16]; *DPP v Rout [2008] VSCA 87; R v Rule* [2008] VSCA 154; *DPP v Towle (Sentence)* [2008] VSC 101 at [24]-[28]; *R v AB (No.2)* [2008] VSCA 39 at [53]-[60]; *R v Bult* [2008] VSCA 227 at [22]-[24]; *R v Franklin* [2008] VSCA 249 at [34]-[36]; *R v Rousetty* [2008] VSCA 259 at [50]; *R v Brown* [2009] VSCA 23 at [19]-[27] & [36]-[41] {see also (2004) 10 VR 328}; *R v Wright* [2009] VSCA 27 at [45]-[54]; *R v Samia* [2009] VSCA 5 at [16]-[20]; *R v Yi Yi Wang* [2009] VSCA 67 at [14] & [24]; *R v Franklin* [2009] VSCA 77 at [23]-[33]; *R v Waugh* [2009] VSCA 92 at [23]-[25]; *R v Alexopoulos* [2010] VSCA 52 at [59]-[66]; *R v Malikovski* [2010] VSCA 130 at [40]-[42]; *R v Bentley* [2010] VSCA 217 at [12]; *R v Scott* [2010] VSCA 320 at [13]; *R v Minotto* [2010] VSCA 310 at [14]-[20] & [29]; *R v Davy* [2011] VSCA 98 at [36]-[47]; *R v Marino* [2011] VSCA 133 at [48]-[55]; *R v Samac* [2011] VSCA 171; *R v Cook* [2011] VSCA 187 at [11]-[17]; *DPP v Clifford* [2011] VSCA 199 at [29]-[39]; *DPP v Farrugia* [2011] VSCA 201 at [26]-[28]; *DPP v Dickson* [2011] VSCA 222 at [11]; *R v Tran* [2011] VSCA 363 at [26]-[28]; *R v Charles* [2011] VSCA 399 at [177]-[186]; *R v DHC* [2012] VSCA 52 at [85]-[98]; *R v Arnautovic* [2012] VSCA 112; *DPP v McGuigan* [2012] VSCA 121; *DPP v Gangur* [2012] VSCA 139; *DPP v TP* [2012] VSCA 166 at [82]-[84]; *DPP v CA* [2012] VSCA 199 at [14]-[18]; *R v Contin* [2012] VSCA 247; *R v Kasey McCartney* [2012] VSCA 268 at [92]-[101]; *R v Buck & Willcocks* [2012] VSC 489; *DPP v Roberts* [2012] VSCA 313 at [95]-[119]; *Waugh v The Queen* [2013] VSCA 36 at [14]-[35]; *R v Gavanas* [2013] VSCA 178 at [102]-[105]; *John Gordon v The Queen* [2013] VSCA 343 at [44]-[67]; *Berry v The Queen* [2013] VSCA 349 at [6]-[14]; *Bowden v The Queen* [2013] VSCA 382 at [17]; *Pasinis v The Queen* [2014] VSCA 97 at [41]-[42] & [62]-[78]; *Zotos v The Queen* [2014] VSCA 324 at [19]; *Fridey v The Queen* [2014] VSCA 271 at [31]-[59]; *DPP v Charlie Dalgleish (a pseudonym)* [2016] VSCA 148 at [59]; *Sovolos v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 149 at [34] & [39]; *Sayer v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 177 at [58]-[83]; *Mendelle v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 204 at [12]-[13]; *Oliver Harlow (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 234 at [96]; *Wheeldon v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 344 at [21]-[25]; *Arnautovic v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 31 at [37]-[44]; *DPP v Drake* [2019] VSCA 293 at [18]-[24]; *DPP v Green* [2020] VSCA 23 at [94]-[97]; *Lachlan Pitt (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 73; *Zampatti v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 285; *Byrne v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 289; *Julian Lockyer (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 321; *Butler v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 129; *Bufton v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 228 at [85]; *Hazell v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 313; *Jenkins v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 1 at [13]-[17]; *Wilson v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 2 at [27]-[37]; *Sang Zung Mang v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 10 at [18]-[24]; *Bidong v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 33 at [28]-[43]; *Salvaggio v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 88 at [11reynolds9]-[124]; *Donnes v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 132 at [21]-[24]; *De Luca v The King* [2023] VSCA 44 at [47]-[60]; *Tonkin v The King* [2023] VSCA 194 at [61]-[81]; *Seiler v The King* [2023] VSCA 207 at [44]-[45]; *Norman v The King* [2023] VSCA 213 at [53]-[65]; *Natano v The King* [2023] VSCA 261 at [46]-[55]; *Gilmore (a pseudonym) v The King* [2024] VSCA 98 at [39]-[51]; *Barnett v The King* [2024] VSCA 100 at [36]-[56]; *Phillips v DPP (Cth)* [2024] VSCA 132 at [27] & [55]; *Sepehrnia v The King* [2024] VSCA 149 at [52]-[69]; *Liberatore v The King* [2024] VSCA 263 at [55]‑[80]; *Harre v The King* [2024] VSCA 278 at [85]-[88]; *Al Qassim v The King* [2024] VSCA 302 at [32]-[41]; *Crough v The King* [2025] VSCA 165 at [33]-[43].

In *R v Izzard* (2004) 7 VR 480; {[2003] VSCA 152} the applicant and a co-offender had attacked a series of 4 victims. The applicant had pleaded guilty to one count of armed robbery, one count of attempted armed robbery, one count of attempted robbery, one count of recklessly causing injury and one count of theft. He had been sentenced to 5 years imprisonment on the count of armed robbery and various terms of imprisonment to be served concurrently on the other counts. A non-parole period of 3½ years was fixed. Callaway JA, with whom Winneke P & Vincent JA agreed, was critical of this method of structuring the sentence. After referring to *R v O'Rourke* [1997] 1 VR 246, *R v Mai* [2000] VSCA 184 & *R v McCorriston* [2000] VSCA 200 at [13], Callaway JA said at [22]-[23]:

"A moderate sentence may, of course, be lengthy. Moderation takes its content from the circumstances and each individual sentence should still be appropriate for the relevant count.

There are at least three reasons why, within the limits of common sense, judges are well advised to moderate and cumulate in appropriate cases. First, moderation is a virtue in itself. Secondly, other victims are not left to feel that the offences committed against them are 'meaningless statistics'. Thirdly, a sentence structured in this way is less vulnerable on appeal. Attention is focussed on the merits and the discretion is not re-opened simply because the total effective sentence, imposed on one count, was manifestly excessive for the offence the subject of that count considered on its own."

In *R v MDB* [2003] VSCA 181 at [14] Batt JA – with whom Ormiston & Vincent JJA agreed – said in relation to sentences of imprisonment: "At least in general, it is preferable for judges to cumulate upon the most serious count, as otherwise the effective sentence for it appears to be reduced: *DPP v Grabovac* [1998] 1 VR 664 at 689; *R v Reid* [Court of Appeal, unreported, 16/11/1998] at p.15 and *R v Birnie* (2002) 5 VR 426 at 436." In *DPP v Adams* [2006] VSCA 149 at [3] the Court of Appeal reiterated: “There must always be a base term specified which will provide the point of reference for all directions relating to concurrency or cumulation.” See also *R v Yi Yi Wang* [2009] VSCA 67 at [10]. Presumably, however, no base sentence need be specified if the sentences on all of the offences are to be served concurrently. See also *R v Nikodjevic* [2004] VSCA 222 at [34]-[42] where the Court of Appeal reiterated the principle in *R v MDB* in overturning a sentence in which the judge had failed to nominate a base sentence upon which various other sentences were to be partly cumulated and *R v Seiler* [2005] VSCA 146 at [3]-[4] where the Court of Appeal referred to *R v Nikodjevic* in overturning a sentence for the same reason.

In *Walsh v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 146 the Court of Appeal allowed an appeal against sentence by an interstate truck driver who had pleaded guilty to one charge of culpable driving causing death and three charges of negligently causing serious injury. The victims were the driver and 3 passengers in a Firefly coach which had run into one of the truck’s trailers which had overturned across the highway after the truck driver had oversteered when his truck drifted to the left off the highway. The Court held that the base sentences of 8y6m, 2y10m & 3y2m were not manifestly excessive but that TES IMP14y/8y6m was. The TES was reduced to IMP11y/7y by reducing the level of cumulation. At [81]-[83] Emerton P & Niall JA said:

[81] “Having sentenced the applicant for the death of Mr Pich, it was then necessary for the sentencing judge to recognise in the sentence he imposed the harm inflicted on the three passengers who suffered serious injuries, bearing in mind that exactly the same conjunction of acts and events that caused the death of Mr Pich also caused those injuries. Arriving at an appropriate overall sentence was an extremely difficult task for the judge. The applicant engaged in a single course of criminal conduct that caused the death of Mr Pich and the injuries to the three passengers, albeit that the consequences of that conduct were multifarious. His moral culpability, which was a significant factor in the sentencing exercise, was not made worse because there was more than one victim. On the other hand, the total effective sentence had to take into account the fact that one person had died and three others seriously injured. The extent of the consequences of the applicant’s negligent driving was plainly a matter of some importance.

[82] In our view, it was open for the judge to impose the sentences that he did on charges 2, 3 and 4. However, the total sentence imposed on the applicant needed to reflect his total criminality. The sentencing judge had to ensure that the aggregation of the sentences appropriate for each offence was a just and appropriate measure of the total criminality involved.

[83] We consider that the periods of cumulation imposed were manifestly excessive having regard to the total effective sentence that they produced. The aggregation of the sentences appropriate for each offence was not a just and appropriate measure of the total criminality involved in the applicant’s conduct. It well exceeded that which was necessary to address just punishment, denunciation and general deterrence.”

### **11.1.4.5 Community correction orders under Part 3A of the Sentencing Act 1991**

Since January 2012, the option of a community correction order [‘CCO’] has been available to Victorian courts sentencing an offender pursuant to the *Sentencing Act 1991*. The CCO is a non-custodial order, to which are attached certain mandatory conditions laid down by the legislature. In addition, the sentencing court can attach to a CCO a range of conditions which are variously coercive, prohibitive, intrusive and rehabilitative.

The CCO is a flexible sentencing option, enabling punitive and rehabilitative purposes to be served simultaneously. The CCO can be fashioned to address the particular circumstances of the offender and the causes of the offending, and to minimise the risk of re-offending by promoting the offender’s rehabilitation. It can be a standalone sentencing order or an order combined with a short term of imprisonment.

In *Boulton v The Queen* (2014) 46 VR 308; [2014] VSCA 342 – from which the above two paragraphs have largely been extracted – the adult appellant had pleaded guilty to one charge of armed robbery and one charge of recklessly causing injury. When he was sentenced for these offences he had served 265d in custody. On the armed robbery charge he appears to have been sentenced to 3m IMP and upon release an 8y CCO; on the injury charge a term of IMP of time served and a 5y concurrent CCO. The Court of Appeal held that the sentences were manifestly excessive and resentenced the appellant as follows: on the armed robbery charge 3m IMP plus a 3y CCO; on the injury charge a 2y6m concurrent CCO. The conditions on the CCOs were the same as those imposed by the sentencing judge.

In an extensive guideline judgment Maxwell P, Nettle, Neave, Redlich & Osborn JJA held, *inter alia*:

* at [5]: “The advent of the CCO calls for a re-consideration of traditional conceptions of imprisonment as the only appropriate punishment for serious offences. This in turn will require a recognition both of the limitations of imprisonment and of the unique advantages which the CCO offers.”
* at [42]: “The CCO provisions reflect both the punitive and rehabilitative components of community-based sentencing.”
* at [63]-[84]: The ‘overarching principles’ which govern the CCO regime are proportionality and suitability.
* at [152]: “The sentencing court will want to be satisfied — and the community would expect — that the imposition of a CCO will ‘punish the offender to an extent and in a manner which is just in all the circumstances’. Both the period of the CCO, and the conditions attached, bear upon the extent of the punishment inflicted. In the particular case, the punitive effect will be determined by the extent, and duration, of the curtailment of the offender’s freedoms.”
* at [204]: “Appendix 1 contains a set of guidelines for sentencing courts to use in deciding whether to impose a CCO and, if so, of what length and with what conditions. The content of the guidelines reflects the views expressed in the guideline judgment and should be read and understood in that context. The guidelines are intended, nevertheless, to be free-standing and to be suitable for use without the need to refer back to the judgment.”

After highlighting at [104]-[112] the gross disadvantages – both to the prisoner and to the community – of a sentence of imprisonment and citing and endorsing dicta of Fox J in *R v Dixon* (1975) ACTR 13, 19–20, their Honours stated at [114]-[115]:

“The CCO option offers the court something which no term of imprisonment can offer [we are not here considering the ‘combination’ option of a CCO and a term of imprisonment], namely, the ability to impose a sentence which demands of the offender that he/she take personal responsibility for self-management and self-control and (depending on the conditions) that he/she pursue treatment and rehabilitation, refrain from undesirable activities and associations and/or avoid undesirable persons and places. The CCO also enables the offender to maintain the continuity of personal and family relationships, and to benefit from the support they provide.

In short, the CCO offers the sentencing court the best opportunity to promote, simultaneously, the best interests of the community and the best interests of the offender and of those who are dependent on him/her. On this analysis, if defence counsel submits that a CCO would be appropriate, it is no answer for a prosecutor (or a judge) to say, ‘How could a CCO be appropriate given that an offence of this seriousness has always received imprisonment?’ As we have endeavoured to explain, that question should mark the beginning, not the end, of the court’s consideration.”

In *Njovu v The King* [2025] VSCA 85 the applicant had pleaded guilty to charges of criminal damage, intentionally cause injury, attempt to pervert the course of justice and persistent contravention of a family violence safety notice and had been sentenced to TES IMP2y9m/1y10m. In refusing leave to appeal and rejecting the applicant’s submission that time served together with a lengthy Community Correction Order was the only sentencing option open to the sentencing judge. Taylor JA said at [50]:

“In *Boulton v The Queen* (2014) 46 VR 308; [2014] VSCA 342 the Court said at [140]:

There will, of course, be cases where the sentencing court concludes, after engaging in the deliberation now required by s.5(4C) [of the *Sentencing Act*], that certain sentencing purposes – typically just punishment, denunciation and/or deterrence – cannot be sufficiently served by the making of a CCO, even with onerous conditions. Consistent with the principle of parsimony, the court would then impose the shortest term of imprisonment consistent with the achievement of those purposes.”

See also *DPP v Bowen* [2021] VSCA 355 at [4]-[13]; *Wasif v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 182 at [60].

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### **11.1.5 Sentencing orders – Sentencing hierarchy**

The Second Reading Speech for the CYPA referred (at p.1155) to "a new and broader hierarchy of sentencing orders in the Criminal Division, which will provide the Court with greater flexibility in sentencing…[A]dditional non-custodial options have been created". And (at p.1154): "Consistent with the philosophy of the [CYPA], a 'guardianship to the Director-General' order, formerly known as wardship, will no longer be available as a sentencing option in the Criminal Division."

Eleven sentencing orders are available under s.360(1) of the CYFA when the Court finds a child guilty of an offence, whether summary or indictable. These form a sentencing hierarchy: s.361 provides that the Court must not impose a sentence unless it is satisfied that it is not appropriate to impose a sentence referred to in any preceding paragraph of s.360(1). This is the principle of **parsimony** as to which, in relation to a sentence imposed on an adult, the Court of Appeal in *Wasif v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 182 said at [45]: “The longstanding common law principle of parsimony is directed to ensuring that a just and appropriate sentence is imposed, by requiring that, in each case, such sentence is no more than that which is commensurate with the offending, taking into account all the relevant circumstances of the case, including the subjective circumstances of the offender.” See also *R v Assaad* [2022] VSC 800 at [119]; *R v K*Y [2022] VSC 805 at [85]; *DPP v Merryful; DPP v Bloomfield* [2023] VSC 244 at [65].

The detention orders – Youth Residential Centre orders under ss.410-411 of the CYFA & Youth Justice Centre orders under ss.412-413 of the CYFA – are not to be confused with youth justice centre detention sentences for young adults under ss.3 & 32 of the *Sentencing Act 1991*. Victoria is unique in Australia in providing the option to adult courts of sentencing immature, vulnerable 18-20 year old offenders to custody in the juvenile system rather than prison.

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| **THE PRESCRIBED FORMS/WARRANTS ARE IN ORDERS 4 & 5 OF THE**  ***Children’s Court Criminal Procedure Rules 2009* [S.R. 189/2009]** | | | | | | |
| **SENTENCING ORDER** | | | | **CYFA** | | **NOTES** |
| **(a)**  **[DIM]** | | **DISMISSAL** | | s.360(1)(a) | | 1. Without conviction 2. A fairly uncommon order |
| **(b)**  **[UUT]** | | **NON-ACCOUNTABLE UNDERTAKING** | | ss.363-364  [Form 7] | | 1. AS FOR AN ACCOUNTABLE UNDERTAKING EXCEPT IT MAY NOT BE BREACHED [s.364] 2. A very rare order |
| **(c)**  **[AUT]** | | **ACCOUNTABLE UNDERTAKING** | | ss.365-366  [Form 8] | | 1. Without conviction 2. Charge(s) dismissed 3. May be ordered in relation to 1 or more offences 4. Maximum period 6 months (12 months in exceptional circumstances) 5. Accountable undertaking may be breached [s.366] |
| Undertaking by child (and if required by parent) with or without conditions to do or refrain from doing the act or acts specified in the undertaking. | | | | | |
| **(d)**  **[GBB]** | | **GOOD BEHAVIOUR BOND** | | ss.367-372  [Form 10] | | 1. Without conviction 2. Charge(s) adjourned for period of bond 3. May be ordered in relation to 1 or more offences 4. Maximum period 12 months (18 months in exceptional circumstances and if the child is aged 15 or more on the day of sentencing) 5. Bond must be in “an amount less than one half of the maximum fine that may be imposed on the child under s.373” 6. Court must dismiss charge(s) on the adjourned date if child has observed the conditions of the bond [s.368] 7. Bond may be breached [ss.371-372] 8. Optional special conditions [s.367(3)(d)] |
| Court may order GBB if it appears expedient to do so, having regard to all the circumstances, including:  (a) the nature of the offence;  (b) the character & antecedents of the child;  (c) whether or not the child pleaded guilty. | | | | | |
| 1. Mandatory conditions: To appear if required during the period of or at the end of the adjournment and to be of good behaviour during the period of the adjournment [s.367(3)(a), (b) & (c)] | | | | | |
| **(e)**  **[FIN]** | | **FINE** | | ss.373-379 | | 1. If the Court finds a child guilty of an offence, whether indictable or summary, it may impose a fine with or without conviction 2. Maximum fine is the lower of the maximum prescribed and:   Per offence: 1 penalty unit if child < 15, otherwise 5 penalty units  Per case: 2 penalty units if child < 15, otherwise 10 penalty units  The value of 1 penalty unit for the 2019-2020 financial year is $165.22 |
| A Court imposing a fine on a child must take into consideration, among other things, the financial circumstances of the child when determining the amount of the fine [s.374]. | | | | | |
| 1. May only be ordered in relation to 1 offence. No power to order aggregate fine. 2. Instalment Orders/Time to pay [ss.375-7]. 3. Orders in default of payment of fine/instalment [ss.378-379]. | | | | | |
| **(f)**  **[PRO]** | **PROBATION** | | ss.380-386  [Form 11] | | 1. With or without conviction. In *R v P & Ors* [2007] VChC 3 at [51] & [54] Judge Grant distinguished between two co-offenders, convicting one and not convicting the other. 2. May be ordered in relation to 1 or more offences 3. Maximum period 12 months (or 18 months if one of the offences is punishable by imprisonment > 10 years) 4. If, on the same day or in the same proceeding, multiple probation orders are imposed on the child, their maximum aggregate period is 18 months 5. May not extend beyond child’s 21st birthday 6. May be breached [s.384] 7. May be varied or revoked [ss.381(5) & 421] | |
| Probation involves the lowest level of supervision of the 4 supervisory orders. The frequency of contact is entirely at the discretion of the youth justice officer. A rough average is one contact per week. | | | | |
| 1. May be ordered concurrently in whole or part or cumulatively on an uncompleted probation order [s.382] 2. Cannot be ordered without child’s consent [s.380(2)] 3. Mandatory conditions [s.381(1)] 4. Optional special conditions (reasons required) [ss.381(2)-(4)] | | | | |
| **(g)**  **[YSO]** | **YOUTH SUPERVISION ORDER** | | ss.387-395  [Form 12] | | 1. With or without conviction: see *R v P & Ors* [2007] VChC 3 at [39], [41], [43], [45], [47] &[49]. 2. May be ordered in relation to 1 or more offences 3. Maximum period 12 months (or 18 months if one of the offences is punishable by imprisonment > 10 years): see *DPP v SI (a child)* [2018] VChC 3 4. May not extend beyond child’s 21st birthday 5. If, on the same day or in the same proceeding, multiple YSOs are imposed on the child, their maximum aggregate period is 18 months 6. May be ordered concurrently in whole or part or cumulatively on an uncompleted YSO [s.388] 7. Cannot be ordered without child’s consent [s.387(2)(b)] 8. Mandatory conditions [s.389(1)] 9. Optional special conditions (reasons required) [ss.381(3)+(4) & 389(3)] 10. May be breached [s.392] 11. May be varied or revoked [ss.389(4) & 421] | |
| YSO involves a middle level of supervision. The frequency of contact & attendance is at the discretion of the Secretary DJCP [‘the Secretary’]. Although this is not the norm, the person may also be directed by the Secretary to participate in a community service program or other program [s.389(6)]. | | | | |
| YSO may be suspended by the Secretary if the person is ill or there are other exceptional circumstances [s.422(1)] or if the person is in custody at the time the YSO is made or subsequently [s.390(1)]. | | | | |
| Section 390(3) permits the Secretary, with the consent of the parole board, to direct a term of operation of a YSO be served concurrently with a period of parole. | | | | |
| **(h)**  **[YAO]**  **15+** | **YOUTH ATTENDANCE ORDER** | | ss.396-409  [Form 13] | | 1. Mandatory conviction 2. May be ordered in relation to 1 or more offences, at least one of which must be such that the child would otherwise be sentenced to detention 3. Child must be at least 15 on day of sentencing 4. Maximum period 12 months but may not extend beyond child’s 21st birthday 5. Cannot be ordered without enquiries of the Secretary as to suitability of child [s.398(b)] and without child’s consent [s.398(c)] 6. May be ordered concurrently in whole or part or cumulatively on an uncompleted YAO [s.400] 7. Mandatory conditions [s.399(1)] 8. Optional special conditions (reasons required) [ss.381(3)+(4) & 399(2)+(3)] 9. May be breached [s.408] 10. May be varied or revoked [s.409] 11. Objects of YAO [s.405] | |
| YAO involves an intensive level of supervision & attendance. The frequency of contact & attendance is set out in s.402(1): As directed by the Secretary the person must, in every week during the term of the YAO-  (a) attend a youth justice unit for a maximum of 3 attendances;  (b) such attendances to be for a maximum of 10 hours of which no more than 4 hours may be spent in community service activities under s.407. | | | | |
| YAO may be suspended by the Secretary if the person is in custody at the time the YAO is made or subsequently [s.403]. | | | | |
| YAO is an alternative to YJC for a child aged 15 or more on date of sentencing for an offence for which the child would otherwise be sentenced to detention in YJC as a result of the gravity or habitual nature of the child's unlawful behaviour [s.397(1)]. | | | | | | |
| **(ha)**  **[YCO]** | **YOUTH CONTROL ORDER** | | ss.409A-409Z  [Form 13A] | | 1. Mandatory conviction 2. May be ordered in relation to 1 or more offences, at least one of which must be such that the child would otherwise be sentenced to detention as a result of the gravity or the habitual nature of the child’s unlawful behaviour 3. Maximum period 12 months - if, on same day or in the proceeding, multiple YCOs are made the maximum aggregate period is 12 months 4. May not extend beyond child’s 21st birthday 5. Cannot be ordered without (b) enquiries of the Secretary as to the suitability of the child (c) the child’s consent and (d) a YCO plan [s.409C] 6. May be ordered concurrently in whole or part or cumulatively on an uncompleted YCO [s.409I] 7. Mandatory requirements [s.409F(1)] 8. Optional requirements [s.409F(2)] 9. Mandatory judicial monitoring [s.409L] 10. May be varied [s.409N] | |
| YCO is the most onerous community supervision sentencing order for a child. It involves judicial monitoring and is modelled on the Community Corrections Order available for an adult pursuant to the *Sentencing Act 1991*. | | | | |
| YCO may be suspended by the Secretary if the child is in custody at the time the YCO is made or subsequently [s.409M]. | | | | |
| Mandatory revocation on application by child or if child breaches the YCO or commits an offence punishable by IMP 5 years or more while YCO in force [s.409Q] -> The consequence is detention for up to the uncompleted balance of YCO term unless inappropriate because of exceptional circumstances [s.409R]. | | | | |
| **YCO OBJECTS** The objects of a YCO, set out in s.409A of the CYFA, are:   1. to provide a judicially supervised, intensive supervision regime for the child; and 2. to penalise the child by imposing restrictions on his or her liberty; and 3. to provide intensive, targeted supervision to the child, to help him or her to develop an ability to abide by the law; and 4. to engage the child in education, training or work (whether paid or unpaid); and 5. to give the child an opportunity to demonstrate a desire to cease offending.   **YCO PLANNING MEETING** The Court must order that a YCO planning meeting be held if the Court is considering making a YCO [s.409D(1)] else the Court has no power to make a YCO [s.409C(d)]. The Court may order a further YCO planning meeting be held if a YCO is already in force and the Court considers that such a meeting is necessary [s.409D(2)]. The purpose of a YCO planning meeting is to develop, through discussion, a YCO plan for the child and to review or vary a YCO plan that is in force [s.409S]. See ss.409T to 409Z for provisions regulating YCO planning meetings and YCO planning meeting reports.  **MATTERS TO WHICH COURT MUST HAVE REGARD IN DECIDING IF TO MAKE A YCO** Section 409E provides that in determining whether to make a YCO the Court must have regard to:   * the child’s behaviour on any bail supervision program and on remand if applicable; * the extent to which the child has acknowledged responsibility for his or her offending; * the availability of education, training or work opportunities (paid or unpaid) for the child and the child’s willingness to engage in those opportunities; * the report of the YCO planning meeting; and * any other matter that the Court considers relevant.   **NON-ACCOUNTABLE PARENTAL UNDERTAKING** The Court may order that the child’s parent give a non-accountable undertaking, with or without conditions, to support the child to comply with the YCO [ss.409G+409H].  **REPORTING AND JUDICIAL MONITORING** Section 409L provides that a child in respect of whom a YCO is in force must attend the Court from time to time (at least monthly for the first half of the order) as directed by the Court, for the Court (constituted by the same magistrate who sentenced the child except in the circumstances detailed in s.409L(7)) to consider-   1. the child’s compliance with the YCO; and 2. the ongoing suitability of the requirements of the YCO.   The Secretary must provide a report about the child’s compliance before each attendance at least 3 working days before the attendance or otherwise as directed by the Court. When the child attends Court, the Court must consider whether the YCO should be varied under s.409N.  If a higher court makes a YCO, s.409K requires it to remit to the Children’s Court the responsibilities for reporting and monitoring [s.409L], variation [s.409N] and –subject to s.423– revocation [s.409Q]. | | | | | | |
| **(i)**  **[YRC]**  **10-14** | **DETENTION IN YOUTH RESIDENTIAL CENTRE** | | ss.410-411  [Warrant -  Form 18] | | 1. Mandatory conviction 2. The maximum term is the lower of that prescribed and:   Per offence: 1 year  Per case: 2 years   1. The prescribed maximum is highly relevant: see *R v AB (No.2)* [2008] VSCA 39 at [40] & [51]. 2. May be concurrent, partly concurrent or cumulative with sentences for any other offences or sentences currently being served (default is concurrent) [s.411(2)(a)] 3. No power to order a non-parole period 4. YRC cannot be ordered unless a pre-sentence report has been received [s.410(1)(e)]. | |
| YRC is a sentence of last resort for an offence (whether indictable or summary) which is punishable upon a finding of guilt by imprisonment (other than for default in payment of a fine) for a child aged 10-14 on the date of sentencing [ss.410(1)(b)-(d)]. An aggregate YRC sentence can be ordered if a child is convicted of 2 or more offences which-  (a) are founded on the same facts; or  (b) form, or are part of, a series of offences of the same or a similar character [s.362B]. | | | | |
| **(j)**  **[YJC]**  **15-20** | **DETENTION IN YOUTH JUSTICE CENTRE** | | ss.412-413  [Warrant -  Form 18] | | 1. Mandatory conviction 2. The maximum term is the lower of that prescribed and:   Per offence: 3 years  Per case: 4 years   1. The prescribed maximum is highly relevant: see *R v AB (No.2)* [2008] VSCA 39 at [40] & [51]. 2. May be concurrent, partly concurrent or cumulative with sentences for any other offences or sentences currently being served (default is concurrent) [s.413(3)(a)] 3. No power to order a non-parole period 4. YJC cannot be ordered unless a pre-sentence report has been received [s.412(1)(e)]. | |
| YJC is a sentence of last resort for an offence (whether indictable or summary) which is punishable upon a finding of guilt by imprisonment (other than for default in payment of a fine) for a child aged 15-20 on the date of sentencing [ss.412(1)(b)-(d)]. An aggregate YJC sentence can be ordered if a child is convicted of 2 or more offences which-  (a) are founded on the same facts; or  (b) form, or are part of, a series of offences of the same or a similar character [s.362B]. | | | | |
| **DETENTION CENTRES FOR YOUNG OFFENDERS/REMANDEES**  The website of the Department of Justice and Community Safety states that it manages two youth justice custodial precincts in Victoria:  ➊ Parkville Youth Justice Precinct which comprises two youth justice centres and accommodates:   * 10-14 year old males (remanded or sentenced); * 15-18 year old males (remanded or sentenced); * 10-17 year old females (remanded or sentenced); * 18-21 year old women sentenced to a YJC order by the Magistrates, County & Supreme Cts.   ➋ Malmsbury Youth Justice Precinct which comprises two youth justice centres and accommodates young men aged 15-20 years when remanded or sentenced to a YJC order by any court. | | | | | | |

In *R v Ford (a pseudonym)* [2018] VSC 491 Tinney J held that the Court had power to make a YJC order in sentencing an 18 year offender for contempt of the Chief Examiner pursuant to s.49(1) of the *Major Crimes (Investigative Powers) Act 2014*.

In determining the period of a sentence of detention in YRC or YJC the prescribed maximum sentence is highly relevant. In *R v AB (No.2)* [2008] VSCA 39 at [40] & [51] the Court of Appeal (Warren CJ, Maxwell P & Redlich JA) said:

[40] “The maximum sentence provides a guide as to the seriousness with which a particular offence should be viewed: *Hansford v His Honour Judge Neesham* [1995] 2 VR 233, 236; *R v Sibic* (2006) 168 A Crim R 305, [14]-[17] (Redlich JA). It serves as a directive to the courts on how to weigh the gravity of such criminal conduct, the maximum penalty itself being prescribed for the worst class of offence in question: *R v Sibic* (2006) 168 A Crim R 305, [14]-[17] (Redlich JA); *Ibbs v R* (1987) 163 CLR 447; *R v Dumas* [1998] VR 65, 71-2. Recently in *R v Sibic* at [14], this court referred to the following passage from the decision of the High Court in *Markarian v R* (2005) 228 CLR 357 at [31] where the majority said:

‘[C]areful attention to maximum penalties will almost always be required, first because the legislature has legislated for them; secondly, because they invite comparison between the worst possible case and the case before the court at the time; and thirdly, because in that regard they do provide, taken and balanced with all of the other relevant factors, a yardstick.’”

[51] “Whenever Parliament increases the maximum sentence for any criminal offence, that increase has potential significance for all sentences to which the new maximum applies. As the present case illustrates, the increase will have very substantial implications for any sentence for an offence that is placed within the worst category of that offence: *Ibbs v R* (1987) 163 CLR 447; *R v Sibic* (2006) 168 A Crim R 305 at [16]. Even where the offence to which the increase applies is nowhere near the worst category, the increase remains of relevance since, in the usual case, the increase shows that Parliament regarded the previous penalties as inadequate. Even where the new maximum may only be of general assistance [see *DPP v Aydin & Kirsch* [2005] VSCA 86 at [10]-[12] (Callaway JA) as to the variable factors that bear upon the significance of an increased maximum], it becomes the ‘yardstick’ which must be balanced with all other relevant factors: *Markarian v The Queen* (2005) 228 CLR 357 at [31] (Gleeson CJ, Gummow, Hayne & Callinan JJ).”

See also *R v Stratton* [2008] VSCA 130 at [126]-[130]; *R v Gonzalez* [2011] VSCA 175 at [28]-[31].

It is important to note that s.571 CYFA provides that the Court **must** order a pre-sentence report-

* if it is considering making a youth residential centre order or a youth justice centre order for a child;
* if it appears to the Court that a child found guilty of an offence is intellectually disabled. In that event the pre-sentence report:
* must include a copy of any statement issued by the Secretary that the child has an intellectual disability within the meaning of the **Disability Act 2006**; and
* must specify any disability services available, appropriate to the child and designed to reduce the likelihood of the child committing further offences.

### **11.1.6 The community supervisory orders detailed and compared**

Four of the sentencing orders involve supervision of the child in the community by an officer of the Youth Justice Division of the Department of Human Services or alternatively, in the case of probation, by an assigned honorary youth justice officer [s.3 of the CYFA].

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| **SENTENCING ORDER** | | **SUPERVISION, CONTACT, ATTENDANCE & CONDITIONS** |
| **(f)**  **[PRO]** | **PROBATION** | Probation involves the lowest level of supervision. The frequency of contact is entirely at the discretion of the assigned youth justice officer. A rough average is one contact per week. |
| **MANDATORY CONDITIONS [s.381(1)]**  The person placed on probation must-  (a) report to the Secretary within 2 working days after the order is made;  (b) during the period of the order, report to the assigned youth justice officer as required by the officer;  (c) not re-offend during the period of the order;  (d) not leave the State without the written permission of the Secretary;  (e) notify the assigned youth justice officer of any change of residence, school or employment within 48 hours after the charge;  (f) obey the reasonable and lawful instructions of the assigned youth justice officer. | | |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **OPTIONAL SPECIAL CONDITIONS [ss.381(2)-(4)]**  The Court may order the person to observe any condition for the whole or any specified part of the period of the order. Any such condition must relate to the offence and the Court must, in its statement of reasons for the sentence, give its reason for ordering the special condition(s). These may include:   * attendance at school if under school-leaving age; * abstinence from alcohol and/or illegal drugs; * specified residence and/or curfew; * medical, psychiatric, psychological or drug counselling or treatment; * participation in a justice plan if eligible. | | | | | |
| **(g)**  **[YSO]** | **YOUTH SUPERVISION ORDER** | YSO involves a middle level of supervision. The frequency of contact & attendance is at the discretion of the Secretary. In addition the person may be directed by the Secretary to participate in a community service program or other program [see s.389(6)]. | | | |
| **MANDATORY CONDITIONS [s.389(1)]**  The person placed on a youth supervision order must-  (a) report to the Secretary within 2 working days after the order is made;  (b) during the period of the order, report to the Secretary as required by the Secretary;  (c) not re-offend during the period of the order;  (d) not leave the State without the written permission of the Secretary;  (e) notify the Secretary of any change of residence, school or employment within 48 hours;  (f) attend a youth justice unit or any other place specified in the YSO;  (g) participate in a community service program or any other program, if so directed by the Secretary;  (h) obey the reasonable and lawful instructions of the Secretary. | | | | | |
| **OPTIONAL SPECIAL CONDITIONS [ss.389(2)-(3) & 381(2)-(4)]**  Same requirements and same list of conditions as for probation. | | | | | |
| **(h)**  **[YAO]** | **YOUTH ATTENDANCEORDER** | YAO involves an intensive level of supervision & attendance. The frequency of contact & attendance is set out in s.402(1): the person must, every week during the term of the YAO-  (a) attend a youth justice unit for a maximum of 3 attendances;  (b) such attendances to be for a maximum of 10 hours of which no more than 4 hours may be spent in community service activities under s.407.  The objects of a YAO are set out in s.405 of the CYFA. | | | |
| **MANDATORY CONDITIONS [s.399(1)]**  The person placed on a youth attendance order must-  (a) not re-offend during the period of the order;  (b) attend at a youth justice unit for the number of weeks specified in the order;  (c) report to the Secretary within 2 working days after the order is made whether he or she is in custody or not;  (d) not leave the State without the written permission of the Secretary;  (e) notify the Secretary of any change of residence, school or employment within 48 hours after the charge;  (f) comply with the provisions of a notice under s.402 (specifying the times of attendance) and with the requirements for attendance in ss.402(1)(a) & (b);  (g) attend at any alternative day & time under s.402(5) or any extension of the YAO under s.402(6);  (h) carry out the reasonable and lawful directions of the Secretary or any person acting under the authority of the Secretary under ss.406 & 407(1). | | | | | |
| **OPTIONAL SPECIAL CONDITIONS [ss.399(2)-(3) & 381(2)-(4)]**  Same requirements and same list of conditions as for probation. | | | | | |
| **(ha)**  **[YCO]** | **YOUTH CONTROL ORDER** | | YCO involves an intensive level of supervision & attendance plus judicial monitoring. The objects of a YCO are set out in s.409A. | |
| **MANDATORY REQUIREMENTS [s.409F(1)]**  The person placed on a youth control order must-  (a) not re-offend during the period of the order;  (b) report to the Secretary within 2 working days after the order is made whether he or she is in custody or not;  (c) report to the Secretary as required by the Secretary during the period the order is in force;  (d) comply with any lawful and reasonable directions given by the Secretary;  (e) attend Court as directed by the Court for judicial monitoring under s.409L;  (f) participate in education, training or work (whether paid or unpaid) for some or all of the period that the order is in force;  (g) notify the Secretary of any change of residence, school or employment within 2 working days after the charge;  (h) not leave the State without the permission of the Secretary. | | | | | |
| **OPTIONAL SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS [s.409F(2)]**  Having regard to the person’s YCO plan and personal circumstances, the Court may impose on the person any of the following requirements and any other requirement that the Court considers appropriate: | | | | | |
| (a) participate in one or more community service activities;  (b) undergo treatment for drug or alcohol dependence;  (c) attend a counselling or treatment service;  (d) reside at a specific address;  (e) not leave residence between specified hours on specified days;  (f) not contact specified persons; | | | | (g) attend & participate in a group conference;  (h) participate in cultural programs or attend culturally specific community supports;  (i) not use specified social media if so required for the protection of the community;  (j) not visit particular places or areas or only visit them at specified times;  (k) participate in disability services as directed by the Secretary (if child has Int. Disability). | |
| **YOUTH CONTROL ORDER STATISTICS & COMMENTARY**  In 2018/19, the first full financial year in which YCOs were available, there were 18 ordered by the Children’s Court. The total number of YAOs & YCOs in 2018/19 was 48. This was only 5 more than the number of YAOs in 2017/18. In 2019/20 & 2020/21 there have only been a further 9 YCOs ordered. In addition, 1 YCO has been ordered by the County Court. The 28 YCOs ordered have involved 24 young offenders (2 young offenders were each on 3 YCOs): 18 of these were made as original sentencing orders and 9 on resentencing for breaches of other sentencing orders. The YCOs have not been notably successful. Of the 24 young offenders, 15 have had their YCO revoked, 11 having committed a new offence which breached the YCO.  The writer believes that the reasons why YCOs have been comparatively rarely ordered and even more rarely successfully completed include:   * There is a fundamental disconnect between the commission of the sort of serious offences for which a YCO might have been expected to be ordered and the capacity, maturity and self-discipline of the young offender to comply with the strict requirements of the order. * Young persons who commit offences are more likely than adults to do so in company. Accordingly, the deterrent effect of the quasi-suspended sentence provision of s.409R CYFA is challenged by the powerful impact of peer pressure in a way that is comparatively less prevalent for adults. | | | | | |

### **11.1.7 Power to impose an aggregate sentence of YRC/YJC detention under the CYFA**

As and from 27/03/2018 the Children’s Court has had power to impose an aggregate sentence of detention in YRC or YJC in lieu of separate sentences in certain circumstances. Section 362B of the CYFA provides that if a child is convicted by the Court of 2 or more offences (including offences the subject of a rolled-up charge or a representative charge) which –

1. are founded on the same facts; or
2. form, or are part of, a series of offences of the same or a similar character –

the Court may impose an aggregate sentence of detention in respect of those offences in place of a separate sentence of detention in respect of all or any 2 or more of them. The term of the aggregate sentence must not exceed the total effective period of detention that could be imposed had the Court imposed a separate sentence of detention in respect of each offence. Compare s.9 of the *Sentencing Act 1991* and see *R v Grossi* [2008] VSCA 51, *DPP v Felton* [2007] VSCA 65, *R v Rodgers* [2008] VSCA 52, *Oleyar v R* [2015] VSCA 134 & *Finn v Wallace* *& Stewart* [2016] VSC 10; *Jiaming Gui v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 273 at [15]-[16] & [23]-25]; *Hassall v The King* [2024] VSCA 163 at [58]-[73].

In *Sinclair v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 144, speaking of the power in s.9(1) of the *Sentencing Act 1991* to impose an aggregate sentence of imprisonment, the Court of Appeal (Maxwell P & Kaye JA) said at [22]-[23]:

“As this Court said in *Stevens v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 170 at [54] per Emerton & Weinberg JJA, ‘an aggregate sentence will rarely, if ever, be appropriate where there are only two charges and one of them is much more serious than the other’.

In *Director of Public Prosecutions v Frewstal Pty Ltd* (2015) 47 VR 660; [2015] VSCA 266 at [44] Maxwell P described the kind of case for which an aggregate sentence is appropriate as ‘one where the number, similarity and proximity in time of the offences is such that it would be an artificial exercise to impose individual sentences and then, by means of modest orders for cumulation, to arrive at a total effective sentence proportionate to the total criminality. The archetypical example is the case of multiple offences of burglary and theft, committed over a relatively short period, where an aggregate sentence is a ‘more flexible and pragmatic’ way of ‘reflecting all of the offender’s conduct’.”

### **11.1.8 Restitution/Compensation/Costs**

In addition to any other sentencing order, s.360(3) of the CYFA empowers the Court to order a child:

(a) to make restitution or pay compensation in accordance with s.417 of the CYFA;

(b) to pay costs.

Section 360(4) prohibits the Court from making an order referred to in s.360(3) a special condition of another sentencing order.

Section 417, read in conjunction with ss.85H(1), 86(2) & 87J(1) of the *Sentencing Act 1991*, requires the Court to take into account, among other things, the child's financial circumstances and the nature of the burden which would be imposed by an order under:

* s.85B(1) to pay compensation for pain and suffering etc.;
* s.86(2) to pay compensation for property loss, destruction or damage; or
* s.87D(1) to pay costs reasonably incurred by an emergency service agency as a result of an offence of criminal contamination of goods or bomb hoax.

Since a child rarely has the means and ability to pay anything other than a small sum of money, if that, applications for restitution/compensation/costs are commonly refused.

The reference to s.87J(1) of the *Sentencing Act 1991* was added to s.191 of the CYPA on 01/07/2005 [now s.417(1) of the CYFA]. However, no reference to s.87A(4) has been added. The latter provision requires a court dealing with an application under s.87A(1) - for repayment to the State of the whole or a part of assistance and costs awarded to a victim under the *Victims of Crime Assistance Act 1996* – to have regard to the defendant’s financial resources and financial needs. In the absence of express reference to s.87A(1) in the CYPA, the writer wonders whether s.87A has any application in the Children’s Court. However, the question remains moot.

Money unpaid under a restitution or compensation order is a judgment debt, said by ss.85M, 87 & 87N of the *Sentencing Act 1991* to be able to be "enforced in the court by which it was made". Prior to 01/07/2005 enforcement of such orders had not been possible as the Children’s Court had no relevant civil jurisdiction, Part 5 of the *Magistrates’ Court Act 1989* – the Part dealing with civil proceedings generally – is expressly excluded by s.528(2) of the CYFA from having operation in the Children’s Court. Further, s.357(1) of the CYFA expressly excludes a sum of money payable by way of restitution or compensation from the fine default procedures. But a recovery mechanism has now been provided by s.418 of the CYFA, which provides that-

* A person in whose favour a compensation, restitution or cost recovery order is made under s.417 may enforce the order during the period of 5 years following the making of the order by filing in the appropriate court [namely a court with jurisdiction to enforce a debt of the amount of the order]-

1. a copy of the order certified by the principal registrar to be a true copy; and
2. that person’s affidavit as to the amount not paid under the order.

* No charge is to be made for such filing.
* Upon filing, the order must be taken to be an order of the appropriate court and is able to be enforced accordingly save that-

1. no order may be made under s.19 of the *Judgment Debt Recovery Act 1984*; and
2. no order of imprisonment may be made under the *Imprisonment of Fraudulent Debtors Act 1958*.

Section 417(2) of the CYFA – based on s.36 of the *Children (Criminal Proceedings) Act 1987* [NSW] - provides: “The maximum amount that the Court may order an offender to pay under Part 4 of the *Sentencing Act 1991* is $1000.”

It is not clear on the face of the legislation whether s.417(2) of the CYFA caps restitution/compensation/costs at $1000 per case or $1000 per charge. In favour of the “per case” interpretation is that s.417(2) uses the word “offender” rather than the word “offence”. In favour of the “per charge” interpretation is that ss.85B(1) & 86(1) of the *Sentencing Act 1991*, two of the substantive powers to award compensation, use the word “offence”. The latter provides:

"If a court finds a person guilty of, or convicts a person of, an offence it may, on the application of a person suffering loss or destruction of, or damage to, property or pain and suffering as a result of the offence, order the offender to pay any compensation for the loss, destruction or damage (not exceeding the value of the property lost, destroyed or damaged) or for the pain and suffering that the court thinks fit."

Thus, looking only at the legislation, one could make a respectable argument either way. However, it appears from Hansard that parliament intended s.417(2) to cap restitution/compensation/costs at $1000 per case. In the debate on the predecessor s.191(2) of the CYFA, which is in identical terms, in the Legislative Council on 25/05/2005 Hon J M Madden said:

“It is not appropriate for the Children’s Court when sentencing a young person to conduct the truncated civil proceeding for an amount that exceeds the amount that the Court can impose as a financial penalty by way of sentence.

This is especially so given that the Court has no general civil jurisdiction, and given the requirement for the court to conduct inquiries into a young person's financial circumstances. The Children's Court, when sentencing a child, is not in a position to conduct this type of inquiry to determine the children's financial capacity with respect to a large civil debt. It is therefore appropriate for such inquiries to be done in proper civil proceedings as is envisaged in sections 85L, 86(10) and 87M of the *Sentencing Act 1991* which preserves the right to sue.

Further, there is no point making orders that raise the victim's expectation. As Mr McIntosh, the member for Kew in the other house, said, 'You can't get blood out of a stone'. Alternative restorative processes such as the Koori court or through group conferencing are more appropriate in ensuring the necessary balance between the rights of the victim, the needs of the young person and the concerns and expectations of the community.

There is currently divergent practice across the state with respect to these orders in the Children's Court. Clause 41 seeks to impose a level of consistency. Clause 41 does not extend to serious cases dealt with in the County Court or the Supreme Court.”

But under s.150 of the CYPA [now s.373 of the CYFA] the maximum amount of any fine that the Court can impose on a child is 5 penalty units per charge and 10 penalty units per case. Applying Minister Madden’s reasoning, it is clear that the $1000 cap is the maximum amount of compensation etc. that the Children’s Court may impose in any case, irrespective of the number of charges on which compensation has been awarded, just as 10 penalty units is the maximum financial penalty that the Court can impose by way of sentence.

In *DPP v Esso Australia Pty Ltd* [2004] VSC 440 at [7]-[8] Cummins J referred to some of the principles involved with s.85B of the *Sentencing Act 1991* – relating to compensation for pain and suffering – and like legislation, noting *inter alia* at [7]: "Compensation is not punishment and proceeds according to common law criteria: *McDonald* (1979) 1 NSWLR 451 and *In Re Poore* (1973) 6 SASR 308." At [8] his Honour said:

“There are a number of incidents of s.85B compensation proceedings. First, the proceedings are under the *Sentencing Act 1991*, a criminal statute. The proceedings are heard in the Criminal Division by the sentencing Judge. Second, a condition precedent to the institution of s.85B proceedings is the recording of a criminal conviction [or a finding of guilt]. Third, the respondent to an application under s.85B is a party by reason of his, her or its character of being an offender. Fourth, the applicant has to be a victim of a crime. Fifth, there is an intimate connection between the antecedent criminal trial and the application. The documents the application proceeds upon are criminal trial documents, including committal depositions before the trial and victim impact statements after conviction: s.85F(2). Sixth, unlike ordinary civil process where the impecuniosity of the defendant is irrelevant, in s.85B applications the Court may take into account the financial circumstances of the offender and the nature of the burden that the payment ordered will impose: s.85H(1). Seventh, by s.85H, the rehabilitation of the offender, always an important matter in sentencing, should not be deflected or defeated by a compensation order. Eighth, by s.85C(1)(b)(iii) a section 85B application may be made on the victim's behalf by the Director of Public Prosecutions. Ninth, s.85L preserves the applicant's right to recover civil damages separate and apart from, or in addition to, s.85B proceedings. And finally and importantly, pursuant to s.85B compensation can be awarded not only for injury constituted by ‘actual physical bodily harm’ (s.85A(1)(a)) but also (amongst other heads) by ‘grief, distress, trauma, or other significant adverse effect’. Compensation can also be awarded for hospital, medical psychological and other expenses.”

In *DPP v Esso Australia Pty Ltd* [2004] VSC 440 at [17]-[22] Cummins J also rejected, “at three levels: statutory, elemental and chronological”, an argument by the defendant that a s.85B claim for compensation is subject to the threshold requirements of Part VBA *Wrongs Act* 1958 which came into operation in May 2003 and subject to the quantum limitation provisions of Part VB *Wrongs Act* 1958 which came into operation in October 2002. On appeal His Honour’s decision was upheld: “[A] s.85B claim does not fall within the ambit of Part VBA.” {*Esso Australia Pty Ltd v Robinson* [2005] VSCA 138 at [21]-[30]}. At [32] the Court of Appeal also discussed the way in which a legislative “cap” on compensation was to be treated, referring with approval to dicta:

* in *H v Crimes Compensation Tribunal* [1997] 1 VR 608 where it was said that an award of compensation under s.18 of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Act 1983 was to be made on the basis that the prescribed pecuniary limit represented a jurisdictional limit only and did not reflect the top of a graduated scale; and
* in *Eccles v Taylor* [1995] 2 VR 482 at 493 where Ashley J held that in conducting an assessment for the purpose of determining the amount to be awarded as compensation, the court does not assume the limit fixed by statute to be an appropriate amount for a ‘worst case’ and then award ‘a proportionately lesser sum for anything but that worst case’.

In *Kortel v Mirik & Mirik* [2008] VSC 103 at [11] Bell J said: “It is axiomatic, under both s.85G(2) of the *Sentencing Act* and the common law, that when an application is made for compensation under s 85B, the court owes a duty to all parties to the proceeding to observe the rules of natural justice.”

In *RK v Mirik & Mirik* [2009] VSC 14 Bell J discussed in detail and applied the principles in ss. 85B(1)-(4), 85C, 85F, 85G, 85H(1)-(2) of the *Sentencing Act 1991*, awarding substantial sums of compensation ($113,600 & $26,525) against two imprisoned adult offenders having no capacity to pay and holding that the victim’s interests should have greater priority than the offenders’ rehabilitation. See also *Head & Anor v Kingdon* [2025] VSC 442.

In *Ioannou v Catania* [2008] VSC 302 Bell J awarded the adult applicant compensation of $32,051.33 under s.85B for serious burn and related injuries caused when the adult respondent set fire to him. The quantum of compensation (taking into account the matters in s.85H) represented the proceeds from the sale of the sole asset of the respondent who was considered unlikely to have the means to satisfy an order in excess of that amount at any time after his release from custody.

In *DPP v Energy Brix Australia Corporation Pty Ltd* (2006) 14 VR 345, 356-7 [50], Neave JA said that the factors which should be taken into account in assessing compensation for a person’s grief or trauma under s.85B include:

* the circumstances in which the death occurred;
* the effect on the person of hearing of the event causing loss;
* the closeness of the relationship between the person and the victim;
* the age of the person; and
* the extent of the grief and psychological suffering experienced as a result of the loss.

See also dicta of Vincent JA (with whom Buchanan JA agreed) at [30] & [36] in the same case. This dicta of Neave JA & Vincent JA was approved and applied by the Court of Appeal in *Chalmers v Liang & Zhu* [2011] VSCA 439. See also *Pawley v Willis* [2022] VSC 85 at [20]-[26].

In *Shepherd & anor v Kell & anor* [2012] VSC 80 Lasry J relied on dicta of Cummins J in *Robertson v Esso (Australia) Pty Ltd* [2004] VSC 101 at [4] in granting leave pursuant to s.85D to applicants for compensation for an extension of time in which to file their applications. In *Shepherd & anor v Kell & anor* [2013] VSC 24 his Honour analysed s.85H of the Sentencing Act in the course of holding at [32] that “the offenders’ financial circumstances would be relevant: the offenders are young and their prospects for rehabilitation are good”.

In *Koeleman v Nolan* [2012] VSC 128 the appellant had stolen a motor vehicle which was not subsequently recovered. A magistrate made a restitution order under s.84(1)(b) of the *Sentencing Act 1991* requiring the offender to transfer his own motor vehicle to the victim. On appeal the order was set aside, Almond J holding that the offender’s motor vehicle did not fall within the category of “goods that directly or indirectly represent the stolen goods”.

### **11.1.9 Additional orders including disqualification & forfeiture**

Section 360(5) of the CYFA provides that if under any Act other than the CYFA a court is authorised on conviction for an offence-

(a) to make an order with respect to any property or thing the subject or in any way connected with the offence; or

(b) to impose any disqualification or like disability on the person convicted-

then the Court may, if it finds a child guilty of that offence, make any such order or impose any such disqualification or disability despite the child not being convicted of that offence. For the meaning of “conviction” as used in the Confiscation Act 1997 see the judgment of Smith J in *DPP v Nguyen* and *DPP v Duncan* [2008] VSC 292. For analysis of the phrase “used in connection with the commission of the offence” as contained in the definition of “tainted property” in section 3(1) of the Confiscation Act 1997 see the judgment of the Court of Appeal in *R v Chalmers* [2011] VSCA 436. For analysis of the phrase “lawfully acquired” in s.22 of the Confiscation Act 1997, see the judgments of the Court of Appeal in *Markovski v DPP* [2014] VSCA 35.

### **11.1.9.1 Licence suspension/cancellation and disqualification from driving**

An issue which arises on occasion in sentencing children is whether the licence suspension/cancellation and disqualification provisions in the **Sentencing Act 1991** [SA] and the **Road Safety Act 1986** [RSA] apply to a child convicted or found guilty of an offence against either of those Acts or of any other offence. The writer’s opinion is that they do apply.

Section 417(1) of the CYFA provides: “The provisions of Part 4 of the SA apply to a proceeding in the Criminal Division with any necessary modification…”. For the purposes of this discussion the relevant provisions are in Division 3 of Part 4 of the SA headed “**Driver licences and learner permits—suspension, cancellation and driver disqualification**” and the sections therein are as follows:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 87P | Definition of ‘serious motor vehicle offence’ |
| 87Q | Matters to be sent to the Secretary to the Department of Transport |
| 88 | Application of Evidence Act 2008 |
| 89 | Suspension or cancellation of driver licence or learner permit and driver disqualification—certain motor vehicle offences |
| 89A | Suspension or cancellation of driver licence or learner permit and driver disqualification—any offence |
| 89B | Commencement of period of disqualification |
| 89C | Finding on cancellation of driver licence or learner permit or driver disqualification |
| 89D | Presumption in favour of concurrency |
| 89DA | Cancellation on disqualification |
| 89DB | Effect of cancellation |

**Sections 89(1), (2) & (3) SA – Mandatory cancellation & disqualification for serious motor vehicle offences (s.87P SA) and Dangerous or negligent driving when pursued by police**

If a person is **found guilty or convicted** of any of the following offences under the **Crimes Act 1958** [CA] the following mandatory licence cancellation & disqualification provisions in s.89 of the SA apply. These provisions require the **cancellation** of any Victorian driver licence or learner permit (but not a licence or permit issued elsewhere) which the person holds and the **disqualification** of the person from driving a motor vehicle on a road in Victoria for the period specified.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **s.89(2)(a) SA – MANDATORY CANCELLATION + DISQUALIFICATION AT LEAST 18 MONTHS** | |
| 87P(d) | **s.319 CA**: Dangerous driving of a motor vehicle (but not a vessel) causing death or serious injury |
| **s.89(2)(b) SA – MANDATORY CANCELLATION + DISQUALIFICATION AT LEAST 24 MONTHS** | |
| 87P(a) | Manslaughter arising out of the driving of a motor vehicle |
| 87P(b) | **s.24** **CA**: Negligently causing serious injury arising out of the driving of a motor vehicle |
| 87P(ba) | **ss.317AC, 317AD, 317AE or 317AF CA**: Risk to emergency worker/custodial officer arising out of the driving of a motor vehicle |
| 87P(c) | **s.318 CA**: Culpable driving of a motor vehicle (but not a vessel) causing death |
| 87P(e) | Murder or attempted murder arising out of the driving of a motor vehicle |
| 87P(f)(vii) | **s.79A CA**: Aggravated carjacking |
| **s.89(2)(c) SA – MANDATORY CANCELLATION + DISQUALIFICATION AT LEAST 12 MONTHS IF ARISING OUT OF THE DRIVING OF A MOTOR VEHICLE WHILE UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF ALCOHOL OR ALCOHOL AND A DRUG** | |
| 87P(f)(i) | **ss.15A/15B** **CA**: Causing serious injury intentionally/recklessly in circs of gross violence |
| 87P(f)(ii) | **ss.16/17/18** **CA**: Causing serious injury or injury intentionally/recklessly |
| 87P(f)(iii) | **ss.22/23 CA**: Conduct endangering life/serious injury |
| 87P(f)(iv) | **s.63A CA**: Kidnapping |
| 87P(f)(v) | The common law offence of kidnapping |
| 87P(f)(vi) | **s.79 CA**: Carjacking |
| **s.89(3) SA – MANDATORY CANCELLATION + DISQUALIFICATION AT LEAST 12 MONTHS** | |
| --- | **s.319AA** **CA**: Dangerous or negligent driving when pursued by police |

These mandatory licence cancellation provisions do not enable a court to merely suspend a person’s driver licence or learner permit.

The wording of s.87P(f) SA is potentially ambiguous. It lists 7 categories of offences under the CA which are defined as ‘serious motor vehicle offences’ “if arising out of the driving of a motor vehicle while under the influence of alcohol or alcohol **and** a drug” [emphasis added]. A question arises whether any of the offences listed in s.87P(f) are ‘serious motor vehicle offences’ if arising out of the driving of a motor vehicle while under the influence of a drug *simpliciter*. The omission of “under the influence of a drug” from s.87P(f) SA appears at odds with s.89C SA which refers in two places to the court making “a finding that the offence was committed while the offender was under the influence of alcohol or a drug, or both alcohol and a drug, which contributed to the offence.”

**Sections 89(4) & (5) SA – Theft/Attempted theft of a motor vehicle**

In relation to the offences of theft and attempted theft of a motor vehicle, s.89(4) SA provides that if a person is-

* **convicted** of either offence, the court **must**;
* **found guilty** (without conviction) of either offence, the court **may**-

**suspend** or **cancel** any Victorian driver licence or learner permit (but not a licence or permit issued elsewhere) which the person holds and disqualify the person from driving a motor vehicle on a road in Victoria for the period specified.

It follows that-

* if a person is **convicted** of theft or attempted theft of a motor vehicle the court **must** interfere with that person’s right to drive in Victoria but has **a choice** as to whether any Victorian driver licence or learner permit is suspended or cancelled;
* if a person is **found guilty but not convicted** of theft or attempted theft of a motor vehicle the court has an **absolute discretion whether or not** (and if so how) to interfere with that person’s right to drive in Victoria.

There is no minimum period of suspension or disqualification referred to in s.89(4) SA but s.89(5) provides that if a period of suspension or disqualification is not specified by the court on making an order under s.89(4), the period is 3 months.

**Section 89A SA – Any other offence except under the Road Safety Act 1986**

Sections 89A(1) & 89A(4) SA provide that if a person is **found guilty** or **convicted** of any offence other than-

* a serious motor vehicle offence listed in s.87P SA; or
* an offence under s.319AA CA of dangerous or negligent driving when pursued by police; or
* an offence of theft or attempted theft of a motor vehicle; or
* an offence under the RSA or regulations or rules made under the RSA-

the court **may-**

1. if the person is the holder of a Victorian driver licence or learner permit-
2. **suspend** that licence or permit for a specified period; or
3. **cancel** that licence or permit and **disqualify** the person from obtaining a futher one for a specified period; or
4. if the person is not the holder of a Victorian licence or permit but is the holder of one obtained elsewhere, **disqualify** the person from driving a motor vehicle on a road in Victoria for the period that he or she would have been disqualified from obtaining a Victorian licence or permit; or
5. in any other case where the person is not the holder of a driver licence or learner permit, **disqualify** him or her from obtaining one for a specified period.

It follows that in relation to any other offence under the SA the court has an absolute discretion whether or not to interfere with that person’s right to drive in Victoria. There is no express nexus in s.89A between an offence and the driving of a motor vehicle.

There is no minimum period of suspension or disqualification referred to in s.89A(1) SA but s.89A(2) provides that if a period of suspension or disqualification is not specified by the court on making an order under s.89A(1), the period is 3 months.

**Notes on sections 89 & 89A of the SA confirm their applicability to Children’s Court sentences**

There are a number of Notes to ss.89 & 89A RSA. Note 1 to both sections contains the following information [emphasis added] which confirms that both ss.89 & 89A do apply to sentencing in the Children’s Court: “A person who is disqualified from obtaining a driver licence or learner permit or whose driver licence or learner permit is cancelled under this section by order of the Magistrates’ Court or **Children’s Court** may appeal to the County Court. See s.29 of the RSA.”

**Offences under the Road Safety Act 1986**

Pursuant to s.89A(4) SA the licence suspension/cancellation and disqualification provisions in the **Sentencing Act 1991** do not apply to offences under the **Road Safety Act 1986**. The issue whether the RSA provisions – for example s.28 & Schedule 5 or s.50(1A) & Schedule 1 – apply to sentencing in the Children’s Court has not been the subject of any superior court decision of which the writer is aware, an appeal to the Supreme Court against a magistrate’s decision that s.50(1A) did apply in the Children’s Court having been abandoned some years ago.

However, in *Victoria Police v FT* [2018] VChC 2 [Children’s Court of Victoria, 06/03/2018] Magistrate Bowles held at [20] that having regard to-

* the provisions of the CYFA;
* statutory interpretation of the RSA;
* the public policy provisions underpinning the RSA; and
* the specific licensing regime in the RSA and the relevant Regulations-

the mandatory provisions of the RSA do apply to children and young persons who have been found guilty in the Children’s Court of relevant offences contrary to the RSA.

FT, aged 17.6 years old at the time of the offending, had pleaded guilty to three offences:

* driving a motor vehicle with more than the prescribed concentration of alcohol in her breath contrary to s.49(1)(f) of the RSA [0.039%], an offence which under amendments to s.50 introduced by the Road Safety Amendment Act 2014 included mandatory licence/permit cancellation, disqualification and interlock provisions on persons in FT’s position; and
* driving a vehicle without an experienced driver sitting beside her and failing to display “L” plates contrary to the Road Safety (Drivers) Regulations 2009, offences which did not require mandatory cancellation and disqualification either pursuant to the Regulations themselves or pursuant to the general provision of s.28 of the RSA.

The Court accepted that FT had no criminal history, had completed Year 12 and had been accepted into a tertiary course, works part-time in food retailing, had been intercepted by police on a routine basis and not as a result of bad driving, had completed 100 hours of driving and lived at home with her parents, one of whom was wheelchair-bound.

In her statutory interpretation of the RSA, Magistrate Bowles held, *inter alia*-

[28] “The language in s.49 and s.50 refers to ‘the person’, ‘a person’, ‘the offender’ and ‘the accused’. The words ‘person’, ‘offender’ and ‘accused’ are not defined in the definition sections in s.3(1), s.47A in Part 5…nor in the interpretative provisions in s.48 RSA.

[29] Unlike other provisions in the RSA, the words are not qualified by age [cf. s.84F], for example, restricting these provisions to only apply to persons 18 years and older or specifying that they do not apply to those persons under the age of 18 years. The words therefore bear their ordinary meaning. A child or young person appearing before the Children’s Court who is guilty of an offence pursuant to s.49 RSA is ‘a person’, an ‘offender’ and an ‘accused’.”

At [30]-[38] her Honour discussed the public policy provisions underpinning the RSA and concluded:

* The RSA is legislation the purposes of which “include promoting safety on the roads and responsible road use”.
* When the relevant mandatory cancellation provisions in s.50 were introduced by the Road Safety Amendment Act 2014, the the Minister for Roads tabled a statement in accordance with the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 which included the following: *“The rationale for imposing stronger licence sanctions on drink-driving offenders under 26 years of age is that this group of offenders is* *more vulnerable due to inexperience compared with other driver groups and is overrepresented in traffic crashes resulting in serious injuries and deaths.”* This statement and the associated Second Reading Speech “highlight the overriding public policy principle of community safety. The requirement for the mandatory provisions to apply to young offenders is consistent with and furthers the public policy objective of community safety in the RSA.”

At [41]-[44] Magistrate Bowles discussed the licensing regime in the RSA and the relevant Regulations, noting that a specific licensing regime is provided for in regs 21, 22 & 31 of the Road Safety (Drivers) Regulations 2009 [S.R. 95/2009] “which places a more onerous obligation on younger applicants than others when seeking to obtain their driver’s licences”. Her Honour concluded:

“The impact of the mandatory provisions in the RSA can operate more onerously on a young person than on an adult, for example, the requirement in Regulation 21(1)(a) for a person under the age of 21 to hold a learner’s permit for a continuous period of 12 months before being eligible to apply for a driver’s licence. If a person under the age of 21 has their learner’s permit cancelled for 3 months, that person would be precluded from applying for their driver’s licence for 15 months, not just for 3 months.”

In light of the sentencing principles to be applied in the Children’s Court pursuant to s.362, Magistrate Bowles conceded at [45] that it “would ordinarily be counterintuitive…for a young person to potentially be more harshly penalised than an adult”, a consequence flowing from a plain reading of s.360(5)(b) of the CYFA. That section provides [emphasis added]:

“If under any Act other than this Act a court is authorised on a conviction for an offence to impose any disqualification or like disability on the person convicted, then the Court **may**, if it finds the child guilty of that offence, make any such order or impose any such disqualification or disability despite the child not being convicted of the offence.”

On its plain reading s.360(5)(b) applies to remove conviction as a pre-requisite for disqualification for a child. On this plain reading the disqualification provisions can potentially operate more harshly for a child than for an adult. It might therefore be argued to be in conflict with the principles of sentencing generally as well as with the matters set out in s.362(1) of the CYFA, including the requirement in s.362(1)(d) for the Court “as far as practicable [to] have regard to the need to minimise the stigma to the child resulting from a court determination”.

However at [25] her Honour said:

“One interpretation of s.360(5) CYFA could be that the mandatory provisions in another Act do not apply to children appearing before the Children’s Court. Section 360(5) includes the word ‘may’. However, in my view s.360(5) CYFA means that the Children’s Court is not required to record a conviction when making an order, for example, disqualifying a person from obtaining a licence. This interpretation is consistent with s.362(1)(d) CYFA, namely the need to minimize the stigma to the child resulting from a court determination.”

And at [46]-[47] her Honour concluded:

“[I]n my view, the specific licensing regime in the Regulations and the purposes of the RSA evince an intention by Parliament to override the general sentencing principles applicable to young people.

[Accordingly] the mandatory provisions of the RSA apply when children and young people are guilty of relevant RSA offence/s and are being sentenced in the Chidlren’s Court of Victoria.”

**Principles & considerations surrounding licence disqualification**

The principles surrounding licence disqualification were discussed by the Court of Appeal in *R v Franklin* [2009] VSCA 77 at [34]-[39]. In that case the adult appellant had been convicted of culpable driving and disqualified from driving for 8 years. This was effectively for 12 months after the appellant’s earliest release date. In dismissing the appeal on this issue, Warren CJ (with whom Redlich JA & J Forrest AJA) said at [34]-[39]:

“The principles and considerations surrounding licence disqualification are similar to those for other sentences. In determining for how long a licence is to be cancelled, this Court has held:

‘the Court should have regard to two separate considerations. They are first the need for the period of cancellation itself to serve its part as a punitive element in the context of the total punishment imposed, and secondly, the need to provide protection to the public from the dangers of possible future lawless motor vehicle driving by the offender. Those two considerations have each to be given such weight as the Court considers is appropriate bearing in mind it is their combined effect which will determine the ultimate length of the disqualification: *R v George* (Unreported, Supreme Court of Victoria, Court of Criminal Appeal, 21 September 1989, Crockett, O’Brian and Gray JJ).’

Imposing a disqualification period only for the period of imprisonment adds little to the punishment of the offender and nothing to the protection of the public, if it is determined that such protection is required. It is only after release that ‘the disqualification will ‘come home’ to the offender’: *R v Birnie* (2002) 5 VR 426, [30]. It will be a matter to be assessed in each case in accordance with sentencing principles including due consideration of the rehabilitation of the offender. Given that disqualification is mandatory in culpable driving cases, the legislature must have intended for it to continue beyond the term of imprisonment where the sentencing court thought it appropriate: *R v* *Wootton* [2002] VSCA 165, [27].

That said, the disqualification should not inhibit the offender’s rehabilitation too greatly *[R v Tantrum* (1989) 11 Cr App R (S) 348, 349; *R v Tran* (2002) 4 VR 457], particularly where it is determined that there is no need to protect the public [*R v* *Bazley* (Unreported, Supreme Court of Victoria, Court of Appeal, 21 August 1997, Phillips CJ, Batt JA and Vincent AJA)]. That rehabilitation is heavily dependent upon the offender’s ability to obtain employment. When the appellant leaves prison, and due to the nature of his trade, he will doubtless need to have a driver’s licence to gain employment which in turn would be important to his rehabilitation.

In this case, the appellant’s licence was cancelled as a condition of his bail and as such it may be considered that this element to the punishment has to some extent been endured.

The sentencing judge found the appellant to be genuinely remorseful, with good prospects of rehabilitation and employment after imprisonment. I do not consider there is a high risk of re-offending. Therefore given the particular characteristics and circumstances of the appellant, the pre-sentence disqualification, the significant period of imprisonment and the importance of facilitating the appellant’s rehabilitation, it may well be arguable that the appellant should be allowed to apply for his driver’s licence upon release on parole. However, the question is whether error has been made out. In my view, no error is revealed. The sentencing judge was entitled to order as he did. I do not find this ground made out.”

In *R v Nguyen* [2009] VSCA 64 the 28 year old appellant had been sentenced to 3y3m imprisonment with a non-parole period of 2y6m on charges of attempted armed robbery and theft and had been disqualified from driving for 3y. The Court of Appeal allowed his appeal, reducing the sentence to 3y1m imprisonment with a non-parole period of 2y. It also amended the disqualification period in relation to which Williams AJA (with whom Dodds-Streeton & Weinberg JJA agreed) said:

[70] “In *Lefebure* (2000) 112 A Crim R 41 the Court held that the disqualification has a punitive element which requires an assessment of the extent to which, in the context of the overall punishment, it is needed to reflect the community’s dissatisfaction with the offence. The length of any period of imprisonment is relevant and sometimes the disqualification period should be longer to achieve its objectives. The convicted person’s dependency on a driving licence is also relevant in order not to undermine prospects of rehabilitation: (2000) 112 A Crim R 41, 44, [7]-[8] (Tadgell JA, Chernov and Hedigan JJA agreeing).

[71] Whilst there was no direct evidence as to the appellant’s future need for a licence or as to whether he would have any access to a car, I assume the likelihood that his rehabilitation prospects would be enhanced by the ability to obtain a licence once he is released on parole.

[72] Bearing in mind the punitive nature of the order, I consider that he should be disqualified from obtaining a driver’s licence for the period commencing on 20 September 2007 and ending two months after the date of his release from custody on parole or at the expiration of his sentence.”

See also *R v Charles* [2011] VSCA 399 at [196]-[209]; *Koukoulis v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 19 at [17]-[24] applying *Lefebure v The Queen* (2000) 112 A Crim R 41; [2000] VSCA 79, *Rodi v The Queen* [2011] VSCA 48 and *R v Tran* (2002) 4 VR 457; [2002] VSCA 52; *Parker v The King* [2022] VSCA 207 at [41]-[49]; *Gurbuz v The King* [2024] VSCA 189 at [53]-[66].

### **11.1.9.2 Incompatibility of diversion and licence cancellation/suspension**

As discussed in section 10.7 of these Research Materials, it is clear from s.356B(1) of the CYFA that diversion is not available in the Children’s Court on a charge which relates to-

1. an offence punishable by a minimum or fixed sentence or penalty, including cancellation or suspension of a licence or permit to drive a motor vehicle and disqualification under the Road Safety Act 1986 or the *Sentencing Act 1991* from obtaining such a licence or permit or from driving a motor vehicle on a road in Victoria but not including the incurring of demerit points under the Road Safety Act 1986 or regulations made under that Act; or
2. an offence against s.49(1) of the Road Safety Act 1986 not referred to in paragraph (a).

While it follows from this that diversion is available in the Children’s Court on a charge which is not punishable by a fixed sentence or penalty, it is the writer’s view that if diversion is granted on such a charge, the Children’s Court has no power to impose a discretionary cancellation or suspension of the child’s driver licence or permit. In the first place, despite the words “or the *Sentencing Act 1991*” in s.356B(1)(a), s.4 of the Sentencing Act makes it clear that ss.89 & 89A of that Act do not apply to the Children’s Court. In the second place, the general power of suspension or cancellation of a driver licence or permit contained in s.28 of the RSA has as a pre-condition to its exercise that the court “convicts a person of, or is satisfied that a person is guilty of, an offence against this Act or of any other offence in connection with the driving of a motor vehicle”. But diversion does not involve either a conviction for an offence or a finding by the court that the child is guilty of the offence. Under s.356E(1)(a) the pre-condition for diversion is not a plea of guilty by the child. It is merely an acknowledgement by the child “of responsibility for the offence”. And s.356E(2) specifically states that such acknowledgement does not constitute a plea.

### **11.1.9.3 Forfeiture & other orders**

The Criminal Division of the Children's Court has jurisdiction under the Confiscation Act 1997 to make forfeiture, restraining and/or pecuniary penalty orders in relation to certain property in which a defendant has an interest: see e.g. ss.3 & 12 and Parts 2, 3 & 8 of that Act. There are no reported decisions involving such applications in respect of the property of child defendants.

The approach to be taken in respect of adult defendants has been discussed in a number of cases, including *R v Tran* [2004] VSC 218 at [9]-[11] per Warren CJ; *R v Galek* (1993) 70 A Crim R 252 at 258; *R v Wealand* (2002) 136 A Crim R 159; *Taylor v Attorney General of South Australia* (1991) 53 A Crim R 166 at 175-179 per Debelle J; *DPP v Smith* [2007] VSC 98 per Mandie J; *DPP v Phan Thi Le* [2007] VSCA 18; *Winand* (a decision of the Victorian Court of Criminal Appeal referred to in *R v Tran* at [12]-[13]); *DPP v Nikolaou* [2008] VSC 111 per Kaye J; *DPP v Nguyen; DPP v Duncan* [2009] VSCA 147; *DPP v Khoda Ali & Dounia Ali* [2009] VSCA 162; *Re Moran, Armour and Environmental Concrete Constructions Pty Ltd* [2011] VSC 377.

In *DPP v Phan Thi Le (No.2)* [2007] VSCA 57 the Court of Appeal held, citing *Rose v Hvric* (1963) 108 CLR 353, that the Court is not precluded by s.133A of the Confiscation Act 1997 from awarding costs to a successful applicant for an order excluding property from automatic forfeiture.

In *Commissioner of the Australian Federal Police v Kannan (Evidence Ruling) (No 2)* [2024] VSC 814 the adult respondents had been convicted of slavery offences. The Commissioner was applying for pecuniary penalty orders against the respondents and the first respondent was applying for a compensation order in respect of an interest in a house forfeited under confiscations legislation. At [55] Gorton J ruled that pursuant to s.192A of the *Evidence Act 2008*, the transcript of the prior criminal proceedings (including the sentencing remarks) and the transcript of the appeal proceeding (including the Court of Appeal’s reasons) are admissible subject to any argument pursuant to ss.135 or 136 of the *Evidence Act 2008*.

### **11.1.10 Distinction between dismissing a charge and striking out a charge**

There are two quite distinct circumstances in which a charge may be dismissed. The first is where the prosecution agency has not satisfied the court beyond reasonable doubt of the accused child’s guilt of the charged offence. The second is where the court is satisfied of the child’s guilt but dismisses the charge without conviction pursuant to s.360(1)(a) of the CYFA. This latter is a sentencing order. Both of the orders put an end to the charge.

By contrast, an order striking out a charge – made upon application by a prosecuting agency to withdraw the charge – is neither a sentencing order nor a curial determination of the merits of the charge. In strict law it does not put an end to the charge although in practice in the vast majority of cases it does. However, until such time as the court determines the charge on its merits and records an order finding the defendant guilty or dismissing the charge, a striking out order is no more than a direction to remove the charge from the list of matters for hearing and determination by the Court. In *R v McGowan & Another; ex parte Macko & Sanderson* [1984] VR 1000 Kaye J said at 1002:

“[A]n order striking out an information does not put an end to the proceedings. It is not a curial determination of the charge alleged; it is no more than a direction to remove the information from the list of matters for hearing and determination by the Court.

Notwithstanding that reported authorities are mainly concerned with matters within civil jurisdiction of superior courts, it is clear that the nature of an order striking out an information by a Magistrates’ Court does not differ from a like order made by a court of unlimited jurisdiction. The nature of such an order is demonstrated by the reported submission of counsel and orders made by Mann CJ in *Aiken v Aiken* [1941] VLR 124…

The power to reinstate for trial an action which has been struck out was noted by Smith J in *Roberts v Gippsland Agricultural and Earthmoving Contracting Co Pty Ltd* [1956] VLR 555 at p.565. In the absence of any statutory provision to the contrary, the power forms part of the inherent jurisdiction of the Court.”

See also *Willis v Magistrates' Ct Vic & Buck* [Sup Ct Vic, {MC9/97}, 02/12/1996] per Smith J; *DPP v Sabransky* [2002] VSC 143 at [33]-[37] per Kellam J; *DPP v Moore* (2003) 6 VR 430; [2003] VSCA 90 at [20] per Batt JA; *Neuss v Magistrates’ Court of Victoria & Currey* [2013] VSC 321; *DPP v Quick & Taylor* [2015] VSCA 273; *CDPP v TK* [Children’s Court of Victoria-Stylianou M-27/09/2018] at [9]; *Chalker v Baldwin* [2021] VSC 644 at [15]-[17] per Niall JA. See also the cases referred to in **subsection 3.3.4.4**.

Conversely, where an application by the prosecution for an adjournment of an information is not allowed, a plea of not guilty is entered and the prosecution calls no evidence, the Court must dismiss the information on its merits, not strike it out. See *Douglas v Birt* [Supreme Court of Victoria, {MC1/93}, 01/10/1992] per Hedigan J.

### **11.1.11 Children’s Court has no direct power to impose community work/service**

It may sound like an abundance of riches to have up to ten sentencing orders available in any case (ten rather than eleven because YRC & YJC are mutually exclusive alternatives). However, there is at least one large gap. There is no sentencing order pursuant to which the Children’s Court can order a child to perform unpaid community work or service, that is there is no equivalent to a adult Community-based Order. One of the mandatory conditions of a YSO is that "the person must participate in a community service program or any other program" but that condition only applies if the person is "so directed by the Secretary" [s.389(1)(g); see also ss.389(6) & 389(7)]. Likewise, one of the mandatory conditions of a YAO [s.399(1)(h)] is that the person carry out the reasonable and lawful directions of the Secretary DJCS …under ss.406 & 407(1)" and s.407(1) requires the person to "engage in community service or other activities as directed by the Secretary". Further, s.360(6) prohibits the Court from imposing any condition or requirement on a non-party without that person or body's consent. This all means that the Court has no power to impose a community work condition on either a YSO or a YAO. Nor has the Children’s Court any other sentencing power to require a child to perform unpaid community work or service. Yet there are many offences - of which graffiti is a prime example - in which a good way to ensure that an offending child is held accountable (that is made aware that he or she must bear a responsibility for any action against the law [s.362(1)(f)]) is to require the child to clean up his or her own mess or some other person's mess. It is all very well to give the Court the power under s.360(3)(a) to order a child to make restitution or pay compensation but, as already indicated, a child rarely has the means and ability to pay.

### **11.1.12 Order for forensic procedure on finding of guilt**

Section 464ZF(2) of the Crimes Act 1958 [as amended] provides that if on or after 1 July 1998 a court finds a person guilty of-

(a) a forensic sample offence [i.e. any offence specified in Schedule 8]; or

(b) an offence of conspiracy to commit, incitement to commit or attempting to commit a forensic sample offence-

a member of the police force, at any time following that finding but not later than 6 months after the expiration of any appeal period or the final determination of any appeal (whichever is the later), may apply to the court for an order directing the person to undergo a forensic procedure for the taking of a sample from any part of the body and the court may make an order accordingly. Under s.464ZF(2AA) this 6 month period is extended to 12 months in certain circumstances.

The sample ordered may be either intimate or non-intimate: s.464ZF(4) The most common order for a child is for an intimate sample by way of buccal swab. Any such order must not be executed unless the appeal period has expired or an appeal (if any) has been finally determined and the conviction for the forensic sample offence upheld: s.464ZF(6). If an appeal on conviction for the forensic sample offence is quashed, an order for forensic procedure ceases to have effect: s.464ZF(7).

Section 464ZF(3) provides that if at any time before 1 July 1998 a person has been found guilty by the Court of a forensic sample offence and the person is serving a term of imprisonment or detention, a member of the police force may apply to the Children's Court for an order directing the person to undergo a forensic procedure.

There is a conflict of authority as to whether s.464ZF(3) – and so by implication s.464ZF(2) - excludes any requirement that notice be given to the subject and excludes any right in the subject to be heard. In *Lednar & Ors v The Magistrates' Court & Anor* [2000] VSC 549 Gillard J held that it did. In *Pavic v Chief Commissioner of Police* [2003] VSC 99 at [3]-[4] Nettle J took the opposite view, holding that s.464ZF(3) does not exclude a subject's right to be heard. However, parliament made its intention clear in the Crimes (Amendment) Act 2004 [No.41/2004] when-

* in s.21 it validated earlier orders made without notice or without affording a right to be heard; and
* in s.16 it introduced a new s.464ZF(5) which permits an application under ss.464ZF(2) or 464ZF(3) in respect of an adult person to be made without notice to any person.

However, in s.16 it also introduced new ss.464ZF(5A) & 464ZF(5B) which set up a slightly less stringent regime for applications made in respect of children under 18:

* notice of the application must be served on the child and a parent or guardian of the child;
* the child is not a party to the application;
* the child may not call or cross-examine any witnesses;
* the child may not address the court other than in respect of any matter referred to in ss.464ZF(8)(a) or 464ZF(8)(b) or in response to inquiries made by the court under s.464ZF(8)(c).

Section 464ZF(8) provides that a court hearing an application for a forensic procedure-

(a) must take into account the seriousness of the circumstances of the forensic sample offence;

(b) must be satisfied that, in all the circumstances, the making of the order is justified; and

(c) may such inquiries on oath or by affirmation or otherwise as it considers desirable.

Although it is a pre-condition to the making of an order under s.464ZF that the person has been found guilty of a forensic sample offence, a finding of guilt alone is not sufficient to justify the making of the order. This is clear from *R v Abebe* [1998] VSC 214 where, in refusing a forensic procedure order, Harper J said-

"Parliament has not said that a conviction for murder necessarily results in the success of an application…In this case the application is not supported by any material of any kind. If the conviction for murder is not itself sufficient the position therefore is that I have nothing upon which to be satisfied in all the circumstances the making of the order is justified."

See also *R v Lagona* [1998] VSC 220.

By contrast, in *Lednar & Ors v The Magistrates' Court & Anor* [2000] VSC 549 Gillard J at [268] said-

"It is important in my opinion to note that where there is a serious forensic sample offence committed in the past in the majority of cases the granting of an order will follow without much further consideration. If the forensic sample offence is serious and there is evidence which demonstrates that the prisoner by his past conduct is a repeat offender and likely to offend in the future then it is hard to see what arguments could be put forward to rebut the finding that in all the circumstances the making of the order is justified."

And in *R v Heriban and Brunner* [2005] VSC 76 at [7] Whelan J, although approving the dicta of Harper J in *R v Abebe*, did so in a very qualified way-

“It seems to me that *Abebe* and *Lagona* do not stand for the proposition that evidence of matters in addition to the circumstances of the offence itself must be led before an order can be made. Whilst it is correct, as those cases make clear, that a mere conviction in itself is not sufficient, an order may be justified in a particular case by the seriousness of the offence itself and the circumstances in which it occurred. The issue in every case is whether the order is justified, and in considering that issue the court must take the seriousness of the circumstances of the offence into account.”

If a court makes an order for a compulsory procedure in relation to a child, s.464ZF(9) requires it-

(a) to give reasons for its decision and cause a copy to be served on the child and a parent or guardian of the child; and

(b) to inform the child that a member of the police force may use reasonable force to enable the procedure to be conducted.

An order under s.464ZF must be made in open court: see *Lednar's Case*. The only avenue of 'appeal' is by an application for judicial review pursuant to O.56 of the Supreme Court Rules. In *R v Akin Sari* [2008] VSCA 137 at [107]-[108] Lasry AJA said that an order under s.464ZF was not a penalty or a sentence and accordingly such orders are not part of a sentencing order and are therefore not amenable to challenge on an appeal against sentence.

Section 464ZFB(1) of the Crimes Act 1958 [as amended] provides, *inter alia*, that if on or after 1 July 1998-

(a) a forensic procedure is conducted on a child in accordance with s.464U(7) or 464V(5); and

(b) a court finds the person guilty of-

(i) the offence in respect of which the forensic procedure was conducted; or

(ii) any other offence arising out of the same circumstances; or

(iii) any other offence in respect of which evidence obtained as a result of the forensic procedure had probative value-

a member of the police force, at any time following that finding but not later than 6 months after the expiration of any appeal period or the final determination of any appeal (whichever is the later), may apply to the court for an order permitting the retention of any sample taken and any related material and information and the court may make an order accordingly.

In *R v Heriban and Brunner* [2005] VSC 76 Whelan J proceeded at [6] on the basis that the same considerations applied to applications under s.464ZFB(1) as to applications under s.464ZF(2).

Section 464ZFC(1) imposes an obligation on the Chief Commissioner of Police without delay to destroy, or cause to be destroyed, any forensic sample taken and any related material and information if no application was made for its retention under s.464ZFB within the specified period or if a court refuses to make an order under s.464ZFB.

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### **11.1.13 Sentencing of children for Commonwealth offences**

Section 20C of the Crimes Act 1914 (Cth) provides that a child or young person who, in a State or Territory, is charged with or convicted of an offence against a law of the Commonwealth may be tried, punished or otherwise dealt with as if the offence were an offence against a law of the State or Territory.

In *CDPP v TK* [2018] VChC 4, the offender – who was aged between 16 & 17 at the time of the offending and 19 at the time of sentencing – had pleaded guilty to two charges laid under the Criminal Code Act 1995 (Cth) which prescribe maxima of 10 years’ & 2 years’ imprisonment respectively:

1. a representative charge under 477.2(1) of unauthorized modification of data whilst knowing that the modifications were unauthorised and being reckless as to whether the modifications will impair reliability, security or operations;
2. a charge under s.478.1(1) of unauthorised access and or modification of restricted data intending to cause that modification and knowing that the modification was unauthorised.

The offences involved ‘hacking’ into the electronic network of a large American corporation.

Two of the issues which arose on the plea were:

1. whether the Children’s Court – in sentencing a young federal offender – has power to impose dispositions under the Crimes Act 1914 (Cth); and
2. whether the Children’s Court power under s.360 of the CYFA is constrained in the event of any conflict with s.16A of the Crimes Act 1914 (Cth).

The issues arose in the context of a dispute between the parties as to whether general deterrence was an applicable sentencing principle when sentencing a child in the Children’s Court of Victoria in respect of Commonwealth offences.

Stylianou M placed TK on probation without conviction for a period of just over 8 months. In her detailed written judgment her Honour held at [29]:

“I accept that s.20C, by use of the word ‘may’ is permissive and that this Court may, therefore, ostensibly decide to sentence a child charged with a federal offence under the regime of the Crimes Act 1914 (Cth). However, I am not persuaded by the prosecution submission that s.20C merely enables this Court to access the sentencing options in s.360 of the CYFA but otherwise constrains this Court to the extent that any aspect of the CYFA conflicts with s.16A of the Crimes Act 1914 (Cth).”

After referring to Part 1B of the Crimes Act 1914 (Cth) and ss.68(1) & 68(11) of the Judiciary Act 1903 (Cth), her Honour continued at [33]-[41]:

[33] “Section 79 of the Judiciary Act 1903 (Cth) provides that the laws of each state or territoty including the laws relating to procedure shall, except as otherwise provided by the Constitution or the laws of the Commonwealth, be binding on all Courts exercising federal jurisdiction in all cases to which they are applicable…Section 79…is entitled “State or Territory laws govern where applicable”. Section 20C of the Crimes Act 1914 (Cth), a federal law, makes provision for State and territory Courts to deal with a child federal offender as if the offence was committed against the laws of that jurisdiction. Put simply, it makes state laws applicable. The CYFA provides the legislative framework by which children are dealt with for offences against State law in Victoria.

[34] Section 20C by its clear terms enables this Court to deal with TK as if the offences were offences againat a law of this State. Nowhere in its terms does s.20C limit the application of State law in the way contended for by the prosecution.

[35] The prosecution submission (as to the effect of s.20C) would obviously be more persuasive if that submission was instead being made in respect of s.20AB of the Crimes Act 1914. This section is titled ‘additional sentencing alternatives’. Here, the legislature made it clear that where a State Court imposes any one of the alternative sentences for a federal offence as specified in that section, *‘the provisions of the laws of the State…with respect to such a sentence…that is passed…or made under those laws shall, so far as those provisions are capable of application and are not inconsistent with the laws of the Commonwealth, apply, by virtue of this subsection to and in relation to the sentence or order passed or made under subsection 1.’* Such restriction or qualification is notably absent from s.20C.

[36] Section 20C must be taken to mean what it says, not what it does not say. That being so, this Court is empowered to deal with this case ‘as if the offence were an offence against a law of the State’.

[37] When this Court determines to invoke the power vested in it by s.20C and therefore to deal with a young offender under State law, the CYFA comes into play. Under the CYFA, *in determining the appropriate sentence available under s.360*, the Court *must* apply ‘as far as practicable’ the considerations in s.362(1).

[38] The language of s.362(1) and the nature of the matters to which regard *must* be had, are such as to preclude any consideration of general deterrence. As the Court of Appeal said in *CNK v R* (2011) 32 VR 641 at [14]:

*‘…if a sentence were increased – for the purpose of general deterrence – beyond what would otherwise have been imposed on the child, the sentencing Court would have breached its obligation to secure “as far as practicable” the objectives set out in s.362(1). More particularly, to treat a child as a vehicle for general deterrence would amount to “making an example” of the child, for the purpose of deterring others. This would, in our view, be in direct conflict with the Court’s obligation under s.362(1)(d) to ‘minimize the stigma to the child’ resulting from the Court’s determination.”*

[39] The Court of Appeal determined that the language of s.362 CYFA conveys a clear legislative intent to exclude general deterrence. That conclusion did *‘not depend upon s.362(1) being treated as an exhaustive statement of sentencing considerations to be applied where a child is being sentenced. Rather, the analysis turns on the singularity of general deterrence as a sentencing consideration and…its incompatibility with the clear objectives and plain language of s.362(1)’*: *ibid* at [38].”

[40] If this Court is ‘enabled’ to deal with TK as it would have, had he stood to be sentenced for a State offence, in so doing, for this Court then also to apply the sentencing considerations set out in s.16A of the Crimes Act 1914 (Cth) as argued by the prosecution, would be in direct conflict with the Court’s obligation under the terms of the CYFA. Amongst other factors, s.16A requires consideration of general deterrence, a concept entirely inconsistent with the provisions of the CYFA.

[41] *DPP (Cth), DPP v Dylan Hutchison (a pseudonym)* [2018] VSCA 153 dealt with an accused charged with both federal and state offences. Consistent with this Court’s interpretation of the applicable sentencing principles in the present case, Priest, Beach & Ashley JJA said at [56], by way of *obiter*, ‘[I]f the respondent’s offending had been detected at or about the time of its commission, he would have fallen to be sentenced under the provisions of the CYFA, where general deterrence would have played no part in the sentencing process’. In argument, the prosecutor in the present case submitted that insofar as the Court of Appeal in *Hutchison* included the Commonwealth offence in this statement of *obiter*, it was an incorrect statement. I am not persuaded by this submission of the prosecution.”

In *LS (a pseudonym) v CDPP* [2020] VSC 484 the appellant was a 17 year old female who had been found guilty, *inter alia*, of 5 charges of producing child pornography and 5 charges of transmitting child pornography, the charges being based on offences against ss.474.20(1)(a)(ii) & 474.19(1)(a)(ii) of the *Criminal Code 1995 (Cth)*. The CDPP’s central submission was that general deterrence is one of the mandatory sentencing considerations mentioned in s.16A of the *Crimes Act 1914 (Cth)* and that there was nothing in the terms of s 20C which compelled a court sentencing a child under the *CYF Act* to disregard general deterrence, as it must when sentencing a child for a state offence. At [64]-[67] Beale J rejected the CDPP’s submission:

[64] “But on a natural reading of s 20C, if general deterrence is taken into account when sentencing a child for a federal offence under the *CYF Act*, it is difficult to see how it can be accurately claimed that the child was ‘punished or otherwise dealt with as if the offence were an offence against the law of [Victoria]’.

[65] Further, s 20C makes specific provision for child federal offenders. In my view, s 16A — a general provision regarding federal offenders — must yield to the specific provision that is s 20C.

[66] I am fortified in this interpretation of s 20C by what the Court of Appeal said in *DPP* v *Hutchinson* [2018] VSCA 153. In that case, the court was dealing with an appeal by both the Victorian DPP and the CDPP against the adequacy of the sentences imposed by a County Court judge for four state offences and one federal offence. The offender was a child at the time of most of the offending (aged 16 years)38 but not at the time he was charged (aged 19 years).39 The sentencing judge placed him, without conviction, on two Community Correction Orders in relation to the State offences and a s 19B bond in relation to the federal offence. The Court of Appeal, in dismissing the Crown appeal, said this at [56]:

‘…If the respondent’s offending had been detected at or about the time of its commission, he would have fallen to be sentenced under the provisions of the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005*, where general deterrence would have played no part in the sentencing process.’

[67] Based on a natural reading of s 20C and the Court of Appeal’s dicta in *Hutchinson*, I reject the submission of the CDPP that I must take general deterrence into account in sentencing you on the federal offences.”

### **11.1.14 Sentencing powers of Supreme Court or County Court**

In s.3 of the *Sentencing Act 1991* [as amended] "young offender" is defined as "an offender who at the time of being sentenced is under the age of 21 years". Prior to an amendment introduced by Act No.48 of 1997, "young offender" had been defined as one "who at the time of being sentenced is aged 17 or more but is under the age of 21 years". This amendment and a number of related amendments appear to have been spurred by criticisms of the legislation made by the Court of Appeal in *R v Hill* [1996] 2 VR 496 and in order to resolve a conflict between the judgment of Hampel J in *R v G* [Supreme Court of Victoria, unreported, 16/09/1994] and of Cummins J in *R v F* [Supreme Court of Victoria, unreported, 05/12/1995].

Thus it is now clear:

* that the sentencing powers of the Supreme Court & County Court in respect of a child found by such court to be guilty of an offence include power to make any of the sentencing orders detailed in s.7(1) of the *Sentencing Act 1991* [as amended]: see e.g. *DPP v SJK & GAS* [2002] VSCA 131; and
* that in the exercise of those powers, the sentencing guidelines in s.5 of that Act are relevant.

However, in addition to those powers, s.586 of the CYFA authorises the Supreme Court or County Court, in sentencing a child for an indictable offence, to exercise the power to make any sentencing order which the Children's Court may make under the CYFA save that an order that the child be detained in a YRC or YJC must be made in accordance with Subdivision (4) of Division 2 of Part 3 (ss.32-35) of the *Sentencing Act 1991*. And it appears from the judgment of Nettle J in *R v PP* [2002] VSC 578 at [28] that the sentencing principles set out in s.362(1) of the CYFA are also relevant to the sentencing of young persons by superior courts.

### **11.1.15 Relevance to sentencing of agreement between Crown and defence**

An agreement between prosecuting authorities and an offender which affects the course of proceedings before a sentencing judge has been recognised as a significant factor in sentencing: see *R v Ioannou* [2007] VSCA 277 at [22]-[23]; *Malvaso v R* (1989) CLR 277; *DPP v Waack* (2001) 3 VR 194, 200-6.

However, it remains a matter for the sentencing judge whether he or she forms the same view as that encapsulated in a plea bargain between Crown and defence. In *R v G Williams* [2007] VSC 490 King J did not agree with the Crown and defence submission that a wholly suspended term of imprisonment would be an appropriate sentence. At [6]-[7] her Honour said-

“[I]t is ultimately for the court to determine what sentence is appropriate. The court is not bound, in any way, by the negotiations between counsel as to the appropriateness or otherwise of a sentence. That is clearly the role and function of the court. It is, however, extremely important that the court take heed of what has been agreed and if possible, within the proper principles of sentencing, to give effect to, or at the minimum to give considerable weight to such agreements…[Whilst] it is important, it is also to be noted as Coldrey J stated in *R v Kenneth Charles Jarrett* [Supreme Court of Victoria, 30/06/1994], when the Crown had submitted that a wholly suspended sentence was appropriate for Mr Jarrett, his Honour said- ‘It is, however, only one aspect of the broader sentencing considerations to which the court must have regard.’”

An appeal was dismissed by the Court of Appeal: see *R v George Williams* [2008] VSCA 95 at [27] where Osborn AJA, with whom Buchanan & Vincent JJA agreed, said:

“The real question is whether the reasons of the sentencing judge demonstrate that she failed to have proper regard to the Crown’s concession. When her Honour’s reasons are read as a whole they demonstrate…that she accepted that it was ‘extremely important that the Court take heed of what has been agreed’ and that she indicated she would pay it ‘significant regard’.”

In *Nguyen v The Queen; Ho v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 134 the sentencing judge did not agree with the prosecution concession that the appellants who had pleaded guilty to cultivation of a commercial quantity of cannabis were mere ‘crop sitters’. At [61] Priest & Beach JJA found no error:

“Although the Crown conceded on the plea that both applicants were crop sitters, the judge was not bound to accept that agreed factual statement, so long as the judge — as he did in the present case — afforded the parties procedural fairness: *R v Duong* [1998] 4 VR 68, 77–8; *Chow v DPP* (1992) 28 NSWLR 593; *R v Mielicki* (1994) 73 A Crim R 72; *Scott v The Queen* [2010] VSCA 290 [48]; *DPP v Perry* (2016) 50 VR 686, 711–712 [92]–[93].

In *Gilbert v The King* [2025] VSCA 83 Taylor JA refused an application for extension of time in which to seek leave to appeal by an applicant who had pleaded guilty to theft, dangerous driving causing serious injury and failing to render assistance and who had been sentenced to TES IMP6y8m/5y2m. The applicant’s single ground of appeal was that the “sentencing judge went behind the agreed summary and unilaterally aggravated the factual basis for the plea”. In her judgment Taylor JA discussed cases including *Weininger v R* (2002) 212 CLR 629, *Ristevski v The Queen* (2011) 31 VR 93; [2011] VSCA 53, *R v Bunning* [2007] VSCA 205, *R v Lowe* [2009] VSCA 268, *DPP v Walsh (a pseudonym)* [2018] VSCA 172 & *Qayyum v The King* [2025] VSCA 14, noting in particular at [45]‑[47]:

[45] “...[A]s this Court in *Lowe* [2009] VSCA 268 made plain at [16]:

In sentencing, the judge is not fettered by the facts upon which the parties rely. The judge may seek further facts from either party or may indicate that he or she intends to rely upon facts additional to those which the parties have put the court so long as it is done in accordance with ordinary legal principles appropriate to a criminal trial.

[46] And, to reiterate, the applicant does not contend that he was denied procedural fairness.

[47] Very recently – in *Qayyum v The King* [2025] VSCA 14 – this Court observed at [74] that

*Lowe* does not stand for a universal and inflexible principle that the judge is bound only by the facts contained in the indictment and prosecution opening. As is made clear in *Lowe*, the material available to a judge in determining an appropriate sentence varies depending on the circumstances of the case. If it becomes an issue, it is necessary to examine all the circumstances in which the plea of guilty was entered.”

See also *Kapkidis v The Queen* [2013] VSCA 35 at [20]; *DL v The Queen* [2018] HCA 32 at [39].

### **11.1.16 Procedural fairness**

In *R v Alexandridis* [2008] VSCA 126 the Court of Appeal held that the failure of a sentencing judge to give an unrepresented offender the opportunity to adduce evidence or make submissions that he had been provoked when he slashed a victim’s face was a denial of procedural fairness. At [17] Redlich JA, with whom Buchanan & Nettle JJA agreed, said:

“It is uncontroversial that an ingredient of the court's duty to accord procedural fairness involves the giving of a fair opportunity to a party to adduce evidence or make submissions rebutting potential adverse findings. Procedural fairness must be upheld for its own sake, as well as for its consequences. The experience of the common law is that out of fair and lawful procedures will emerge fair and lawful outcomes.”

In *DL v The Queen* [2018] HCA 32 the appellant had been convicted of murder. At the sentencing hearing the primary judge found it probable that the appellant had been acting under the influence of some psychosis at the time of the offence and was accordingly not satisfied that the appellant had possessed the intention to kill. On appeal the prosecutor had submitted that there was no issue with the primary judge’s factual findings. However the Court of Criminal Appeal – in exercising a power to re-sentence – had rejected the primary judge’s finding that the appellant had suffered a temporary psychosis which precluded forming an intention to kill but failed to put the appellant on notice of its inclination not to act on the concession made by the prosecution. In holding that there had been a denial of procedural fairness and accordingly a miscarriage of justice, Bell, Keane, Nettle, Gordon & Edelman JJ said at [39] (emphasis added):

“Leeming JA was right to say that **the Court of Criminal Appeal was not bound by the prosecutor's concession. Notwithstanding the adversarial nature of criminal proceedings, the public interest in the sentencing of offenders is such that the sentencing judge (or the appellate court in the case of re-sentencing) is not constrained by any agreement between the parties as to the appropriate range of sentence or by concessions made by the prosecutor**: *GAS v The Queen* (2004) 217 CLR 198 at 211 [31]; [2004] HCA 22; *Elias v The Queen* (2013) 248 CLR 483 at 494-495 [27]; [2013] HCA 31; *Barbaro v The Queen* (2014) 253 CLR 58 at 76 [47]-[49] per French CJ, Hayne, Kiefel and Bell JJ; [2014] HCA 2; *Chow v Director of Public Prosecutions* (1992) 28 NSWLR 593 at 606 per Kirby P. Where, however, the judge (or the appellate court in the case of re-sentencing) is minded not to act on a concession made by the prosecution, the failure to put the offender on notice of that inclination and give him or her an opportunity to deal with the matter by evidence or submissions will ordinarily be a miscarriage of justice. In the absence of such an indication, it will be reasonable for the offender to conduct his or her case upon the understanding that the concession will be accepted and acted upon by the court: *Collins v The Queen* (2018) 92 ALJR 517 at 525 [32]; 355 ALR 203 at 211; [2018] HCA 18; *Chow v Director of Public Prosecutions* (1992) 28 NSWLR 593 at 613 per Sheller JA; *R v Tadrosse* (2005) 65 NSWLR 740 at 745 [19] per Howie J; *Stokes v The Queen* (2008) 185 A Crim R 74 at 77 [13]-[15] per Barr J; *Ng v The Queen* (2011) 214 A Crim R 191 at 205-206 [43]-[50]; *Govindaraju v The Queen* [2011] NSWCCA 255 at [52]-[57], [62] per Hall J; *R v Cunningham* [2005] QCA 321 at 5 per Keane JA. It was an error to hold that the appellant had had ample opportunity to be heard on all aspects of his appeal.”

In *Mendelle v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 204 the Court of Appeal accepted the respondent’s concession that the sentencing judge’s departure from his earlier tentatively expressed sentencing indication without giving counsel for the applicant an opportunity to be heard consititued a failure to accord procedural fairness. However, leave to appeal was refused on the basis that the sentence imposed on the applicant was lenient and did not require any adjustment.

In *Chuah v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 51 the Court of Appeal (Priest & Kyrou JJA) held that the sentencing judge had failed to accord the applicant procedural fairness in the two respects summarised at [54] & [64]:

[54] “[D]efence counsel was entitled to continue to conduct the plea on the basis that the prosecutor had conceded that the applicant did not have knowledge of the quantity or purity of the charge 1 parcel. As such, it was not open to the judge to sentence the applicant inconsistently with this concession unless he gave the applicant notice that he was not willing to accept the concession, and an opportunity to make submissions as to why the judge should accept it: *DL v The Queen* (2018) 265 CLR 215, 232 [39]. As the judge did not do so, and sentenced the applicant on the basis of the prosecutor’s initial position set out in his written submissions rather than his final position set out in the exchange on the plea, the judge failed to accord the applicant procedural fairness.

[64] [I]n sentencing the applicant on a basis that was inconsistent with the factual position accepted on the plea [in relation to the applicant’s purpose for entering Australia], the judge denied the applicant procedural fairness.”

See also *R v Sa* [2004] VSCA 182 at [29]; *R v Bennett* [2006] VSCA 274 at [4]-[6]; *R v Healey* [2008] VSCA 132 at [42]-[43]; *R v Rule* [2008] VSCA 154 at [46].

### **11.1.17 Relevance of United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child**

In *DPP v TY (No 3)* [2007] VSC 489 at [47]-[51] Bell J discussed the relevance to the sentencing of child offenders of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child which entered into force on 02/11/1990 and to which Australia is a party. The Convention has not been incorporated into Australian law, which means that it cannot operate as a direct source of law: *Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs v Teoh* (1995) 183 CLR 273, 287. However, as Maxwell P pointed out in *Royal Women’s Hospital v Medical Practitioners Board* (2006) 15 VR 22, 38*,* Australian courts have been prepared to consider international human rights conventions in exercising sentencing discretions. At least three cases have involved taking the Conventioninto account: *R v Togias* (2001) 127 A Crim R 23, 43; *Walsh v Department of Social Security* (1996) 67 SASR 143, 147; *Bates v Police* (1997) 70 SASR 66, 70 (but see contra *Smith v R* (1998) 98 A Crim R 442, 448). As Bell J stated in *Tomasevic v Travaglini* [2007] VSC 337 at [60]-[65], international human rights, such as those recognised in Article 40(1), can be a relevant consideration in the exercise of judicial powers and discretions. Article 40(1) of the Convention recognises

“the right of every child alleged as, accused of, or recognised as having infringed the penal law to be treated in a manner consistent with the promotion of the child’s sense of dignity and worth, which reinforces the child’s respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of others and which takes into account the child’s age and the desirability of promoting the child’s reintegration and the child’s assuming a constructive role in society.”

In *DPP v TY (No 3)* at [51] while holding that the Convention reinforces the existing principle of “giving primary emphasis to youth and rehabilitation as a mitigating factor when sentencing children”, Bell J also noted that-

* “the provisions of any relevant legislation…remain applicable and must be applied”’; and
* “taking the Convention into account does not lead to the result that children can escape criminal responsibility and just punishment; where the crime is very serious, considerations other than youth and rehabilitation can become more pressing”.

Bell J also remarked at [48] that Article 40 can “cut both ways” where the victim is a child. In that case the defendant was 14, the victim whom he murdered in a spur of the moment attack was 18:

“The Convention reminds us, to use the words of Cummins J in his recent decision in *DPP v Farquharson* [2007] VSC 469 at [3]: “’Children are precious and are vulnerable. They are entitled to love, to care, to health, to education, to security and to safety. Most of all they are entitled to life.’”

### **11.1.18 Sentencing for conspiracy compared with sentencing for completed offence**

In *DPP v Fabriczy* [2010] VSCA 334 the Court of Appeal held:

[2] “There is no principle of law that the sentence for conspiracy to commit an offence should be less than the sentence which the completed offence would have attracted. The conspiracy offence is directed at a different mischief – the making of an agreement to act unlawfully – and the sentencing court must assess the degree of criminality, and the moral culpability of the individual conspirators, accordingly. The Court must take into account not only what was done by the particular defendant but also the scope and duration of the conspiracy as a whole and everything done in furtherance of it.”

[14] The assertion that there could be such a general rule misapprehends the seriousness with which the law views the crime of conspiracy. Conspiracy is an inchoate offence. The offence lies not in the overt acts themselves, injurious though they may be to an ordered society, but in the anterior agreement to commit them: *DPP v Bhagwan* [1972] AC 60, 79 per Lord Diplock. It is the agreement of a number of persons to carry into effect the unlawful purpose in combination which is of the essence of the crime: *R v Ongley* (1940) 57 WN (NSW) 116, 117 (Jordan CJ); *Gerakiteys v The Queen* (1984) 153 CLR 317, 334 (Deane J);  *Raptis, Lilimbakis & Sinclair v R* (1988) 36 A Crim R 362, 364 (Young CJ, O’Bryan and Tadgell JJ). The offence of conspiracy is complete once there is agreement between two or more persons: *R v Hoar* (1981) 148 CLR 32, 38 (Gibbs CJ, Mason, Aickin and Brennan JJ); *Gerakiteys v The Queen* (1984) 153 CLR 317, 327, 334; *Kamara v DPP* [1974] AC 104, 119. It is a continuing offence {*Truong v R* (2004) 223 CLR 122} so long as there are two or more parties to it intending to carry out the design {*DPP v Doot* [1973] AC 807, 823; *R v G, F, S and W* (1974) 1 NSWLR 31, 43–44}.

[15] The charge of conspiracy is brought because ‘criminal action organised, and executed, in concert is more dangerous to society than an individual breach of the law’: *DPP v Doot* [1973] AC 807, 817–8 (Lord Wilberforce); *R v Wasson* [2004] NSWCCA 200, [21]. The crime of conspiracy was described in Hawkins’ *Pleas of the Crown* as follows: ‘All confederacies whatsoever, wrongfully to prejudice a third person, are highly criminal at common law.’

[16] The essential feature of the offence of conspiracy is the agreement between two or more persons to commit the crime, sometimes referred to as the element of ‘concert’: *Raptis, Lilimbakis & Sinclair* *v R* (1988) 36 A Crim R 362, 364 (Young CJ, O’Bryan and Tadgell JJ). It is this element which differentiates the offence of conspiracy to commit a substantive offence from the offence of attempting to commit the substantive offence, and from the substantive offence itself. The element of concert makes the offence of conspiracy more serious than if an individual were acting alone to plan and commit the offence, as the likelihood of the crime occurring is increased by the involvement of multiple participants making a commitment to each other to do so. There is said to be a ‘dangerousness’ inherent in the plotting, ‘either because several may achieve what an individual would find difficult or impossible, or because other criminal plans may emerge from the group.’: M Goode, *Criminal Conspiracy in Canada*, applied by the Federal Court in *R v Hoar* *and Noble* (1981) 34 ALR 357, 364. (The present case exemplifies the last point, as the second conspiracy emerged following the completion of the first.) As Lee J stated in *R v Shepherd*, ‘men acting in combination to achieve unlawful ends present a far greater evil and danger to the community than do the acts of individuals acting alone to achieve their nefarious ends.’: *R v Shepherd* (1988) 37 A Crim R 303, 313.

[17] The extent of the offender’s participation in the combination, established by reference to his or her individual acts and declarations, will inform but not determine the conclusion as to the offender’s degree of criminality: *Marie, Chitrizza and Casagrande* (1983) 13 A Crim R 440; *Raptis, Lilimbakis & Sinclair v R* (1988) 36 A Crim R 362, 365; *Shepherd* *(No 2)* (1988) 37 A Crim R 466, 478; Gillies, *The Law of Criminal**Conspiracy*, 2nd ed (1990) 254–5)*; R v Koh* [[2001] NSWCCA 324.](http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/cases/nsw/NSWCCA/2001/324.html) The individual offender is to be punished for involvement in theconspiracy and not just for the acts that he or she performed. The sentencing judge therefore needs to assess, for the purpose of sentencing the individual conspirator, the ‘content and duration and reality’ of theconspiracy, and what is actually done in transaction of it,as well asthe role of the offender before the court: *R v Kane* [1975] VR 658, 661, applied in *Savvas v The Queen* (1995) [183 CLR 1](http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/cases/cth/high_ct/183clr1.html), 6.

[18] It is an error to equate conspiracy to commit an offence with an attempt to commit that offence. A comparison of s 321 (conspiracy) and s 321N (attempt) shows that the elements of the two offences are quite different. More relevantly for present purposes, whereas the maximum penalty for conspiracy is the same as the maximum for the substantive offence, s 321P of the *Crimes Act* *1958* expressly fixes a lower maximum for an attempt than for the substantive offence.”

### **11.1.19 Offending in a custodial setting is a relevant sentencing consideration**

In *DPP v De Castres; DPP v Kent* [2011] VSCA 377 Ross AJA (with whom Ashley & Harper JJA agreed) referred to *R v Allen & Jackson* (1994) 77 A Crim R 99, *R v Devries* [2005] VSCA 95 at [20]‑[23] per Vincent JA and *R v Berry & Wenitong* [2007] VSCA 202 at [126] per Redlich JA (with whom Buchanan and Kellam JJA agreed) and said at [36]:

“In my view, these authorities support the proposition that deterrence assumes particular importance as a sentencing principle where the offending takes place in a custodial or prison setting. Hence the custodial or prison setting of an offence may be regarded as an aggravating feature.”

In *Hope v The Queen; Pua v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 230 Priest, Beach & Kaye JJA said at [73]-[74]:

“[I]t was correct for the sentencing judge to observe that it was an aggravating circumstance of the applicants’ crimes that their offences were committed while they were in custody and against prison officers who were merely performing their usual duties in an entirely appropriate manner. The common law has long recognised that it is an aggravating circumstance to assault a law enforcement or corrections officer while performing his or her duty. As to corrections officers performing their duties, see *R v Schneidas (No.1)* (1980) 4 A Crim R 95,100; *R v Keating* (1993) 65 A Crim R 315,323. Redlich JA (Buchanan & Nettle JJA agreeing) explained the reasons for this, in respect of police officers, in *DPP v Arvanitidis* (2008) 202 A Crim R 300. His Honour said:

‘It is a serious offence to assault police officers in the execution of their duty ordinarily requiring a significant element of deterrence in the sentences to be imposed: *R v Edigarov* (2001) 125 A Crim R 551 [42]-[43]; *R v Stone* (1995) 84 A Crim R 218. The courage of police officers in protecting lives and property is something upon which the community depends. It is incumbent on the Court to impose appropriate sentences to demonstrate support for the authority of police officers who undertake a difficult, and dangerous task in the execution of their duties in maintaining law and order: *R v Hamilton* (1993) 66 A Crim R 575; *re Attorney General’s Application under s.37 of the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999 No.2 of 2002* (2002) 137 A Crim R 196 [22]. Ambulance officers, and others performing such essential public duties, are to receive a similar measure of support and protection. Where the offenders knows or ought to have known that the victim was discharging a public duty of this sort, a more severe sentence will usually be imposed to deter such persons from violent assaults on them when performing their duties: *R v Nagy* [2004] 1 Qd R 63, [46]-[47] & [72]-[74]…’

The same reasoning applies with equal force in respect of prison officers performing the essential public duties that they perform. An inmate of a prison who intentionally inflicts serious injury on a prison officer can ordinarily expect to receive a substantial term of imprisonment in addition to any term then bering served.”

### **11.1.20 Vigiliantism**

In *Hamid v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 5 the Court of Appeal upheld a sentence of IMP10y/7y imposed on the 28 year oldapplicant on a charge of recklessly causing serious injury. The Court noted at [47] that “general deterrence is always an important sentencing consideration in offences of violence. It had heightened significance in the present case because there was an element of vigilantism in the applicant’s offending”. This was demonstrated by his text messages indicating that he attacked the victim because he perceived that the victim had dishonoured his sister and he wanted to punish the victim by permanently scarring him.” At [41]-[42] Whelan & Kyrou JJA said:

“The Courts have consistently condemned acts of vigilantism. They have repeatedly emphasised that members of the community must resolve their grievances by lawful means rather than taking the law into their own hands by physically harming perceived wrongdoers or members of their family, or damaging their property. The sentences that the courts impose on those who act contrary to the rule of law by taking personal vengeance need to be such as to deter not only the offenders from committing similar offences in the future but also to deter others from taking the law into their own hands.

We respectfully adopt the following statement of Brooking JA in *Director of Public Prosecutions v Whiteside* (2000) 1 VR 331, 339 [24] (citations omitted):

‘Vigilante enterprises must be suppressed, as appellate courts have made clear. Where four men, acting on ‘rumour and innuendo’, assaulted a fifth for ‘messing with kids’, the Court of Appeal endorsed the judge’s description of the ‘vigilante action’ and said that it called for serious reaction from any court anxious to preserve the rule of law: *R v Sheekey*. Similar offences committed by only one or two offenders have, as one would expect, drawn the same response: *Re Attorney-General’s Reference (Nos 17 and 18 of 1994)* (‘That is what this case was about, people taking the law into their own hands. It has to be stopped’); *R v Kennedy* (‘vigilante enterprises of this kind are simply not tolerated by the community’); *R v Demittis* (‘The idea that individual citizens may take the law into their hands in this way is quite mistaken. It frequently results in serious injuries, and very often they are inflicted on individuals who are quite innocent of any offence whatsoever. It is not the view adopted in this court in previous cases that the law may be taken into the hands of citizens or, indeed, that anything but the proper processes of the law should be gone through before a person is dealt with for criminal offences. Vigilante enterprises of this kind are simply not tolerated by the community.’); *R v Brelsford* (‘Vigilante action, from which Australia has happily been free so far, is notorious for the serious consequences that it often entails. Quite frequently, they are unintended and, on occasions, of course, the wrong person is selected as the target of this kind of rough justice.’).’”

In *DPP v Thorn* [2023] VSC 702 the 58 year old accused [who was aged 53 at the time of the offending] had been found guilty of murder and common law assault of a 30 year old man BJ and had pleaded guilty to intentionally causing injury, kidnapping and false imprisonment of BJ. The accused had harboured a belief, based on rumours, that BJ was a paedophile. The accused and co-offenders attacked the unsuspecting victim in his own home, kidnapped him in the boot of the accused’s vehicle and took him to a rural property where he was tied to a massage table and further assaulted. He was then returned to the boot of the vehicle and transported to an isolated bush location where he was shot in the back of the head and buried in a shallow grave. The accused was motivated by vigilantism and had given no indication of remorse or regret. Categorising the offending as “very serious with a high degree of moral culpability”, Tinney J sentenced the accused as follows:

* 1. Murder: Life imprisonment.
  2. Common law assault: IMP5y.
  3. Intentionally causing injury: IMP8y.
  4. Kidnapping: IMP11y.
  5. False imprisonment: IMP9y.

The sentences were ordered to be served concurrently and a non-parole period of 32y was set. In the course of sentencing Tinney J said:

[2] “The crimes for which you fall to be sentenced are examples of vigilante justice inflicted by you in company with others upon a helpless and outnumbered man who, throughout the many hours of the terrifying ordeal leading up to his shocking death, was treated by you with violence and disdain, reflecting the hatred you felt for him because of your belief that he was a paedophile, and your strongly-held view that you should be entitled to deal with him as you wished.”

…

[4] “When speaking most dishonestly to the police in the aftermath of your crimes, you portrayed yourself as a benevolent citizen coming to the assistance of young children in need, when in reality, yours was conduct which showed a want of common human decency, and, as Taylor JA stated when sentencing one of those with whom you acted during some of the period in question, was ‘imbued with the arrogant righteousness of vigilantism’: *R v Harvey* [2020] VSC 496 [6]. Your behaviour was an affront to the rule of law.”

…

[91] “As I have already indicated, and has been conceded by your counsel, your crimes are exceedingly serious. All of the crimes you committed were serious examples of those crimes. The fact that they were committed in the context of organised vigilante action by a gang of violent and vindictive thugs is a substantial aggravating feature. In Director of *Public Prosecution v Whiteside and Dieber* (2001) 1 VR 331, Brooking JA observed that appellate courts have made it clear that vigilante enterprises must be suppressed, referring to a series of cases in which appellate courts have stated, amongst other things, that such action calls for serious reaction from any court anxious to preserve the rule of law. In sentencing Harvey, as noted earlier, Taylor JA described his offending at [6] as being ‘imbued with the arrogant righteousness of vigilantism’. She went on to say at [46]:

‘Your behaviour was deliberate, pre-meditated thuggery in pursuit of private vengeance and conducted in concert with others. As such it was an affront to the rule of law.’

[92] The Court of Appeal in accepting Taylor JA’s characterisation of Harvey’s offending as ‘pre-meditated thuggery’, noted in *Harvey v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 84 at [52]-[54]:

‘It is clearly established that the law cannot countenance individuals taking the law into their own hands, meting out punishment for perceived wrongdoing…

There is no place for such behaviour…

Because of the insidious nature of vigilante behaviour, and the risk that offenders, through some misguided notion of justice, might seek to justify their behaviour, general deterrence is very important. A sentencing judge is entitled to give it great weight.’

[93] Yours were not spontaneous or impulsive criminal acts, committed in haste and without sufficient thought. These were well-planned, well-executed criminal offences, with the eventual murder of BJ carried out with truly chilling callousness and disregard for the sanctity of human life. You had ample time as you prepared to carry out this particular crime to reflect on what you were doing and to desist. You did not do so. Your crimes were an affront to normal, decent society.”

See *Wood v The Queen; Bell v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 39 at [37] & [90]; *R v Harvey* [2020] VSC 496 {appeal dismissed: *Harvey v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 84 at [18] & [52]-[54]}; *DPP v Hooper & Stefani* [2022] VSC 821 at [82], [92], [99], [155] & [159]; *DPP v Bottom & Smith* [2023] VSC 717 at [103]-[107].

### **11.1.21 Relevance of cultural practice to sentencing for a Commonwealth offence**

In *Jan v DPP (Cth)* [2025] VSCA 43 the 47 year old Afghan-born applicant was convicted by a jury of causing her 17-year old daughter V to enter into a forced marriage contrary to s.270.7B(1) of the *Criminal Code Act 1995* (Cth). In August 2019 V had participated in a permanent Nikah (cultural marriage) with a Mr Halimi. She had told police the day before at her school that she did not want to marry him and that she knew nothing about him, including his last name. In November 2019 V graduated from high school and the following day she moved to Perth with Mr Halimi. In January 2020 Mr Halimi killed V in a fit of rage by slitting her throat when she did not behave as he expected. It was common ground that the applicant believed that in forcing her daughter to marry she was acting in her daughter’s best interests and that she was grief-stricken at her daughter’s death. The applicant herself had been the subject of a forced marriage at the age of 12 or 13 years to a man she had never met and with whom she subsequently had 5 children of whom V was the youngest. The applicant’s husband had been killed by the Taliban about a month after V’s birth. Her father, brother and sister had also been killed by the Taliban. The applicant and her children – all of whom were married by the age of 18 or 19 in arranged marriages – had come to Australia as refugees and settled in Shepparton. The applicant fell to be sentenced as a person of good character. She had been a member of the Goulburn Valley Afghanistan Association since 2013.

The sentencing judge had imposed a sentence of IMP3y with the applicant mother to be released on her own recognisance after 12m.

Emerton P & Taylor JA refused leave to appeal against sentence, categorising the applicant’s offending as a serious example of a serious offence. At [36], [38]-[39] & [43] their Honours said:

[36] “The judge was correct to hold that s.16A(2A) of the *Crimes Act 1914* (Cth) prevented consideration of the applicant’s belief that she was acting in the best interests of [her daughter] in mitigation of her moral culpability *in so far* as that belief arose from Hazara culture. That section did not – either theoretically or in fact – prevent the judge from considering the applicant’s background and lack of education as matters personal to her. It is clear that the judge gave what weight she could to the personal circumstances of the applicant in mitigation of penalty – short of acting contrary to s.16A(2A).”

[38] “Section 16A(1) of the Crimes Act requires a court to impose a sentence that is of a severity appropriate in all the circumstances of the offence. In addition to any other matters, s.16A(2) requires a court to take into account such of the delineated matters ‘as are relevant and known to the court’. Section 16A(2)(m) refers to the ‘character, antecedents, age, means and physical or mental condition of the person’.

[39] Section 16A(2A) then provides as follows:

“However, the court must not take into account under subsection (1) or (2), other than paragraph (2)(ma) [which was not relevant in this case], any form of customary law or cultural practice as a reason for:

1. excusing, justifying, authorising, requiring or lessening the seriousness of the criminal behaviour to which the offence relates; or
2. aggravating the seriousness of the criminal behaviour to which the offence relates.”

[43] “It is to be remembered that s.16A(2A) qualifies the operation of s.16A(1) as well as s.16A(2). That is, customary law and cultural practice must not be considered when the court is determining what is ‘a sentence...that is of a severity appropriate in all the circumstances of the offence’. This determination involves consideration of the s.16A(2) factors that are relevant and known to the court, including those in s.16A(2)(a) – the nature and circumstances of the offence – and s.16A(2)(m) – the character, antecedents, age, means and physical or mental condition of the offender. The determination necessarily involves an assessment of the seriousness of the particular offending. And the task must be performed as part of the instinctive synthesis, taking into account both objective gravity and moral culpability: *Brown v The Queen* (2019) 59 VR 462 [55]; [2019] VSCA 286.”

Boyce JA dissented, concluding at [182] that the sentencing judge erred in construing s.16A(2A) as she did and that the error was material. His Honour would have allowed the appeal and released the applicant from prison immediately.

Although not relevant to the above case, it should be noted that s.16A(2AA) provides that s.16A(2A) does not apply in relation to an offence against any of the following:

1. s.22 of the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act 1984*;
2. ss.15A, 15C, 17B, 22A, 27A, 74AA, 142A, 142B, 207B, 354A, 355A & 470 of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*;
3. s.48 of the *Aboriginal Land and Waters (Jervis Bay Territory) Act 1986*;
4. ss.69 & 70 of the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976*;
5. s.30 of the *Aboriginal Land (Lake Condah and Framlingham Forest) Act 1987*;
6. any other law prescribed by the regulations that relates to:
7. entering, remaining on or damaging cultural heritage; or
8. damaging or removing a cultural heritage object.

### **11.1.22 Effect of racist motivation for offending**

In *Karam v The King* [2025] VSCA 194 the applicant had been sentenced to TES IMP6y3m/4y9m on charges including intentionally causing injury [IMP4y8m] and conduct endangering persons x 2 [IMP1y8m & IMP2y of which 8m of each was cumulative on the injury sentence]. The first victim was of African appearance and the applicant had shouted racist abuse at him. The applicant had used his vehicle to run over the second victim who was of Indian appearance. The sentencing judge had found that racist motivation underlay the offending against both victims. Leave to appeal was refused. At [14]-[15] & [53] Priest & McLeish JJA said:

[14] “Section 5(2)(daaa) of the *Sentencing Act* requires the sentencing judge to have regard to whether the offence was motivated by hatred for or prejudice against a group of people with common characteristics with which the victim was associated or with which the offender believed the victim was associated. By implication, the presence of such a motivation may be treated as an aggravating factor in the sentencing process.

[15] Consistently with this provision, in the course of giving the sentence indication, the judge held that the racist conduct of the applicant ‘considerably elevates the [applicant’s] moral culpability [and] diminishes any basis for mercy or compassion’.”

…

[53] “At first blush the sentence of 4 years and 8 months’ imprisonment imposed on the charge of intentionally causing injury is at least stern, being just under half the maximum sentence, after a plea of guilty. But this was a very serious example of the offence. To drive a motor vehicle directly at a randomly selected pedestrian on a crowded public footpath, mounting the curb, hitting the pedestrian and then driving 10 metres with the injured man on the bonnet, is abhorrent conduct that strikes at the entitlement of the public to feel secure from physical harm while going about their daily lives. Mr Singh was concussed and has significant ongoing effects from this wholly unprovoked attack. The seriousness of the conduct is exacerbated, albeit in a moderated way in the present case as the judge recognised, by the fact that the ‘random’ victim was chosen because of the colour of his skin. The judge rightly emphasised the need for the sentence to reflect significant weight to denunciation of this conduct, protection of the community and both general and specific deterrence.”

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## **11.2 Selected cases on sentencing**

### **11.2.1 Young adults & children sentenced under the Sentencing Act**

There are a plethora of cases in which principles relevant to the sentencing of young adults and a few cases in which principles relevant to the sentencing of children under the *Sentencing Act 1991* have been discussed by superior courts. A convenient starting point is the judgment of Batt JA in *R v Mills* [1998] 4 VR 235. The offender, who was 20½ at the time of the offence and 21 at the date of sentencing and had no prior convictions, was convicted of recklessly causing serious injury resulting from a 'glassing'. The trial judge had sentenced him to 18 months imprisonment with a 9 month non-parole period. The Court of Appeal allowed the appeal and sentenced him to be imprisoned for a term of 12 months with 8 months to be suspended for 3 years. In the leading judgment Batt JA made the following observations (at p.241) about the sentencing of youthful offenders-

"(i) Youth of an offender, particularly a first offender, should be a primary consideration for a sentencing court where that matter properly arises.

(ii) In the case of a youthful offender, rehabilitation is usually far more important than general deterrence. This is because punishment may in fact lead to further offending. Thus, for example, individualised treatment focussing on rehabilitation is to be preferred. (Rehabilitation benefits the community as well as the offender).

(iii) A youthful offender is not to be sent to adult prison if such a disposition can be avoided, especially if he is beginning to appreciate the effect of his past criminality. The benchmark of what is serious as justifying adult imprisonment may be quite high in the case of a youthful offender; and, where the offender has not previously been incarcerated, a shorter period of imprisonment may be justified. (This proposition is a particular application of the general principle expressed in s.5(4) of the Sentencing Act)."

In so holding, his Honour referred with approval to *R v Martin* [1973] VR 854; *R v Seymour* (1983) 5 Cr App R (S) 85 at 87; *R v Smith* (1988) 33 A Crim R 95 at 97; *R v G D P* (1991) 53 A Crim R 112 at 116; *R v Edwards* (1993) 67 A Crim R 486 at 489 (a very strong case, albeit that it was a Crown appeal); and *R v Misokka* [Court of Appeal, unreported, 09/11/1995] at pp.6-7 per Callaway JA and at pp.10-11 per Vincent AJA.

In *R v Le* [2009] VSCA 247 Coghlan AJA (with whom Ashley & Weinberg JJA agreed) applied R v Mills, saying at [21]:

“I am satisfied that the applicant should be treated as a youthful offender, and it follows that his rehabilitation should loom large in considering the appropriate sentence.”

In *Salapura v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 255 at [77] Whelan & Kyrou JJA said: “Ordinarily, the more youthful the offender, the greater the weight to be given to his or her rehabilitation.”

In *Balshaw v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 78 the 20 year old applicant (aged 18 at the time of offending) had pleaded guilty to 7 charges, including aggravated burglary x 2 and attempted aggravated burglary of cannabis crop houses and had been sentenced to IMP5y/2y10m. In granting leave to appeal and resentencing the applicant to 3y10m detention in a youth justice facility, Kaye & T Forrest JJA said at [57]: “In accordance with the principles outlined by Batt JA in *Mills*, in view of his youth, immaturity and lack of significant previous convictions, it was important that the appellant not be sent to an adult prison unless that disposition could not be avoided.” See also [2022] VSCA 34 at [19]-[23].

In *DPP v Monteiro* [2009] VSCA 105 the 26 year old respondent had been sentenced to 2y6m imprisonment on a count of intentionally causing serious injury and 21 months of the sentence was suspended for a period of 3 years. The circumstances of the offence were described pithily by Buchanan JA as “an unprovoked physical attack upon a man who had the misfortune to pass on the street and look at angry men affected by drugs and alcohol”. The Court of Appeal held that the sentence was manifestly inadequate but dismissed the appeal in the exercise of discretion. At [29] Buchanan JA, with whom Maxwell P & Nettle JA agreed, referred to dicta of Fox J in *R v Dixon* (1975) 22 ACTR 13, 19-20 in describing how prison was antithetical to rehabilitation:

“Generally prison does not provide an atmosphere conducive to rehabilitation. Prisoners’ lives are closely regulated. They have no real ability to adapt to society for they are isolated from the general community. Their neighbours are fellow criminals, some of whom are malicious and violent. Employment is limited. In the present case, the sentencing judge saw the rehabilitation of the respondent as significant. He was sending a young man to prison for the first time and may well have had in mind the likely adverse consequences of a lengthy gaol sentence. The prospects of the respondent’s rehabilitation may be reduced if he re-enters society when his aspiration of a reformed way of life has been eroded or ended by a lengthy exposure to prison life.”

In *DPP v Jason Thomas Roe* [2005] VSCA 178 the Court of Appeal dismissed a Director’s appeal against a sentence of 12 months imprisonment, to be served by way of intensive correction order, on a respondent aged 25 with an IQ in the region of 75-79 who had pleaded guilty to one count of armed robbery and one count of intentionally causing serious injury. He had 41 prior convictions and 10 previous findings of guilt, mostly related to offences of dishonesty but including one conviction for robbery in 2000 for which he was sentenced to 12 months’ imprisonment, 8 months of which was suspended. The offences were committed in the context of a heroin addiction against a fellow heroin user to whom the respondent had given $100 to provide heroin. In dismissing the appeal, Charles JA, with whom Vincent & Ashley JJA agreed, said at [15] & [17]:

[15] “As Eames JA said in the very recent appeal by the DPP in the matter of *Caine Michael Snell* [2005] VSCA 131 at [35], ‘the sentencing task is never more difficult than when a sentencing judge discerns a faint hope of rehabilitation with a youthful offender with multiple prior convictions, who stands yet again to be sentenced on serious offences’, an offender ‘who – unless rehabilitated – was likely to bedevil the community throughout what would no doubt be a shortened, and certainly wasted, lifetime of criminal behaviour interspersed with increased periods of imprisonment.’…

[17] Her Honour was entitled to place significant weight on the respondent's plea of guilty, relative youth, remorse, that he had spent almost seven months in custody, his successful participation in Teen Challenge, that he had not thereafter relapsed into heroin use or re-offending, his interaction with Mr Winther and obtaining of employment, all of which led her Honour to the view that he has ‘good rehabilitative prospects and the community is best served by your continuation on that path’”.

However in *DPP v Lawrence* (2004) 10 VR 125 at 132; [2004] VSCA 154 - a case in which a 20 year old male with prior convictions for violence had been found guilty of intentionally causing serious injury in circumstances where, while intoxicated, he had engaged in a wantonly violent attack employing kicking and bottles - Batt JA said at [22]:

“[W]ith an offence as serious as intentionally causing serious injury and particularly with an instance of it as grave as this one, the offender's youthfulness and rehabilitation, achieved and prospective, whilst not irrelevant in the instinctive synthesis which the sentencing judge must make, were of much less significance than they would have been with a less serious offence. As has been said, youth and rehabilitation must be subjugated to other considerations. They must, as the President said in *Wright* [1998] VSCA 84 at [6], take a ‘back seat’ to specific and general deterrence where crimes of wanton and unprovoked viciousness (of which the present is an example) are involved, particularly where (again as here) the perpetrator has been given previous chances to control his aggressive habits. This is because the offending is of such a nature and so prevalent that general deterrence, specific deterrence and denunciation of the conduct must be emphasised. There is a particular reason why, with this offence, youthfulness of an offender cannot be of much significance. This is that, as this very case exemplifies, the persons who commit the offence and wreak appalling injuries, very often by kicking and stomping upon their prone or supine victims, are predominantly youths and young men acting under the influence of alcohol or drugs or both. Here, the respondent was in any event only on the borderline of youthfulness and moreover was not by any means a first offender.”

This dicta was approved and applied by the Court of Appeal in *R v John Likiardopoulos* [2010] VSCA 344 at [173]. In *DPP v Avci* [2008] VSCA 256 at [52] Maxwell P (with whom Buchanan & Redlich JJA agreed) approved the general proposition from Batt JA in *R v Mills* [1998] 4 VR 235, 241 that “in the case of a youthful offender, rehabilitation is usually far more important than general deterrence” but also applied *DPP v Lawrence* (2004) 10 VR 125 at [22] in holding that the gravity of the offending (7 rapes of 4 females) meant that youth and rehabilitation had to be “subjugated to other considerations”.

In *Vassallo v The King* [2025] VSCA 7 the appellant was between 22 & 24 years of age when he committed the offences of rape (x2), false imprisonment (x2), supply a drug of dependence to a child, kidnapping and conduct endangering persons. In discussing the relative youth of the appellant, the Court of Appeal (Priest & Kaye JJA) said at [90]-[91]:

[90] “…While the applicant was young, he was, nevertheless, significantly older and more mature than his two victims. As we have noted, the applicant was a young adult; by contrast, his two victims were young adolescents. There was a patent and significant age discrepancy between the applicant and his two vulnerable victims.

[91] Secondly, while, ordinarily, the youth of an offender may be a mitigating factor, it is recognised that, as the level of the seriousness of the criminality of the offender increases, there will be a corresponding reduction in the mitigating effects of the offender’s youth: *Azzopardi v The Queen* (2011) 35 VR 43, 57 [44]; *DPP (Cth) v MHK (a pseudonym)* (2017) 52 VR 272, 289 [56]; [2017] VSCA 157. Similarly, where the offence is one which is commonly committed by young offenders, the youth of the offender in question may need to be accorded less weight as a mitigating factor, in order to ensure that the sentencing principles of general deterrence and specific deterrence are given appropriate weight: *DPP v Lawrence* (2004) 10 VR 125, 132-133; [2004] VSCA 154.”

In *R v Hatfield* [2004] VSCA 195 at [11] Chernov JA, with whom Vincent JA & Gillard AJA agreed, said:

"It may be accepted that, ordinarily, an offender's youth is a very powerful mitigating circumstance that calls for rehabilitation to be in the forefront of the factors that govern the sentencing disposition. But it should be said that the offender's youth and the prospect of rehabilitation may be overriden by other sentencing considerations that point to the need to impose a custodial sentence. The weight to be given to youth as a mitigating factor must depend on the circumstances of the case. Thus, in *R. v. Mills* [1998] 4 VR 235 Batt JA pointed out that the youth of an offender is '***a* primary consideration**' (my emphasis) for sentencing purposes and in *R. v. Bell* [1999] VSCA 223 the same learned judge again emphasised (at [14]) that the general propositions stated in *Mills* about the significance of the youth of the offender for sentencing purposes "are just that - general propositions". See also *Director of Public Prosecutions v. SJK* [2002] VSCA 131 at [60] per Phillips CJ, Chernov & Vincent JJA. And in *R v Teichelman* Batt JA, with whom Phillips CJ and Buchanan JA agreed, noted (at [20]) that, notwithstanding that the youth of an offender is a powerful mitigating factor, it may, in the face of other powerful considerations, be subjugated to other sentencing principles or purposes. For example, where general deterrence must be emphasised in the punishment of an offence, as, for example, in culpable driving, there may be correspondingly less scope for leniency on account of the offender's youth."

In *R v Angelopoulos* [2005] VSCA 258 the Court of Appeal allowed an appeal against a sentence of 30 months detention in YJC for offences of affray, intentionally causing serious injury, intentionally causing injury and possession of an unregistered firearm by a youthful offender who was aged 17 at the time of the offences and was 18 years 9 months at the time of sentence. The amendments to the CYPA caused by the *Children and Young Persons (Age Jurisdiction) Act 2004* increasing the jurisdiction of the Children’s Court to include 17 year old offenders had been given assent but were not in operation at the time of sentencing. The appellant was re-sentenced to a total effective sentence of 18 months detention in YJC. The judgment of Eames JA, with whom Callaway & Buchanan JJA agreed, discusses a number of relevant issues:

* The sentencing judge had erred in not giving weight to the fact that the offender would have been a child had the age amendments been in operation at the time of sentence: per Callaway JA at [3]-[5] & Eames JA at [49]‑[57].
* Were it not for the judge’s error in relation to the age amendments, the aforementioned principles enunciated by Batt JA in *R v Mills* [1998] 4 VR 235 and in *DPP v Lawrence* (2004) 10 VR 125 at 132 “would have been entirely applicable”: per Eames JA at [44]-[47].
* It was inappropriate to decide whether general deterrence may be relevant to the sentencing of young offenders under the CYPA even though it is not specifically mentioned in s.139(1) [now s.362 of the CYFA]: per Callaway JA at [2]. See also per Eames JA at [56] after referring to the South Australian cases of *R v S* (1982) 31 SASR 263 & *R v Wilson* (1984) 35 SASR 200 and to the judgments of the Court of Appeal in *R v PP* [2003] VSCA 100 & *R v Evans* [2003] VSCA 223. Note: This has now been resolved in the negative: see *CNK v The Queen* [2011] VSCA 228.

In *DPP v Rose, DPP v Miller* [2005] VSCA 275, in dismissing a Director’s appeal, Nettle JA, with whom Maxwell P & Charles JA agreed, said at [29]:

“[T]his case threw up for the sentencing judge the very difficult task of balancing the imperatives of general deterrence and denunciation against the youth and prospects of rehabilitation of the respondents, bearing in mind the pivotal role which drug addiction played in each case, and thus the overall need to produce a sentencing synthesis tailored to the particular and special circumstances of each case. It is apparent if I may say so with respect that, consistently with the observations of Buchanan JA in *R. v. McKee and Brooks* [2003] VSCA 16 at [12]-[16] the sentencing judge paid particular regard to the age and antecedents of the respondents, the factors which led to their commission of the offences, and to the significant progress which each of them has made in beating their addiction and re-equipping themselves to play a constructive role upon their release back into society. His Honour thus produced sentences which in the exercise of his intuitive synthesis he considered to be best adapted to the circumstances of the offenders.”

In *R v Scott* [2012] VSC 514 at [26] – in sentencing a 20 year old offender to IMP8y6m/6y on a count of manslaughter by criminal negligence arising out of the driving of a motor car – Beach J also focussed on the balancing of deterrence and denunciation against the youth and rehabilitation of the accused:

“In the case of a youthful offender like you, rehabilitation is usually said to be more important than general deterrence because punishment may in fact lead to further offending. It is correctly said that the incarceration of a young person in the adult prison system, carrying as it does a real potential to cause damage of a kind for which both the offender and the community may pay dearly in the long term, should not be ordered unless the Court is satisfied that the powerful factors which have been accepted by the legislature and the courts as requiring and justifying the existence of a separate youth correctional system have been very clearly displaced in importance in favour of the adoption of a more punitive approach: *R v Misokka* [1995] VSC 215, per Vincent AJA. That said, in the circumstances of this case, the primacy of rehabilitation as a sentencing consideration must be moderated by the need for the Court to express the community’s denunciation of your criminal conduct and to deter you and others from engaging in similar conduct in the future: cf *DPP v Neethling* (2009) 22 VR 466, 477 [53]-[54].”

In *DPP v TY (No 3)* [2007] VSC 489 Bell J sentenced the 18 year old defendant to 12 years imprisonment with a non-parole period of 8 years in respect of a non-premeditated murder which he had committed at age 14 years 8 months. At [53]-[54] his Honour said that the degree of the defendant’s moral culpability was affected by his very young age and his intellectual, social and emotional immaturity. At [42]-[46] his Honour said:

[42] “The principles of sentencing provide that youth is a mitigating consideration of the first importance: *R v Kumar* (2002) 5 VR 193, 228; *R v Athuai* [2007] VSCA 2, [12]. There are two reasons for the approach of the courts in this regard…

[43] The first is that the immaturity of the offender may affect the court’s assessment of their moral culpability for the crime. A person as young as a child, while being criminally responsible, may lack the degree of insight, judgment and self-control that is possessed by an adult. As Phillips CJ and Chernov and Vincent JJA said in *DPP v SJK and GAS* [2002] VSCA 131 by ‘reason of the stage of development that an offender may have reached, he or she may not fully appreciate the seriousness and real consequences of the offending actions’, especially when the crime is committed on the ‘spur of the moment’, as many crimes committed by children are. The law recognises this in other ways. For example, the objective test in the law of negligence and of manslaughter by unlawful and dangerous act {*DPP v TY (No 2)* (2006) 14 VR 430, 434} takes account of youth. It does so, in the words of Kitto J in *McHale v Watson* (1966) 115 CLR 199 at 213 because children are different to adults when it comes to ‘things which pertain to foresight and prudence – experience, understanding of causes and effects, balance of judgment, thoughtfulness’.

[44] The second is that the community has a very strong interest in the rehabilitation of all offenders {*DPP v Tokava* [2006] VSCA 156 at [21]-[24]; *R v Detenamo* [2007] VSCA 160 at [27]}, but most especially young offenders {*R v Mills* [1998] 4 VR 235, 241-242; *R v Woodburn* [2002] VSC 72 at [18]-[22]; *R v Lam* [2005] VSC 495 at [8]; *DPP v McCloy* [2006] VSCA 99 at [59]; *DPP v Bridle* [2007] VSCA 173 at [10]; *DPP v Turnbull* [2007] VSCA 251 at [29]} which, in the case of the latter, is ‘one of the great objectives of the criminal law’: *R v Tran* (2002) 4 VR 457, 462. That objective may be achieved, depending on the circumstances, by a non-custodial sentence, which is by far the preferred course {*R v Misokka* (Unreported, Supreme Court of Victoria, Court of Appeal, Charles & Callaway JJA and Vincent AJA, 09/11/1995) at 10-11; *R v Mills* [1998] 4 VR 235, 241-242; *DPP v Tokava* [2006] VSCA 156 at [21]-[24]; *DPP v Bridle* [2007] VSCA 173 at [10]} or a sentence of youth detention rather than adult prison {*R v Woodburn*  [2002] VSC 72 at [19]; *R v Johns* [2003] VSC 415 at [33]; *R v PP* (2003) 142 A Crim R 369, 374; *DPP v Turnbull* [2007] VSCA 251 at [29]}, or, if a sentence of imprisonment is positively called for, one of shorter length than might otherwise be the case and, finally, by a shorter than usual non-parole period {*R v Nguyen* [2003] VSC 62 at [30]; *R v Perera* [2003] VSC 146 at [44]}.

[45] The application of these sentencing principles is very challenging when the crime committed by the young person is very serious. True, youth and rehabilitation remain mitigating considerations of the first importance {*R v Edwards* (1993) 67 A Crim R 486, 489; *R v Tipas* [2004] VSC 25 at [13]; *DPP v Reynolds and Ors* [2004] VSC 533 at [29]; *R v Athuai* [2007] VSCA 2 at [12]; *R v BTB* [2006] VSC 374 at [22]-[27]; *DPP v Bridle* [2007] VSCA 173 at [10]}. But, they may apply with less force in such cases, having regard to the enhanced significance of other considerations, such as general and specific deterrence {*R v Giles* [1999] VSCA 208 at [18]; *R v Tran* (2002) 4 VR 457, 462; *R v PP* (2003) 142 A Crim R 369, 375-376; *DPP v Lawrence* (2004) 10 VR 125, 132; *DPP v Angelopoulos*  [2005] VSCA 258 at [44]-[47]; *DPP v McCloy* [2006] VSCA 99 at [62]; *R v Nguyen* [2007] VSCA 165 at [42]-[44]} and the denunciation of the heinous nature of the crime. Thus, while rehabilitation will be of primary importance in the usual case, it is not the only objective of the criminal law and, when the crime is very serious, it may be displaced in favour of those other considerations {*R v Tran* (2002) 4 VR 457, 462; *R v Tipas* [2004] VSC 25 at [13], [18] & [23]; *DPP v Karipis* [2005] VSCA 119 at [13]}.

[46] Where the balance is to be struck in cases of serious crimes depends on the overall circumstances {*R v Ung* [2002] VSCA 101 at [29]*; R v Schneider* [2007] VSCA 103 at [15]-[17]}. For example, objectively the crime may be very grave, such as murder. In such cases, despite the youth of the offender, the sentence must reflect the gravity of the crime and not be disproportionately low {*R v Teichelman* [2000] VSCA 224 at [20]; *R v Giles* [1999] VSCA 208 at [20]; *R v Bell* (1999) 30 MVR 115 at [14]; *DPP v SJK and GAS* [2002] VSCA 131 at [61]-[62]; *R v GM* [2006] VSC 473 at [32]}. That, TY, applies to your case. Or it may appear that the young offender was behaving like an adult or had engaged in premeditated criminal activity, in which case they may have an adult-like degree of moral culpability {*R v JPD* [2001] VSC 204 at [15]-[16]; *R v PDJ* (2002) 7 VR 612, 629. That is not the case with you, TY. Or the young person may show no remorse, which may affect the court’s assessment of their prospects of rehabilitation {*R v Mills* [1984] 4 VR 235, 241; *DPP v SJK and GAS* [2002] VSCA 131, [66]; *DPP v Turnbull* [2007] VSC 251 at [29]}. I have already acknowledged your sincere remorse, TY. Overall, depending on the circumstances, the rehabilitation of a young offender, even in cases of serious crime, is a relevant sentencing consideration, but the scope for actual leniency of sentence on account of age is less {*DPP v SJK and GAS* [2002] VSCA 131, [65]; *R v Kumar* (2002) 5 VR 193, 228}. This is the main reason why, TY, despite you being aged only 14 years at the time, I must sentence you to a significant term of imprisonment for committing the crime.”

In *DPP v Turnbull* [2007] VSCA 251, in dismissing a DPP appeal against a sentence of 18 months detention in a YJC on a plea of guilty to one count of armed robbery and one count of intentionally causing serious injury, Nettle JA, with whom Maxwell P & Dodds-Streeton JA agreed, said at [29]:

“[A]uthority is clear that the incarceration of young persons in adult prison should be avoided if possible, for the obvious reason that an adult gaol has the potential to cause damage of a kind for which the offender and the community will pay dearly in the long run {*R v Misokka* (Unreported Victorian Supreme Court of Appeal, 9 November 1995) at [10]; *DPP v Tokava* [2006] 156 at [21]-[23]}. Hence, in most such cases rehabilitation remains the primary consideration, so long as there is a realistic chance of rehabilitation {*R v Mills* [1998] 4 VR 235, 241}.

In *DPP v Mourkakos* [2007] VSCA 312 the 18 year old respondent had been sentenced to imprisonment for 6 months & 2 weeks on a 7 count presentment including charges of intentionally causing injury, aggravated burglary and affray. A declaration was made that the 201 days for which he had been in custody was already served. On a second 4 count presentment including charges of intentionally causing injury and affray, the respondent was sentenced to a community-based order for 2 years. The Court of Appeal allowed a Director’s appeal and re-sentenced the respondent on the first presentment to imprisonment for 3 years but suspended for 2 years all but the 201 days which he had already served. However, the judgments of Maxwell P & Dodds-Streeton JA (with whom Nettle JA agreed) highlight the importance of rehabilitation as a factor in sentencing a youthful offender. At [2]-[3], Maxwell P endorsed the remarks of the sentencing judge to this effect:

“[T]here can be no doubt that the community has a strong interest in seeking to ensure that young people learn from their mistakes, even bad ones, and are given the opportunity to put them behind them and become law abiding and contributing members of the community. It is right for the individual young person and it is right for the community. Rehabilitation therefore is an important matter. Prison should be the disposition of last resort.”

At [41] Dodds-Streeton JA referred, without disapproval, to the submission of counsel for the respondent that “youth, of its nature, bespeaks hope of reclamation”. And at [46]-[51] her Honour referred with approval to the judgments of the Court of Appeal in *R v Mills* [1998] 4 VR 235; *R v Hatfield* [2004] VSCA 195 & *DPP v Tokava* [2006] VSCA 156.

See also:

* the judgment of the Court of Criminal Appeal in *R v McCormack* [1981] VR 104 where the Court said (at 110): "It is a grave step to decide to impose upon young men previously of good character, the potentially devastating and corrupting experience of a prison term.";
* the judgment of Osborn J in *R v EJC* [2008] VSC 474 where - in imposing a sentence of 3 years detention in a youth justice centre on a 17 year old found guilty of manslaughter arising from a fist fight – his Honour said at [51]: “I am satisfied that your prospects of rehabilitation are good and that conversely a custodial sentence in adult prison would be adverse to those prospects.”;
* the judgment of Maxwell P. in *DPP v Tokava* [2006] VSCA 156 at [24] where his Honour said: that “it would be unreal and artificial for sentencing courts to ignore the evidence about anti-social effects of time spent in gaol”;
* the judgments of the Court of Appeal in *R v Jones* [2000] VSCA 204, especially at [11]-[12] per Callaway JA;
* the sentencing remarks of Bongiorno J in *R v Louise Teresa Miller* [2002] VSC 456 at [9], of Habersberger J in *R v JH* [2006] VSC 201 at [13], of Lasry J in *R v Lovett* [2008] VSC 60 at [20]-[24] and of Coghlan J in *R v Strain* [2008] VSC 411 at [36] and *R v AO* [2009] VSC 13 at [47].
* the judgment of Nettle J in *R v PP* [2002] VSC 578 (young person aged 16 found guilty of manslaughter) where at [34] his Honour approved and applied the dicta of Batt JA in *R v Mills* and noted: "Something of that same sort of reasoning appears to lie behind the decision of the Court of Appeal in *R v Hill* [1996] 2 VR 496 at 501; see also His Honour's judgment in *R v Clappers & Teap* [2003] VSC 462 at [44];
* the judgment of the Court of Appeal in *R v PP* [2003] VSCA 100, allowing an appeal against the afore-mentioned judgment of Nettle J, where Callaway JA said at [8]:

"[C]ounsel initially submitted that a child should not be imprisoned except where that was necessary to protect the community or the child was 'evil'. He later conceded that an exception might have to be made for culpable driving causing death, because of its prevalence among young offenders and the importance of general deterrence, although he pointed out that there was no example of a 15 year-old offender being imprisoned for that offence. I do not accept the limitation for which counsel contended. There is no bright line distinction between evil children and others. What is required in every case is a sound discretionary judgment that gives appropriate weight, and usually great weight, to youthful immaturity, the better prospects that a young person has for rehabilitation and the desirability of keeping such offenders out of the adult prison system. Those considerations reinforce and complement the common law principle of parsimony and statutory provisions such as s.5(3) and (4) of the *Sentencing Act.*"

* the judgment of the Court of Appeal in *R v Huynh & Others* [2004] VSCA 128 at [47] where Eames JA - referring to *R v Mills* [1998] 4 VR 235 at 241-242 and *R v Giles* [1999] VSCA 208 - said: "Binh Pham had no relevant prior convictions and as a youthful first offender, and having pleaded guilty, the encouragement of rehabilitation was a factor of particular importance." See also [50] where the Court of Appeal referred with approval to *R v Thomas* [1999] VSCA 204 at [16] & *R v Harkness and Ors* [2001] VSCA 87 at [18]-[20];
* the judgment of Coldrey AJA in *R v Wilshaw and Lowe* [2001] VSCA 35 where, upholding the appeal, the Court of Appeal held that the youth of the appellants had not been given sufficient weight by the trial judge;
* the judgment of the Court of Appeal in *Jiaming Gui v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 273 at [18] where, in substituting a 12 month CCO for a 12 month YJC detention order on a charge of aggravated burglary, Priest & Weinberg JJA said:

“We note, however, that counsel for the applicant submitted that, given that the applicant was 18 years old at the time of the offence and 20 at the time of sentence, the principles outlined in *Mills* were relevant, so that rehabilitation was far more important in this case than general deterrence. The applicant was a ‘young offender’ within the meaning of s.3(1) of the Act. He was also a first offender, without prior convictions and of positive good character.”

See also the judgments of the Court of Appeal in *R v Wilshaw & Lowe* [2001] VSCA 35 at [43]-[48]; *R v Van Staveren* [2001] VSCA 41 at [11]; *R v Tooms* [2001] VSCA 144 at [35]-[36]; *R v Madiera* [2002] VSCA 5 at [37]-[38]; *R v Kumar* [2002] VSCA 139 at [130], [153] & [187]; *DPP v Whittaker* [2002] VSCA 162; *R v Buller* [2005] VSCA 184 at [10]-[11]; *R v Athuai* [2007] VSCA 2 at [12]; *R v Tien* [2007] VSCA 56; *R v Frost* [2007] VSCA 98 at [8]-[10]; *DPP v Bridle* [2007] VSCA 173 at [10]; *DPP v Samu* [2007] VSCA 191 at [8]-[9]; *R v Rosenow* [2007] VSCA 265 at [31]; *R v Schneider* [2007] VSCA 103 at [14]-[17]; *R v Rackley* [2007] VSCA 169 at [28]-[30]; *R v Awad* [2007] VSCA 299 at [12]-[15]; *R v Ozbec* [2008] VSCA 9 at [17]-[20]; *R v TG* [2008] VSCA 83 at [31]; *R v Keith Honkeong Chong* [2008] VSCA 119 at [1] & [4]-[5]; *R v Lay* [2008] VSCA 120 at [38]-[39]; *DPP v Dally* [2008] VSCA 173 at [13]-[14]; *DPP v Brooks* [2008] VSCA 253 at [23]; *DPP v Massey* [2008] VSCA 254 at [16]-[17]; *R v Morgan* [2008] VSCA 258 at [23]-[25]; *R v Bidmade* [2009] VSCA 90 at [15]-[16]; *R v O’Blein* [2009] VSCA 159 at [31]-[34]; *R v Malikovski* [2010] VSCA 130 at [31]; *R v* *Ashton* [2010] VSCA 329; *R v Taskiran; R v Nabalarua* [2011] VSCA 358 at [23]-[28]; *Ludwig v The Queen* [2015] VSCA 35 at [27]-[38]; *Le v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 299 at [28]-[29]; *Haberman v DPP* [2020] VSCA 286 at [68]-[70]; *Bergman (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 148 at [91]-[97]; *Jawahiri v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 287 at [22]-[23]; *Frecker v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 331 at [81]-[84] & [91]-[95]; *Laz v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 160 at [31]-[33].

A statement of principle similar to that of Batt JA in *R v Mills* is contained in the sentencing remarks of Bongiorno J in *R v Do and Tran* [2002] VSC 49 where his Honour said (at [25]) in relation to the offender Do who was aged 21 and had been found guilty of the offence of intentionally causing serious injury, the victim having been rendered paraplegic by the shocking offence:

"In sentencing you I am required to take into account your relative youth. Indeed, that fact must be a primary consideration in determining a sentence to be imposed. Rehabilitation of someone as young as you is usually far more important than any question of general deterrence. It benefits the community as well as the offender."

In *R v Nguyen & Deing* [2014] VSC 203 the two accused had been involved in a violent incident in which they had caused some less serious injuries to the victim who had also been stabbed 7 times by a coaccused. The DPP accepted that it was not open to say that either accused was responsible for or complicit in the stabbing of the victim. Both accused were aged 18 at the time of the offending and respectively 19 & 20 at the time of sentence. In sentencing them to community corrections orders on charges respectively of intentionally causing serious injury and intentionally causing injury, Crocuher J said at [35]:

“Whilst the seriousness of their offending and their prior and subsequent criminal histories reduced the weight to be accorded to their youth, I still regarded their youth and maximizing their chances of rehabilitation as important considerations in each case.”

In *R v McConkey [No 2]* [2004] VSCA 26 Eames JA - with whom Buchanan JA & Smith AJA agreed - said at [37] in justifying disparity between sentences imposed on a 19-year old & a 30-year old offender: "It is well settled that youth, and the prospects of rehabilitation it offers, is a factor of particular importance in sentencing."

However in *R v Giles* [1999] VSCA 208 at [20] Batt JA observed that the propositions he enunciated in *R v Mills* cannot be applied without qualification to cases of a very different nature. In *R v Bell* (1999) 30 MVR 115 at [14] His Honour made the same point:

"[I]t seems necessary to state again that the general propositions accepted in *R v Mills* are just that - general propositions. They are, as their terms show, not of universal or automatic application. True it is that they may apply not infrequently, but each case depends upon its own circumstances, including, it is to be noted, the circumstances of the offence as well as those of the offender."

In *R v Connolly* [2004] VSCA 24 Coldrey AJA - with whom Winneke P & Bongiorno AJA agreed - made a similar point:

"The Court of Appeal case of *R v Mills* [1998] 4 VR 235 is frequently cited in relation to young offenders... No doubt a sentencing court will endeavour to implement these principles as far as is possible in sentencing a youthful offender but they are not to be regarded as immutable. In the context of the variety of fact situations and offenders with which courts have to deal, such factors as the seriousness of the offence or offences committed (and the just punishment therefore), the need for deterrence (specific and general), the offender's prospects of rehabilitation and the need to protect the community may need to be reflected in the sentence imposed. This has been recognised in judicial statements in such cases as *R. v. Edwards* (1993) 57 A Crim R 486, *R. v. Missoka* (Court of Appeal, 9 November 1995), *R. v. Tran* (2002) 4 VR 457 and *R. v. PP* [2003] VSCA 100."

That having been said, the Court of Appeal did however reduce the sentence of the youthful offender (17 & 18 at the time of offending) with a "relatively innocuous" criminal record from 4½ years with a non-parole period of 3 years to 3 years with a non-parole period of 2 years on the ground of manifest excess. See also *R v Rongonui-Chase* [2004] VSCA 25 where an identically constituted Court of Appeal, referring to dicta of Callaway JA in *R v Tran* (2002) 4 VR 457, said at [42] & [43]: "The importance of rehabilitation in a youthful offender cannot be gainsaid but the principles enunciated in *R v Mills* are not immutable...It is perhaps trite to observe that the law is not, and cannot be, that regardless of the seriousness of the specific offences or the number and nature of the previous criminal convictions, a youthful offender cannot be sent to an adult prison."

In *R v PDJ* [2002] VSCA 211 the applicant (who was aged 16 at the time of the offence and 17 on the date of sentencing) had been found guilty of the brutal murder of an elderly female and was sentenced to imprisonment for 16 years with a non-parole period of 12 years. Dismissing his appeal against sentence, O'Bryan AJA (Chernov & Eames JJA concurring) referred to *R v Giles* and said at [81]-[83]:

"The judge commented, with justification I consider, that the applicant’s conduct was a very serious example of murder for which the maximum penalty is life imprisonment and indicating a high level of culpability. The judge said that the applicant appeared to have experienced little remorse. He was intent upon falsely inculpating other persons and exculpating himself.

The judge said he appreciated the applicant at age 17 years had many years ahead of him and that his eventual reintegration into society must be accorded great weight in determining an appropriate sentence. I am satisfied that the judge, being very experienced in criminal cases, particularly murder cases, gave proper weight to the matter of rehabilitation. It is impossible for a judge, who considers that a long sentence of imprisonment is called for, to foresee the future life of the offender. The age of the applicant was considered carefully in terms of a long period of incarceration. His Honour said, in effect, that had the offender been older the sentence would have been higher. There can be no doubt in my mind that conduct of the kind indulged in by the applicant cannot be significantly reduced because he is a youthful offender in the sense in which that expression is used in *R v Mills* [1998] 4 VR 235*.*  A youth who roams the streets at night, drinking alcohol, planning and participating in serious criminal activities, cannot rely upon his immaturity or lack of years when he is caught.

Sadly, with very serious offences such as murder, armed robbery and rape, the age of the offender is reducing to an alarming level. The youthful offender can no longer expect to trade on his or her youth in such cases for the elements of deterrence, condemnation and just punishment are significant matters: *R v Giles* [1999] VSCA 208."

In *DPP v SJK & GAS* [2002] VSCA 131, the Court of Appeal again emphasised that the propositions in *R v Mills* are no more than general propositions. In that case two boys, aged 16 & 15 at the time of the offences, had pleaded guilty to manslaughter of an elderly woman in her home in circumstances starkly described by the Court of Appeal at [69]: "[W]e are not aware of a manslaughter which has been accompanied by such a degree of callousness." They had each been sentenced to 6 years imprisonment with a non-parole period of 4 years. The Court of Appeal allowed a Director's appeal and increased the sentences to 9 years imprisonment with a non-parole period of 6 years. Special leave to appeal was granted by the High Court but the appeal was dismissed: *GAS v The Queen; SJK v The Queen* [2004] HCA 22. After referring to the afore-quoted dicta of Batt JA in *R v Mills,* the Court of Appeal said at [60]-[61] & [65]-[66]:

[60] "But as his Honour himself pointed out in that case, youth is '*a* primary consideration' (emphasis ours) for sentencing purposes and in *R v Bell* [1999] VSCA 223 the learned judge again emphasised (at [14]) that the general propositions accepted in *Mills* 'are just that - general propositions'.

[61] When youth is raised for sentencing considerations, the focus is usually placed upon the offender’s prospects of rehabilitation, but this is by no means the only basis upon which it assumes relevance. For at least a century, the attribution of criminal responsibility and the response in terms of the dispositions handed down upon offenders has increasingly reflected developing ideas and understandings concerning personal responsibility, moral culpability and accountability. In the case of young people, to some extent, the law incorporates an acknowledgment of aspects of immaturity. By reason of the stage of development that an offender may have reached, he or she may not fully appreciate the seriousness and real consequences of the offending actions. However, it does not follow that this is always the situation or that, as teenagers, offenders cannot be held appropriately accountable for their conduct in engaging in serious criminal activity."

[65] "These remarks are not intended to diminish in any way the considerable significance to be accorded to youth and rehabilitation as factors to be taken into account in the determination of the appropriate sentence to be imposed on a youthful offender. They are intended, however, to emphasize that these factors constitute only some of a number of matters that must be taken into account and that, even in the case of a young offender, there are occasions on which they must give way to the achievement of other objectives of the sentencing law.

[66] In this case, given the seriousness of the offence and of the offending and the lack of any real remorse shown by the respondents in relation to their crimes and given that there is little evidence to show that they have reasonable prospects of rehabilitation in the near future, the principles of general and specific deterrence and the need for the court to express denunciation of the crime assume considerable significance for sentencing purposes so that there is correspondingly less scope for leniency on account of the respondents’ youth. See *R. v. Sherpa* [2001] VSCA 145 at [11] per Callaway JA with whom Ormiston JA and O’Bryan AJA agreed."

In *R v Simpas & HR* [2008] VSC 222 at [44]-[46] King J distinguished *DPP v SJK & GAS* as a case with “many levels of depravity associated with the offence” and said: “The courts have consistently stated that for young offenders the primary focus should be rehabilitation.”

In *R v Teichelman* [2000] VSCA 224, Batt JA, while reiterating the importance of an offender’s youth and lack of prior convictions and prospects of rehabilitation, said at [20] that they may have to be subjugated to other sentencing principles in particular cases:

"Both *McCormack* [1981] VR 104 at 110 and *Misokka* [Court of Appeal, unreported, 09/11/1995 at pp.6-7 and especially at p.10] recognised that the principles [to] which reference was earlier made…may, in the face of powerful considerations, have to be subjugated to other sentencing principles or purposes. *R. v. Hill* (1982) 6 A Crim R 202, a rape case, provides an example of that. Moreover, whilst it may be that *R. v.Thompson* [Court of Appeal, unreported, 21/04/1998] (where there were two counts), *R.* *v. David John Wright* [1998] VSCA 84 and *R. v. Stevenson* [2000] VSCA 161furnish worse examples of the offence of intentionally causing serious injury than does this case, those cases do show that the offence is a very serious one in the sentencing for which general deterrence, sometimes coupled with just punishment or denunciation, will normally outweigh youth and prospects of rehabilitation and - where it exists - lack of prior convictions and require a prison sentence to be served."

In *R v Feretzanis* [2002] VSC 582 at [43] Nettle J noted that in keeping with the approach adopted in *Oldaker* [Court of Appeal, unreported, 25/09/1995], Batt JA in *R v Teichelman* had accepted that the welfare considerations to which he had adverted in *R v Mills* "will yield to the need for denunciation and deterrence in appropriate cases". However, an appeal was allowed in *Feretzanis' Case* [2003] VSCA 8, principally on the ground that Nettle J had not given adequate weight to the defendant's undertaking to give evidence against other gang members charged with murder and affray. At [27] Ormiston JA also noted: "One should be cautious, nevertheless, especially when dealing with a first offender, in concluding that a sentence of imprisonment is ordinarily the appropriate penalty for [affray]."

In *R v Nancarrow* [2010] VSCA 300 the sentencing judge had convicted and sentenced to 3y8m/2y2m imprisonment a young female who had pleaded guilty to one count of attempted armed robbery and one count of armed robbery. The armed robbery offence was committed whilst on bail for the attempted armed robbery. The appellant was aged 19 at the time of the offences and 20 at the time of sentence. She had numerous prior convictions. By majority her appeal was dismissed. At [18]-[20] Hansen JA (with whom Ross AJA agreed) discussed the operation of *Mills’ Case* and dicta of Maxwell P in *R v Wyley* [2009] VSCA 17:

[18] “As has often been pointed out, *Mills* is not authority for the proposition that in the case of youthful offenders, rehabilitation is invariably the overriding factor in sentencing. As Maxwell P said in *Wyley* at [19]-[20]:

‘… what *Mills* did, in my respectful opinion, was to draw attention to the great significance for sentencing of looking to the offender’s future, as well as to the past conduct for which the offender is being sentenced.

*Mills* constantly reminds sentencing courts, and this Court on appeal, that there is great public benefit in the rehabilitation of an offender and in maximising the prospect that the offender will carry on a law-abiding life in the future. But that consideration is not unique to young offenders. Nor is there any one correct answer as to how the balance is to be struck between that consideration and others which may point towards a period, or a longer period, of imprisonment, rather than a non-custodial sentence.’

[19] In short, the sentencing judge is required to balance conflicting considerations and determine the weight to be given to those considerations. That involves a value judgment, as there is no single correct sentence. Rather, there is a range in which the sentencing discretion can be lawfully exercised…

[20] Further, as the appellant’s counsel conceded, *Mills* sets out propositions of a general nature, the application of which is inherently fact dependent.”

In *R v Hennen* [2004] VSCA 42 the Court of Appeal, despite noting that the total effective sentence was particularly long having regard to the offender's age and the fact he had never before been sentenced to adult prison, nevertheless said at [24]:

"The primacy given to questions of rehabilitation in the case of youthful offenders by cases such as *Mills* must give way, in appropriate cases, to other sentencing considerations. In this case the appellant’s shocking criminal history which included prior convictions for robbery would have entitled the sentencing judge to displace the appellant’s prospects of rehabilitation from the prime position they might have held had the offences under consideration been committed by someone in the position of the appellant without such a history. The expression by the judge of his being more concerned with community protection than the appellant’s prospect of rehabilitation does not, per se, bespeak error."

See also *DPP v Byrnes* [2005] VSCA 63 at [8]; *R v Athuai* [2005] VSC 252 at [21]; *R v JED* [2007] VSC 348 at [38]-[42]; *DPP v Yeomans* [2011] VSCA 277 at [45]-[48]; *R v Tito* [2011] VSCA 303.

In *R v Sherpa* (2001) 34 MVR 345 the applicant who was 20 at the time of the offence, pleaded guilty to one count of culpable driving constituted by negligence. Though there were mitigating factors in addition to his youth which led the Court of Appeal to reduce by 2 years a sentence of 7 years imprisonment with a non-parole period of 5 years, the Court of Appeal said at [11]:

"General deterrence must usually be emphasised in the punishment of this offence and there is correspondingly less scope than in the case of some other crimes for leniency on account of an offender's youth. That does not mean that there is no scope for youth and concomitant prospects of rehabilitation to influence the disposition. Even if an immediate custodial sentence is warranted, as it almost always is, those factors may still have a bearing on the kind of sentence to be imposed (in particular the choice between imprisonment and youth training where the latter is a realistic option), the length of the sentence and the time that must necessarily be served. But it is not to be forgotten that a life has been lost."

In *R v Toombs* (2001) 34 MVR 509 the appellant had pleaded guilty to several offences including one count of culpable driving constituted by recklessness. Despite the appellant's youth the Court of Appeal affirmed a sentence of 6 years' imprisonment on this count, O'Bryan AJA - in the leading judgment - applying at [35]-[36] the above passage from *R v Sherpa*.

In *R v Tran* (2002) 4 VR 457 at [11] Callaway JA - with whom Buchanan & Vincent JJA agreed - said of the above two cases involving youth and culpable driving that they "state the principle and illustrate what might be called 'the supremacy of the facts'." At [14]-[15] His Honour said:

"The rehabilitation of youthful offenders, where practicable, is one of the great objectives of the criminal law, but it is not its only objective. It is not difficult to cite cases where other objectives have had to prevail. It is true that, in the case of a youthful offender, rehabilitation is *usually* far more important than general deterrence [the second proposition in *R v Mills* at 241 which is well supported by the authorities cited] but the word I have italicised is there to remind us that there are cases where just punishment, general deterrence or other sentencing objectives are at least equally important.

This is an example of such a case. An offender with previous findings of guilt of trafficking in and possession of heroin, driving [in a stolen car] in a criminally negligent fashion and under the influence of heroin to such an extent as to be incapable of having proper control over her vehicle, killed two young men and seriously injured four others. There were no exceptional mitigating factors and a lenient sentence was, for all practical purposes, out of the question...[T]he quite moderate sentences that were passed on the individual counts and the equally moderate directions for cumulation that were given took full account of the appellant's youth and prospects of rehabilitation. The non-parole period gave emphasis to the latter..."

This dicta of Callaway JA was referred to with approval by the Full Court in *DPP v Kosmidis* [2008] VSCA 66 at [27] per Forrest AJA, with whom Buchanan & Ashley JJA agreed.

In *R v Dudas* [2003] VSCA 131 at [8] the Court of Appeal drew a distinction between a youthful offender and a youthful first offender:

"True it may be that the appellant can be characterised as a youthful offender, but he was not a 'youthful first offender' of the type who has come under this Court's consideration in cases such as *Mills* and the cases which have followed *Mills*. True it is, also, that the appellant has not before been sentenced to a term in prison, but his Honour was entitled, in [our] opinion, to come to the view that the time for merciful dispositions was up in respect of this appellant, who had demonstrated a clear inclination not to 'mend his ways' and, indeed, had effectively been 'thumbing his nose' for some time at the opportunities which had been previously afforded to him to terminate his criminal activities and to put his obvious God-given talents to law-abiding pursuits."

In *R v Johns* [2003] VSC 415 a 19 year old accused was found guilty of manslaughter of an 18 year old by a tae-kwondo style kick to the head outside a hotel. He was 20 on the date of sentencing. Although Nettle J spoke strongly about the potentially negative effects of adult prison upon a young offender, His Honour did not consider that the maximum period of YJC detention available under the *Sentencing Act 1991* was adequate in the circumstances:

[33] "I need no persuading that the effects of adult prison upon a young offender are to be avoided if at all possible. As a matter of common sense it is obvious, and as a matter of authority, in *R v Mills* [1998] 4 VR 235 at 241-2 the Court of Appeal remarked that youth of an offender for sentencing purposes is a primary consideration and that in the case of a youthful offender rehabilitation is usually far more important than general deterrence. As the Court observed, punishment may in fact lead to further offending, and therefore, individualised treatment focusing on rehabilitation is often to be preferred, and where the offender has not previously been incarcerated, a shorter period of imprisonment may be justified. As a rule, therefore, a youthful offender is not to be sent to an adult prison if such a disposition can be avoided, especially if he is beginning to appreciate the effect of his past criminality or, to put it as counsel did in submissions on your behalf, the benchmark of what is sufficiently serious to justify adult prison in the case of a youthful offender may be quite high. See also *R v Hill* [1996] 2 VR 496 at 501.

[34] But all that having been said, I do not consider that a youth training centre order is appropriate in this case. The maximum period for which I could sentence you to be detained in a youth training centre would be three years [*Sentencing Act 1991*, s.32(3)] and, although current sentencing practices dictated by the Court of Appeal are to treat young offenders with remarkable leniency, even for offences as grave as that which you have committed [see *R v PP* [2003] VSCA 100], I do not consider that a head sentence of three years detention should be regarded as near to adequate. The period could perhaps be increased in effect to as much as four and a half years, by making an order under s. 35(1) of the *Sentencing Act* that your pre-sentence detention not be reckoned as a period of detention already served under the sentence [*R v Hill* [1996] at 505]. But in my judgment even that length of time would fall considerably short of what is required. Of course, it will be open to the Adult Parole Board to order that you be transferred from prison to a youth training centre pursuant to s. 244 of the *Children and Young Persons Act 1989*,and in those circumstancesI propose to forward the relevant papers to the Board for their consideration. But any decision of that kind is a matter entirely for the Board, when and if they choose to make it…

[37] In the result, I sentence you to six years imprisonment. I fix a period of three years and six months as the period you must serve before becoming eligible for parole."

In *R v PSJ* [2004] VSC 502 a 16 year old offender with adjustment and obsessive compulsive disorders had pleaded guilty to one count of intentionally causing serious injury by stabbing a housemate 17 times with a knife. There was no issue between the parties that the young offender should be sentenced to a term of 3 years detention in a youth justice centre, the maximum period of detention allowed by s.32(3) of the *Sentencing Act 1991*. The issue was whether or not it was open to the court to provide that the period of 312 days for which the offender had been on remand could or should be reckoned as already served pursuant to s.35(1). After discussing the cases of *R v Gilbert* [unreported, Supreme Court Victoria, 16/09/1994] and *R v Hill* [1996] 2 VR 496 at 505, Redlich J held at [35] that although he had power to make an order for an effective term of detention of almost 4 years, that would not be an appropriate order having regard to the circumstances of the offence and the mental condition, age and prospects of rehabilitation of the offender. At [34] His Honour said to PSJ:

"In considering what course I should adopt, I have borne in mind that in the case of a young offender there can hardly ever be any conflict between the public interest and that of the offender. The public can have no greater interest than that you should become a good citizen. The difficult task for the court is to determine what treatment gives you the best chance of realising that objective. Rehabilitation is the dominant consideration: *C (a child)* *v R* (1995) 83 A Crim R 561; *MacKenzie & Nicholson* *v R (*1984) 13 A Crim R 330."

In *DPP v Muliaina* [2005] VSCA 13 the 21 year old respondent had pleaded guilty to 11 counts involving aggravated burglary, false imprisonment, rape and brutal assaults on his former de facto wife and had been sentenced to a total of 4 years imprisonment with a non-parole period of 2 years. The Court of Appeal allowed a Director’s appeal, holding that the sentencing judge had given undue weight to the respondent’s youth and insufficient weight to the principles of general and specific deterrence. At [24] Chernov JA (with whom Winneke P & Charles JA agreed) said:

“It may be accepted that, ordinarily, an offender's youth is a very powerful mitigating circumstance that calls for rehabilitation to be in the forefront of the factors that govern the sentencing disposition. But it should be said that the offender's youth and the prospects of rehabilitation may be overridden, at least to a significant extent, by other sentencing considerations that point to the need to impose a substantial custodial sentence. The weight to be given to youth as a mitigating factor must depend on all the circumstances of the case. Thus, in *R v Mills* at 241-242, Batt JA accepted that the youth of the offender is *a* primary consideration (my emphasis) for sentencing purposes, and in *R. v. Bell* [1999] VSCA 223 the same learned judge again emphasised {at [14]; see also *DPP v SJK* [2002] VSCA 131 at [60] per Phillips CJ, Chernov and Vincent JJA, and *Lawrence*}, that the general propositions stated in *Mills* about the significance of youth of the offender for sentencing purposes ‘are just that - general propositions’. In *R v Teichelman* [2000] VSC 224 at [20] Batt JA, with whom Phillips CJ and Buchanan JA agreed, noted that, notwithstanding that the youth of an offender is a powerful mitigating factor, it may, in the face of other powerful considerations, be subjugated to other sentencing principles or purposes. For example, where general deterrence must be emphasised in the punishment of an offence, as here, there may be correspondingly less scope for leniency on account of the offender's youth: *R. v. Hatfield* [2004] VSCA 195 at [11] per Chernov JA. I consider that this is particularly so in a case such as the present where, notwithstanding the anger of the respondent, he must have been fully aware of the nature of his offending conduct.”

In *Makieng v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 52 the 18 year old offender had pleaded guilty to charges of aggravated home invasion [IMP 5y2m] and armed robbery [IMP 4y/14m cumulation] and had been sentenced to a TES IMP 6y4m/3y9m. Holding that the sentence was not manifestly excessive, the Court of Appeal described the offending as “outrageous and disturbing in its audacity”. At [44]-[45] Priest & Kyrou JJA said [emphasis added]:

“In the course of their submissions (both written and oral), the applicant’s counsel unsurprisingly placed a degree of emphasis upon his youth.  With respect to that, the authorities recognise that the youth of an offender, particularly a first offender — which the applicant is not — is often a primary sentencing consideration, so that rehabilitation in the case of a youthful offender often deserves more prominence in the sentencing task than general deterrence: *R v Mills* [1998] 4 VR 235, 241(Batt JA). The authorities also make clear, however, that in cases involving serious violence, whilst an offender’s youthfulness and rehabilitation — both achieved and prospective — are not irrelevant in the exercise of the sentencing discretion, they are of much less significance than in cases of less serious offending.  Youth and rehabilitation must be subjugated to other considerations. Indeed, they must take a ‘back seat’ to specific and general deterrence in cases of violent offending [see *R v Wright* [1998] VSCA 84, [6] (Winneke P)], particularly where — as has the applicant — an offender has previously been given opportunities to reform. That is because offending of the kind perpetrated by the applicant is so prevalent that general deterrence, specific deterrence and denunciation must be emphasised: *DPP v Lawrence* (2004) 10 VR 125, 132 [22] (Batt JA). Plainly, in the circumstances of the present offences and the present applicant, his youth must be of reduced significance. **That does not mean that there is no scope for his youth to influence the sentence — youth will continue to have a bearing on the type and length of any sentence imposed — but it will not have the same significance as in less serious cases.**

In the present case, the applicant’s offending is aggravated by the fact that he was on bail and youth parole at the time.”

In *Siilata v The Queen* [2019] VSCA the young offender was 18 years old at the time of the offence and 19 at the time of being sentenced to IMP 7y on a charge of aggravated carjacking. In refusing leave to appeal, the Court of Appeal said at [31]:

“True it is that the applicant was young but, as the cases make plain, the more serious the offending, the more the mitigating effect of youth diminishes: *Azzopardi v The Queen* (2011) 35 VR 43,55-56 [37]-[40]; *DPP v Lawrence* (2004) 10 VR 125, 132 [22]. Denunciation, general and specific deterrence must have greater emphasis as the seriousness of the offence increases: *Azzopardi* (2011) 35 VR 43, 55-56 [37]-[40]; *Lawrence* (2004) 10 VR 125, 132 [22]. That must be so in this case.”

In *DPP v Elliott & Fares (Sentence)* [2022] VSC 554 E [18¼YO at time of offence] & F [21¾YO at time of offence] were found guilty of a ‘drive by’ shooting at the ‘Love Machine’ night club in Prahran in which 4 shots were fired with intention to kill. F was the driver and E was the shooter. Two persons were killed and three suffered serious injury. In sentencing E to TES IMP life/29y & F to TES IMP life/27y, Tinney J said at [84] & [89]:

[84] “A long line of authority dictates that the youthfulness of an offender may be a primary consideration in sentencing, and that in such a case, rehabilitation is usually far more important than general deterrence: *R v Mills* [1998] 4 VR 235. That is not always the case, however, and the law has recognised that there will be cases in which factors such as youth and rehabilitation would take a ‘back seat’ to other sentencing considerations: *R v Wright* [1998] VSCA 84 [6]; *Director of Public Prosecutions v Lawrence* (2004) 10 VR 125 [60].”

[89] “In the case of each of you, whilst the mitigatory significance of your youth at the time of your crimes and now is not entirely extinguished, the extreme gravity of your offending – conceded by your counsel – means that your youth has much less of a part to play in sentence than would usually be the case. It is clear that the sentencing objectives of deterrence, denunciation, just punishment and protection of the community must be very prominent in the sentencing calculus in each of your cases, and that the weight to be attached to your youth is correspondingly reduced. That is not to say that I disregard your youth. I still have regard to it. Indeed, as will become apparent when I turn to consider the question whether sentences of life imprisonment should be imposed, and how long any non-parole periods should be, it remains an important consideration in this case.”

F’s application for leave to appeal was refused: see *Fares v The King* [2024] VSCA 108.

In *R v Glenn* [2005] VSCA 31 Nettle JA (with whom Vincent JA agreed) said at [13]-[14]:

“Property invasion and assault occasioning injury are serious offences, even when they are committed by a youth of only 17 years of age, and it cannot be gainsaid that there is need for general deterrence of them. I am unable to accept that a suspended sentence of imprisonment of 15 months was manifestly excessive, even if it were stern. So to say is not to deny that rehabilitation is ordinarily the paramount consideration in the sentencing of young offenders, or that the incarceration of them in adult prison is to be avoided wherever possible. So much is well established by authority and it makes obvious sense: *R v Mills* [1998] 4 VR 235 at 241 per Batt JA cf. *R v Diss* [2002] VSCA 14 at [13] and [14] per Brooking JA. But where despite those considerations a judge is of the view that a sentence if imprisonment is necessary, then it must be imposed. For as Batt JA recently observed in *DPP v Lawrence* [2004] VSCA 154 at [16]*:*

‘…the general propositions in *R v Mills* were just that, general propositions, not of usual or automatic application. Each case depended on its own circumstances, including the circumstances of the offence as well as of the offender: *R v Bell* [1999] VSCA 223 at [14] and *R v Henne**n* [2004] VSCA 42 at [24] …’ ”

Cummins AJA dissented. He considered that the proper sentence below would have involved no conviction being recorded. He said at [31]-[34]:

“This appellant, in my view, is a decent young man with a worthwhile future. The question is whether it should be burdened, if not afflicted, for the rest of his life by one brief error of serious, but limited, physical character. Looking to principle, punishment is the first principle, and I consider the appellant has been punished already by his experience through the courts. The third principle is specific deterrence. I consider he needs no deterrence; he will deter himself. The fourth principle is rehabilitation. He will rehabilitate himself. It seems to me the only justification for imposing a sentence of imprisonment upon this young man is general deterrence, and the question arises whether his future should be sacrificed on that principle. In my view, unequivocally, it should not be. The necessary principle involved in imposing a sentence of suspended imprisonment is, as s.21(3) states, that ‘a court must not impose a suspended sentence of imprisonment unless the sentence of imprisonment, if unsuspended, would be appropriate in the circumstances having regard to the provisions of this Act.’…I consider it was not open to the judge below to impose a sentence of imprisonment upon a decent young man for one limited lapse in his life."

It is not easy to reconcile some of these cases. In *DPP v McCloy* [2006] VSCA 99 the divergence in counsels’ submissions illustrated the difficulty. The judgment of Ashley JA, with whom Warren CJ & Buchanan JA agreed, illustrates how the principles in *R v Mills* are to be reconciled with the other sentencing principles:

[58] “[T]here was a divergence in the submissions; counsel for the respondent would only accept that the importance of the *Mills* considerations were diluted when an offender’s prior criminal history showed that the offender was a doubtful prospect for rehabilitation. But counsel for the Director submitted that an offence might be intrinsically so serious as to dilute the importance of those considerations regardless whether the offender was shown to be a doubtful prospect for rehabilitation.

[59] In my opinion, the true position is not that contended for by either party. Rather, in the usual case, for reasons explained in *Mills*, the considerations there mentioned will be at the forefront when a young offender is to be sentenced. But any one of a series of circumstances may dictate a different approach in a particular case. I should give some examples.

[60] In respect of a particular offence, general deterrence may ordinarily be a predominant sentencing consideration. Thus, the offence of culpable driving, as to which see *R v Sherpa* (2001) 34 MVR 345 at [11] per Callaway JA*,* cited in *R v Toombs* (2001) 34 MVR 509and in *Tran* (2002) 4 VR 457 at 461-462. But there can be no inflexible rule. There may still be cases of culpable driving involving a young offender where prospect of rehabilitation is at the forefront of sentencing considerations.

[61] Again by way of example, in a particular case the circumstances of the offence, coupled with the offender’s past criminal history, may operate to deny the application of a sentencing regime which has rehabilitation as a consideration of first importance. *Huynh* [2004] VSCA 156 at [15], [17], [18] was such a case.

[62] Further again, in a particular case the circumstances of the offence, regardless that the offender does not have a past criminal history, may be so serious as to make considerations such as punishment, denunciation and deterrence – general and special – of prime importance. *DPP v SJK & GAS* [2002] VSCA 131 was such a matter. Neither offender had prior convictions, but each had participated in a very grave instance of the crime of manslaughter…*R v PDJ* [2002] VSCA 211 was also a matter falling into that category. The offence was murder...The observations [of the Court of Appeal] recognize the importance, in particular circumstances, of sentencing considerations other than those highlighted in *Mills*.”

In sentencing youthful offenders for murder, Redlich J had performed a similar reconciliation in *R v Cuong Quoc Lam & Ors* [2005] VSC 495 at [8]:

“It is universally accepted within common law countries that in the case of a youthful offender reformation remains an important consideration. Courts have recognised that a youthful offender is likely to be exposed to corrupting influences during a period of imprisonment which may entrench criminal ways which would defeat the very purpose for which punishment is imposed. A primary objective of the criminal justice system is to achieve crime prevention to protect the public. The rehabilitation of an offender should not be seen as a consideration inimical to that objective. Crime prevention to protect the public and the rehabilitation of the offender are interlinked objectives. In sentencing there is thus a broad public interest in taking into account the youth of the offender. Where the offence which has been committed is of a very serious nature that factor may have to yield to other sentencing considerations such as general deterrence. In such cases punishment, general deterrence and other sentencing objectives will assume a more important role and the rehabilitation of a youthful offender less significance. *DPP v Lawrence* (2004) 10 VR 125 at 132; *R v Angelopoulos* [2005] VSCA 258; *R v Ung* [2002] VSCA 101 per Eames JA at [18]-[30] & Callaway JA at [38]-[41]; *R v Misokka* (unreported, Victorian Court of Appeal, 09/11/1995 per Vincent AJA at [48]; *R v Pham & Ly* (1991) 55 A Crim R 128 per Lee CJ at 135.”

See also *R v Tuan Quoc Tran* [2006] VSC 352 at [15] per Harper J; *Mogoai & Another v The Queen* [2014] VSCA 219 at [13].

In *R v Azzopardi, R v Baltatzis, R v Gabriel* (2011) 35 VR 43; [2011] VSCA 372, the applicants, who were all aged 19 at the time of their offending, had engaged in persistent and grave criminal conduct, including multiple counts of armed robbery and of intentionally causing serious injury. All pleaded guilty. Azzopardi & Baltatzis pleaded guilty to 46 counts committed in 21 separate incidents on 11 different evenings over an 8 week period and involving 34 separate victims. Gabriel pleaded guilty to 10 counts committed in 5 separate incidents on the one evening. They were sentenced respectively to IMP 18y6m/13y6m, 16y6m/10y6m & 9y9m/6y. Their appeals principally raised the question whether the mitigating influence of their youth had been expunged because of the extent and seriousness of their criminality and whether, upon a proper understanding of the principle of totality, the imposition of lesser sentences was required. Their appeals were allowed and they were re-sentenced respectively to IMP 16y/10y6m, 12y/7y & 7y/4y.

At [34]-[36] Redlich JA (with whom Coghlan & Macaulay AJJA agreed) reiterated and expanded upon the considerations underlying the primacy of an offender’s youth as a sentencing consideration:

“Firstly, young offenders being immature are therefore ‘more prone to ill-considered or rash decisions’: *R v McGaffin* [2010] SASCFC 22, [69]. They ‘may lack the degree of insight, judgment and self-control that is possessed by an adult’: *DPP v TY (No 3)* (2007) 18 VR 241, 242. They may not fully appreciate the nature, seriousness and consequences of their criminal conduct. As Vincent JA explained in *Director of Public Prosecutions v SJK & GAS* [2002] VSCA 131 at [61]:

‘In the case of young people, to some extent, the law incorporates an acknowledgment of aspects of immaturity. By reason of the stage of development that an offender may have reached, he or she may not fully appreciate the seriousness and real consequences of the offending actions. However, it does not follow that this is always the situation or that, as teenagers, offenders cannot be held appropriately accountable for their conduct in engaging in serious criminal activity.’

Secondly, courts ‘recognize the potential for young offenders to be redeemed and rehabilitated’: *R v McGaffin* [2010] SASCFC 22, [69]. This potential exists because young offenders are typically still in a stage of mental and emotional development and may be more open to influences designed to positively change their behaviour than adults who have established patterns of anti-social behaviour. No doubt because of this potential, it has been stated that the rehabilitation of young offenders, ‘is one of the great objectives of the criminal law’: *R v Tran* (2002) 4 VR 457*,* 462. The added emphasis for the purposes of sentencing on realisation of a young offender’s potential to be rehabilitated is further justified because of the community’s interest in such rehabilitation {*DPP v TY (No 3)* (2007) 18 VR 241, 242; *R v Marshall* [2003] NSWSC 448, [15]}, not only at a theoretical level, but because the effective rehabilitation of a young offender protects the community from further offending. As stated in *R v Lam & Ors* [2005] VSC 495, [8]:

‘A primary objective of the criminal justice system is to achieve crime prevention to protect the public. The rehabilitation of an offender should not be seen as a consideration inimical to that objective. Crime prevention to protect the public and the rehabilitation of the offender are interlinked objectives. In sentencing there is thus a broad public interest in taking into account the youth of the offender.’

Thirdly, courts sentencing young offenders are cognizant that the effect of incarceration in an adult prison on a young offender will more likely impair, rather than improve, the offender’s prospects of successful rehabilitation: *R v McGaffin* [2010] SASCFC 22, [69]. While in prison a youthful offender is likely to be exposed to corrupting influences which may entrench in that young person criminal behaviour, thereby defeating the very purpose for which punishment is imposed: *R v Lam & Ors* [2005] VSC 495, [8]. Imprisonment for any substantial period carries with it the recognised risk that anti-social tendencies may be exacerbated. The likely detrimental effect of adult prison on a youthful offender has adverse flow-on consequences for the community: *R v Hatfield* [2004] VSCA 195, [10] (Chernov JA). As Fox J stated in *R v Dixon* (1975) 22 ACTR 13, 19–20:

‘The reasons are obvious enough: the prisoners are kept in unnatural, isolated conditions, their every activity is so strictly regulated and supervised that they have no opportunity to develop a sense of individual responsibility, they are deprived of any real opportunity to learn to live as members of society, their only companions are other criminals…

When, therefore, a court has to consider whether to send a young person to gaol for the first time, it has to take into account the likely adverse effects of a gaol sentence. A distinct possibility, particularly if the sentence is a long one, is that the person sent to gaol will come out more vicious, and distinctly more anti-social in thoughts and deed than when he went in. His own personality may well be permanently impaired in a serious degree. If he could be kept in gaol for the rest of his life, it might be possible to ignore the consequences to society, but he will re-enter society and often while still quite young. His new-found propensities then have to be reckoned with. A substantial minority of persons who serve medium or long gaol sentences soon offend again.’”

His Honour went on at [37]-[40] to discuss “the tension between the mitigating influence of an offender’s youth and the increased need for deterrence in the case of very serious violent offending” – in short the tension between the judgments of Batt JA in *R v Mills* [1998] 4 VR 235, 241 and *DPP v Lawrence* (2004) 10 VR 125, 132 – before concluding at [44]:

“The general propositions which flow from these authorities is that where the degree of criminality of the offences requires the sentencing objectives of deterrence, denunciation, just punishment and protection of the community to become more prominent in the sentencing calculus, the weight to be attached to youth is correspondingly reduced. As the level of seriousness of the criminality increases there will be a corresponding reduction in the mitigating effects of the offender’s youth: see also *IE v The Queen* (2008) 183 A Crim R 150 [16] (Latham J; Spigelman CJ and Hulme J agreeing). But only in the circumstances of the gravest criminal offending and where there is no realistic prospect of rehabilitation may the mitigatory consideration of youth be viewed as all but extinguished: cf. *DPP v Terrick* (2009) 24 VR 457,470-71.”

In *McLean v The King* [2023] VSCA 6 the applicant – aged 22 at the time of the appeal – had been sentenced to a TES IMP6y6m/4y on a plea of guilty to recklessly causing serious injury in 2019 [IMP5y] and to offences including amed robbery [IMP3y CUM6m] and intentionally causing injury [IMP3y CUM9m] in 2021. The circumstances of the “serious injury” were that the applicant punched the victim with a full force blow to the right side of his jaw causing the victim to fall backwards, striking the top of his head on the concrete footpath and resulting in the victim being unconscious for 8-9 minutes, suffering broken teeth, damage to his nose, pain, headaches and some ongoing consequences. Although describing the IMP5y sentence for the 2019 offence as “very stern”, the Court of Appeal (Niall & T Forrest JJA) refused leave to appeal. Citing the above dicta from *Azzopardi v The Queen* (2011) 35 VR 43 – Niall & T Forrest JJA said at [42]-[46] [emphasis added]:

[42] “It is plain that the applicant’s age was a highly relevant matter. His youth was relevant because the law generally recognises that young persons are more prone to rash behaviour lacking the self-control that comes with maturity, rehabilitation of young offenders is of central importance and incarceration in an adult prison is likely to impair rather than assist in rehabilitation.

[43] Not only was the applicant’s age important but it also made the sentencing exercise a very difficult one. Although the applicant’s age and immaturity went some way to explaining the offending they also meant that there was very little if any restraint on the applicant’s behaviour. In some cases, to give any significant weight to the age of the respondent, and thus diminish the gravity of the offending, the importance of general deterrence and the protection of the community, carries the risk of producing an entirely inadequate sentence.

[44] Given the gravity of the offending, the applicant’s significant criminal history and behaviour and the fact that the 2021 offending, which was serous in its own right, occurred when the applicant was on bail, it was open to the judge to moderate the mitigatory force of the applicant’s age. That said, we do not accept the applicant’s submission that the judge ‘substantially eliminated’ youth as a relevant factor. **The judge said that youth carries less weight than if the applicant were a first time offender or if the offending were less serious. In the circumstances of this case, there was no error in that approach.**

[45] The applicant has a bad criminal record. At the time of the 2019 assault, he had prior findings of guilt for recklessly causing serious injury and armed robbery. He had the opportunity for less punitive dispositions that did not involve incarceration but these did not prevent either the 2019 or 2021 offending. It is also of concern that, when on bail for a very serious assault, he committed a significant armed robbery and caused a terrible knife wound to the face of the victim. The applicant was not to be punished again for his prior offences, however the pattern of offending reveals a high level of immaturity and lack of self-control. **The resorting to high level violence, including with a weapon, makes the offending grave and counterbalances to some extent the mitigatory effects of youth.**

[46] In our opinion, the sentence for the 2019 offence was very stern but we are not persuaded that it was manifestly excessive so as to permit intervention by this Court. The sentences on the 2021 charges and in particular the armed robbery and intentionally casing injury charges were by no means severe and well within range. The knife wound to the victim’s face was particularly nasty. The orders for cumulation were moderate and took into account the undoubtedly high base.”

In *DPP v ST* [2023] VSC 49 the offender – who was aged 15 at the time of the offence and 18 at the time of sentence – had pleaded guilty to manslaughter. He had brandished a small knife during a group attack on a 15 year old victim resulting in a single fatal stab wound. The Crown could not exclude that the infliction of the stab wound may have been accidental. He had no prior criminal history and very good prospects of rehabilitation. In imposing a sentence of 2y YJC detention, Fox J said at [35] & [43]:

[35] “You were a child at the time of your offending, and you are now a young offender [Sentencing Act 1991 (Vic) s 3(1)] and only 18 years old. Your youth is a very important sentencing consideration. In particular, given your age, your rehabilitation is a more important aim than general deterrence. General deterrence is not irrelevant, but punishment that focuses on rehabilitation is to be preferred in your case, as it will benefit both you and the community. The courts have long recognised that there is great public benefit in rehabilitating a young offender, and maximising the prospect that they will go on to live a peaceful, productive and law-abiding life: *R v Mills* [1998] 4 VR 235, 235-236. Further, the law recognises that children may lack the foresight, insight, judgement and self-control that comes with adulthood, particularly where the crime is committed spontaneously. Young people are prone to ill-considered or rash decisions, and may not fully appreciate the nature, seriousness and consequences of their acts: *R v McGaffin* (2010) 206 A Crim R 188, 210 [69]. That said, the weight to be attached to youth correspondingly reduces as the level of seriousness of the criminality increases: *Azzopardi v The Queen* (2011) 35 VR 43, 57, [44].”

[43] “Your age at the time of the offending is relevant when assessing your moral culpability. Youth Justice found your offending occurred in the context of negative peer associations and a ‘lack of consequential thinking’. They also noted your young age at the time, and the ‘associated level of impressionability that likely would have been present’. Your young age reduces your moral culpability, not simply because you were 15 years old, but because, as I have stated, the courts recognise that young offenders, particularly children, are immature, impressionable and less likely to appreciate the gravity and consequences of their conduct. The Youth Justice report satisfies me that you were likely influenced by others, and you did not consider or appreciate the possible consequences of your actions on this afternoon.”

See also *R v Filippi, Kosterman and Vergados* [2011] VSCA 438 at [78] per Warren CJ with whom Nettle & Ashley JJA agreed; *Beau Buckley v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 138 {discussed in detail in **Part 11.21**}; *Gilmore (a pseudonym) v The King* [2024] VSCA 98 at [52]-[60].

In *DPP v Pan* [2022] VSCA 98 the Court of Appeal dismissed a DPP appeal against a sentence of IMP24y/16y imposed on a 22 year old man who at the age of 19 had fatally shot a childhood friend at close range with a shotgun. At [49] Priest, Niall & Emerton JJA said:

“In *Azzopardi*, Redlich JA brought together the principles that apply where a court is called on to sentence a young offender. Those principles are informed by a number of factors. In assessing the culpability of a young offender it is important to recognise that ‘the young and immature are more prone to ill-considered or rash decisions’ [*R v McGaffin* (2010) 206 A Crim R 188, 210 [69] (White J); [2010] SASCFC 22]; ‘may lack the degree of insight, judgment and self-control that is possessed by an adult’ [*DPP v TY [No 3]* (2007) 18 VR 241, 242 [43] (Bell J); [2007] VSC 489]; and may not fully appreciate the nature, seriousness and consequences of their criminal conduct [*Azzopardi* (2011) 35 VR 43, 53 [34] (Redlich JA); [2011] VSCA 372]. Secondly, rehabilitation and avoiding or reducing the adverse effects of incarceration in an adult prison will usually be a fundamental aspect in sentencing, serving both the interests of the offender and the community more broadly.”

In *Gommers v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 258 the 21 year old offender (22 at the date of sentencing) who had 16 prior convictions or findings of guilt from 4 appearances, 3 of which were in the Children’s Court, had been sentenced to a TES IMP 5y10m/4y on a consolidation of 24 charges. A sentence of IMP 3y was imposed on charge 1, intentionally cause injury, in circumstances in which the appellant shot the victim in the upper left thigh with a sawn-off .22 calibre rifle in the context of a demand for money that was allegedly owed to him. In refusing leave to appeal, Priest & Kaye JJA said at [45]-[47]:

“As to the applicant’s youth, counsel for the applicant contended that it was not adequately reflected in the sentence imposed on charge 1. Relying on *Azzopardi v The Queen* (2011) 35 VR 43, 53–6 [34]–[40] (Redlich JA), counsel reminded the Court of the principles that apply to the sentencing of youthful offenders. Counsel submitted that a youthful offender should not be sent to an adult prison if such a disposition could be avoided: *R v Mills* [1998] 4 VR 235, 241 (Batt JA). So much may be accepted. As we have indicated, however, the applicant’s offending represented a serious example of gratuitous violence.

It cannot be gainsaid that the youth of an offender — particularly a first offender — is often a primary consideration in sentencing, so that rehabilitation in the case of a youthful offender will often be more important than general deterrence. Given the seriousness of the offence, however, the applicant’s youth, and his prospects of rehabilitation, must to some extent be subjugated to other sentencing considerations, such as general deterrence. As Winneke ACJ said in *Wright* [1998] VSCA 84, [6] – see also *DPP v Lawrence* (2004) 10 VR 125, 132 [22] (Batt JA) – youth and rehabilitation must take a ‘back seat’ to specific and general deterrence ‘where crimes of wanton and unprovoked viciousness are involved’.

We are not persuaded that the sentence on charge 1 is outside the range of sentences open to the judge in the sound exercise of discretion. Indeed, we consider it to be proportionate to the seriousness of the applicant’s offending.”

In *R v Boland* [2007] VSCA 242 the Court of Appeal allowed an appeal against a sentence of 43 months imprisonment with a non-parole period of 24 months imposed on the appellant in respect of 8 counts of indecent assault committed by him on a person under the age of 16, the offences having been committed 24-29 years ago at times when the appellant was aged 14-19. At [16] Nettle JA, with whom Ashley & Dodds-Streeton JJA agreed, said:

“Decisions of this Court in *R v Nutter* (unreported, 08/11/1995, Charles & Callaway JJA & Vincent AJA) and *R v Better* [2003] VSCA 71 (Charles, Buchanan & Vinccent JJA) recognise that where offences which have been committed while an offender is a child or immature and are not prosecuted until many years after the event, there is good reason to mitigate penalty, or at least to do so where the offender has achieved a significant degree of rehabilitation and there has been no further offending. Although such an offender falls to be sentenced as an adult, common sense and fairness dictate that the assessment of the nature and gravity of the crime, and of the offender's moral culpability, take into account that what was done was done as a child, or as a person of immature years, and not as an adult or a person of greater maturity. Counsel for the appellant is also correct that general deterrence ordinarily has a lesser role to play in the sentencing of children and immature young people than in the case of mature adults, and that it is significant that the appellant has not re-offended in more than 24 years.”

The above dicta was applied by the Court of Appeal in *R v Miller* [2011] VSCA 143 at [67] and in *DPP (Cth) & DPP v Dylan Hutchison (a pseudonym)* [2018] VSCA 153 at [67].

In *DPP v Clifford* [2025] VSC 199 the 18 year old offender had entered an early guilty plea to manslaughter. He had stabbed the 40 year old victim seven times when confronted by the victim while searching inside the victim’s parked car. The offender has a severe traumatic brain injury as a result of a car accident enlivening *Verdins* principle 5. He also had a limited criminal history, genuine remorse, a drug and alcohol addiction and reasonable prospects of rehabilitation. In sentencing him to IMP8y6m/5y, Incerti J said at [54]-[56] in relation to the offender’s youth:

[54] “Your age is a relevant factor in sentencing you. You were 18 at the time of your offending; you are now 20.

[55] The law says that the youth of an offender should be a primary consideration for a sentencing court when the matter properly arises: *Azzopardi v The Queen* (2011) 35 VR 43. In the case of such an offender, rehabilitation is usually more important than general deterrence; that is because rehabilitation benefits the community as well as the offender.

[56] These principles, however, are not absolute. Due regard must be had in each case to other relevant matters, including the seriousness of the offending and whether there has been any prior offending. Generally speaking, the more serious the offending, the less weight to be attributed to youth. However, the mitigatory effect of youth will be extinguished only in circumstances of the gravest criminal offending, and where there is no realistic prospect of rehabilitation. Your youth is an especially important factor in this sentencing exercise.”

### **11.2.2 Children and young persons sentenced under the CYPA & CYFA**

There are few reported or unreported decisions of superior courts dealing with the sentencing of children and young persons under the *Children and Young Persons Act 1989* ['CYPA'] or the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* [‘CYFA’]. This is because such appeals as there are generally proceed by way of a hearing *de novo* in the County Court. In *H v R & Ors* [2008] VSC 369 at [72] Forrest J commented that that was only the second hearing in the Trial Division of the Supreme Court involving an appeal from the President of the Children’s Court.

In addition to the specific considerations listed in s.362(1) of the CYFA, one would expect the general principles enunciated in *R v Mills* to apply, *a fortiori*, to the sentencing of young offenders under the CYFA, the legislature having made no explicit mention in that Act of punishment, denunciation or deterrence (either specific or general), but rather having set out a series of sentencing principles predominantly based on a 'welfare' model.

In *H v R & Ors* [2008] VSC 369 at [11]-[13] Forrest J said:

“Considerations relevant to a sentence imposed under the CYFA are set out in s.362(1)…

The term ‘rehabilitation’, whilst not appearing within the section, nevertheless underpins those matters set out in s.362(1)(a) to (d). The principle of specific deterrence is incorporated within s.362(1)(g) of the Act; general deterrence is not a relevant sentencing principle: see *R v Angelopoulos* [2005] VSCA 258 at [52]–[56].

Section 360 of the Act then provides a raft of sentencing options open to a Court”.

In upholding the President’s sentence of 27 months’ detention in a youth justice centre for a number of serious and violent offences - including an armed robbery in which H had used a Stanley knife to slash the victim’s face inflicting a cut which penetrated the victim’s skull and ran from after his left eye down and across to behind his ear - Forrest J made the following points at [80]-[82]:

* the fact that H has a loving and strong relationship with his mother and that it would be desirable for him to live at home with his mother is counterbalanced by the fact that having been given a number of opportunities to live with his mother and to receive counselling at a fairly intense level, he still committed a very serious crime only eight days after he had been placed on his fifth youth supervision order;
* the possibly detrimental effects of H being detained in a youth justice centre for a relatively lengthy period needed to be balanced against his persisting and escalating criminality;
* a critical aspect in the sentencing of H, particularly given that at times he has shown an apparent lack of any real insight into his wrongdoing, is a need to ensure that he must bear responsibility for what he has done over the past two years;
* there was also a real need for public protection from the type of violent acts that H has perpetrated, which included two assaults requiring hospital treatment of his victims, the second of which was a vicious attack requiring surgical intervention.

In *CNK v The Queen* (2011) 32 VR 641; [2011] VSCA 228 the applicant came to be sentenced in the Supreme Court because he had been presented – along with a number of adult co-offenders – on a charge of attempted murder, in respect of which that Court has exclusive jurisdiction: see s.516 of the CYFA. Following his acquittal on that count, the charges of which the applicant was found guilty – namely aggravated burglary, kidnapping, recklessly causing serious injury and reckless conduct endangering serious injury – were all within the jurisdiction of the Children’s Court. The Court of Appeal said of this: “Circumstances like this will, doubtless, occur very infrequently.” On its face, the offending was extremely serious. In the company of his mother and uncle and an 18 year old associate (with his 19 year girlfriend) and a 15 year old associate, the applicant – who had just turned 15 and had no prior convictions – went to the home of the victim who was a long-time friend of his mother. All six offenders forced their way into the victim’s home. She was assaulted by the mother and uncle and with the assistance of the applicant and four of the co-accused she was forcefully abducted, overpowered and placed in the boot of the 19 year old’s car which was then driven to the Maribyrnong River. There she was forcibly removed from the boot and forced through the bush to the river. En route she was further assaulted and kicked. The applicant’s uncle then threw her into the river and pushed her head forcefully under the water on a number of occasions. The blows which caused the serious injury to the victim were struck by the uncle and the 18 year old associate. The sentencing judge found that the applicant had played “a significantly lesser role in the offending”.

In the unusual circumstances of the case the Court disagreed with the Crown submission that the Children’s Court might have decided that the charges were unsuitable to be determined summarily saying at [85]: “Having regard to the low level of the applicant’s culpability, there was nothing in the circumstances of the offending which would have attracted the ‘exceptional circumstances’ provision.” The Court continued at [86]-[87]:

“That being so, the applicant was entitled to be sentenced in accordance with the provisions of the CYFA, and subject to the limitations which it imposed. We are conscious that, by force of s.586 of the CYFA, when the Supreme Court sentences a child to detention in a youth justice centre the applicable maximum if 3 years, as set by s.32(3)(b) of the *Sentencing Act 1991*, not 2 years as set by s.413(2) of the CYFA. In the circumstances, however, the applicant was entitled to the benefit of the 2 year maximum. Any other result would have the effect of treating the applicant unequally with any other child in like circumstances, solely because he had been proceeded against, unsuccessfully, for attempted murder.

For these reasons, the submission of the prosecutor on the plea – that the full range of adult penalties was available – was erroneous, in our view. The prosecutor cited the decision of Coghlan J in *R v AO* [2009] VSC 13, but that was a case of manslaughter which, as explained earlier, raises entirely different considerations.”

The applicant had been sentenced to 3 years’ detention in a youth justice centre. Allowing his appeal, the Court of Appeal re-sentenced him to 194 days’ detention in a youth justice centre on each of the charges of aggravated burglary, kidnapping and recklessly causing serious injury and convicted him and placed him on an 18 month youth supervision order on the charge of reckless conduct endangering serious injury. Given time already served, this meant the applicant’s immediate release. At [70]-[75] the Court of Appeal said that had it been re-exercising the sentencing discretion as at the date of sentence (by which time the applicant had spent 96 days in custody), it would have released him on a YSO immediately based on the following considerations:

1. The applicant was a very young offender – barely 15 years old at the time – and very immature.
2. His behaviour was entirely reactive. He had not taken the initiative in any respect. He had followed the lead of his uncle and his mother, joining in an enterprise entirely initiated by them.
3. Once he was in the car, his ability to withdraw was limited.
4. The culpability of a young offender who gets drawn into something on which his mother and another close adult relative are embarking is very different from that of a young offender who, alone or in company, initiates a course of unlawful, violent activity: cf. *DPP v SJK* [2002] VSCA 131.
5. His role was minimal, his presence making no practical difference of any kind.
6. His prospects of rehabilitation were quite exceptional.

In *DPP v DDH* [unreported, County Court of Victoria, 10/11/2011] Judge Wood allowed a DPP appeal against a sentence of 12 months youth attendance order imposed on a 16 year old Aboriginal offender on charges of theft, intentionally cause injury, rape, armed robbery and recklessly cause injury committed over a period of 6 months. His Honour described the offending, particularly the rape and the armed robbery, committed at night and at knifepoint, as “shocking”. In imposing a sentence of 18 months detention in a youth justice centre his Honour said at [29]:

“I have concluded that your offending, which is serious in the case of the thefts and assaults but extremely serious in the circumstances of rape and armed robbery leaves the court with no alternative than to impose a sentence of immediate detention in a Youth Justice Centre. In so determining I have considered the sentencing hierarchy set out in section 360 of the *CYFA*. I do not find that the sentencing objectives set out in section 362 of that Act can be met by a Youth Attendance Order. – particularly paragraphs (e), (f) and (g) of subsection 1..”

See also *RAC v The Queen* [2011] VSCA 294.

### **11.2.3 Sentencing hierarchy**

In *Y v F* [2002] VSC 166, the appellant Y, who was aged 13, was charged with theft from a shop of a padlock and bike-lock valued at $16. He had no prior convictions, he had pleaded guilty and was placed on a good behaviour bond in the sum of $50 by the presiding Magistrate. Y's legal representative had urged the Court "to consider proving and dismissing a charge perhaps with a short undertaking to be of good behaviour”. The Magistrate said: " I'm prepared to put [Y] on a bond." Y’s legal representative replied that it was Y’s first time in court to which the Magistrate responded, "Well I understand that he has probably had a warning before he has come here". Y’s legal representative replied, "But that goes for everyone here so when would there ever be an undertaking in that situation." She then referred the Magistrate to s. 138 of the CYPA, stating that he had to consider why "a lower order would not be appropriate". The Magistrate then said, "Well it’s a theft which is a serious offence, an indictable offence. My view is that it would take something quite extraordinary to dismiss, find a charge proved and dismissed where it’s a theft." Upholding the appeal, McDonald J said (at [28]):

"[B]y so construing the provisions of s. 137(1)(a), (b) or (c) of the [CYPA] the presiding Magistrate qualified the capacity of the Court, in the exercise of its sentencing discretion, where a child had been found guilty of a theft and in substance so construed the Act that such sentencing dispositions would not be available to the Court in such a case unless there was 'something quite extraordinary'. Such construction of the provisions of s. 137(1)(a), (b) or (c) is not open on the clear language of s. 137 of the [CYPA]. In so construing those provisions the presiding Magistrate made an error of law. Further, I conclude that by reason of the presiding Magistrate wrongly so construing those statutory provisions, he did not have regard to the mandatory statutory direction as provided by s. 138 of the [CYPA]."

### **11.2.4 Factual basis of sentencing – Relevance of uncharged acts**

*R v Storey* [1998] 1 VR 359 was a decision of a Court of Appeal consisting of 5 judges. The majority (Winneke P, Brooking JA, Hayne JA & Southwell AJA) held (at p.368) that in sentencing it is not "appropriate or useful to ask which party bears an onus [of proof]. The question is, what is the standard of proof that is to be met and on what matters." Overruling the decision of the Court of Criminal Appeal in *R v Chamberlain* [1983] 2 VR 511 and disapproving in part the decision of the Court of Appeal in *R v Ali* [1996] 2 VR 49, the majority held (at pp.368-9) that there is no relevant distinction between circumstances of aggravation and circumstances of mitigation or between circumstances of the offence and circumstances of the offender. The relevant distinction is between facts adverse to the interests of the offender (adverse in the sense of being "likely to result in a more severe sentence than would otherwise be the case") and facts favourable to the offender. The majority concluded (at p.369) that

"the judge may not take facts into account in a way that is *adverse* to the interests of the accused unless those facts have been established beyond reasonable doubt. On the other hand, if there are circumstances which the judge proposes to take into account *in favour* of the accused, it is enough if those circumstances are proved on the balance of probabilities."

In *R v PP* [2002] VSC 578 at [26] Nettle J applied the aforementioned dicta from *R v Storey* and dicta from *R v Cheung* [2001] HCA 67 at [14] when he said to PP: "According to high authority, while there is no general requirement to sentence you on the view of the facts most favourable to you, it is required that facts which tell against you be proved beyond reasonable doubt." See also *R v Cain* [1974] VR 759 at 762; *R v Hill* [1979] VR 311 at 312; *R v Rumpf* [1988] VR 466, *R v Olbrich* (1999) 199 CLR 270; *Banda v DPP (Cth)* [2003] VSC 224 at [15]; *R v Saw* [2004] VSC 117 at [14]; *R v Mitchell* [2005] VSC 219 at [6]; *R v Lanteri* [2006] VSC 225 at [11]-[12]; *R v Healey* [2008] VSCA 132 at [39]-[51]; *R v Elias (Ruling)* [2011] VSC 405; *R v Formosa* [2012] VSCA 298 at [8]: *Director of Public Prosecutions v Devey (No 1)* [2020] VSC 826; *DPP v Ackerley (No 1)* [2021] VSC 189 at [53]; *R v Chee* [2021] VSC 355 at [6]-[7]; *Panourakis v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 259 at [45]-[55].

In *R v Storey* [1998] 1 VR 359 the majority also said at 371:

“Ordinarily, much of what is relied on in sentencing is not the subject of evidence given on the plea. Judges have always relied heavily on what is asserted from the bar table and we see no reason why that practice should not continue ... As we have said, judges can, and commonly do, act in such hearings on matters that are not proved by evidence that would be admissible at trial.”

In *R v Stratton* [2008] VSCA 130 at [3]-[4] Ashley JA [who formed the majority with Lasry AJA] said:

“[T]he learned sentencing judge was asked to sentence the appellant on the basis that he had simply presented the gun in [the deceased’s general] direction and [it had] discharged.’ It was implicit in this version of events that the appellant had not intentionally discharged the firearm. This was consistent with the weapon – which was never recovered - being described as having had a ‘hair trigger’.

It is not to the point whether the version of events upon which the learned judge was asked to sentence the appellant strains credulity. For it was the basis upon which the Crown, having accepted the appellant’s plea, presented the matter to the learned sentencing judge.”

In *Strbak v The Queen* [2020] HCA 10 at [1] the High Court (Kiefel CJ, Bell, Keane, Nettle & Edelman JJ) said of the questions raised by the appeal:

“Under the common law of Australia, on the trial of a criminal allegation (save in rare and exceptional circumstances), no adverse inference should be drawn by the jury (or the judge in a trial without a jury) from the fact that the accused did not give evidence: *RPS v The Queen* (2000) 199 CLR 620 at 632-633 [27]-[28] per Gaudron A-CJ, Gummow, Kirby and Hayne JJ; *Azzopardi v The Queen* (2001) 205 CLR 50 at 75 [68] per Gaudron, Gummow, Kirby and Hayne JJ; *Dyers v The Queen* (2002) 210 CLR 285 at 292 [9] per Gaudron and Hayne JJ, 305-306 [52] per Kirby J, 327-328 [120]-[121] per Callinan J. **The question raised by the appeal is whether the same stricture applies to the resolution of a dispute as to the facts constituting the offence in sentencing. If it does, a further question is whether that position is modified by s 132C of the *Evidence Act 1977* (Qld), which relevantly provides that, if an allegation of fact is not admitted or is challenged, the sentencing judge may act on the allegation if the judge is satisfied on the balance of probabilities that the allegation is true.”**

The High Court answered the questions respectively “Yes” and “No.” In answering the first question affirmatively the High Court said at [13] & [44]:

[13] “When sentencing an offender where there is a dispute as to the facts constituting the offence, the judge should not draw an adverse inference by reason of the offender's failure to give evidence save in the rare and exceptional circumstances explained in the joint reasons in *Azzopardi v The Queen*: (2001) 205 CLR 50 at 70 [52], 73 [61]-[62], 74 [64], 75 [68] per Gaudron, Gummow, Kirby and Hayne JJ; see also at 123 [210] per Callinan J.”

[44] “Notwithstanding his Honour's meticulous review of a large body of evidence, the determination of at least some contested facts adversely to the appellant took into account her failure to give sworn evidence at the sentence hearing. It is not suggested that the case is within the rare and exceptional category in which the trier of fact might properly take such a failure into account: *Azzopardi v The Queen* (2001) 205 CLR 50 at 75 [68] per Gaudron, Gummow, Kirby and Hayne JJ. It cannot be said that the findings respecting the appellant's callous failure to seek prompt treatment for Tyrell's arm injury and instances in which she subjected him to physical violence were not material to the ultimate conclusion that she inflicted the fatal injuries. In the circumstances, the appeal must be allowed.”

In answering the second question negatively the High Court said at [32]:

[32] “[W]here the prosecution seeks to have the court sentence on a factual basis that goes beyond the facts admitted by the plea, and which is disputed, it is incumbent on the prosecution to adduce evidence to establish that basis: *R v Olbrich* (1999) 199 CLR 270 at 281 [25]. Absent contrary statutory provision, the prosecution is required to prove matters on which it relies that are adverse to the interests of the offender to the criminal standard: *R v Olbrich* (1999) 199 CLR 270 at 281 [27] per Gleeson CJ, Gaudron, Hayne and Callinan JJ, citing *R v Storey* [1998] 1 VR 359 at 369 per Winneke P, Brooking and Hayne JJA and Southwell A-JA.. The adoption of the lesser, civil standard for proof of facts in sentencing under s 132C of the Act says nothing as to onus of proving a fact that is not admitted or is disputed.”

In *KMC v Director of Public Prosecutions (SA)* [2020] HCA 6, the High Court concluded at [34]: “The applicant was not sentenced on the basis of the facts most favourable to him. His sentencing was therefore contrary to what the law (as stated by *Chiro v The Queen* (2017) 260 CLR 425) required.”

In *R v Sa* [2004] VSCA 182 the appellant, a 28 year old Australian citizen of Samoan descent, had pleaded guilty to one count of aggravated burglary and one count of intentionally causing serious injury to his 47 year old cousin. In the course of his reasons the sentencing judge said:

"You have armed yourself with a machete and attacked a defenceless man from behind in his own home in front of children. There is a disturbing prevalence of offences of violence with these types of weapons in our community."

Counsel for the appellant submitted that the last sentence betrayed error in 2 ways. Firstly, that there was no evidence for the assertion that there was a prevalence of such behaviour with such weapons involving Samoan men. Secondly, that the judge did not put counsel on notice that he was having regard to the prevalence of such offending and thus the appellant was denied procedural fairness. The Court of Appeal rejected both submissions. At [29] & [31] Eames JA, with whom Callaway & Buchanan JJA agreed, said:

"[29] It is inappropriate for a sentencing judge to aggravate a sentence by reference to facts of which he or she has knowledge without giving counsel the opportunity to address and answer those facts, but that is not so when the facts are a matter of notoriety: see *R v Li* [1998] 1 VR 637. In such a case counsel should know, without being told, that such an adverse factor is likely to be taken into account: see *R v Downie & Dandy* [1998] 2 VR 517 at 523 per Callaway JA, with whom Phillips CJ & Batt JA agreed…

[31] The observation that there was a disturbing prevalence of use of such items as weapons highlighted a matter which is notorious within the criminal justice system and was therefore open to be made by the judge without being the subject of evidence. In my view, it was not an observation about which counsel needed to be forewarned, in particular because the use made of the factor by the judge was quite limited in scope. The judge did not suggest that use of machetes as a weapon was prevalent among Samoans. His Honour was, however, entitled by way of addressing the need for general deterrence, to warn anyone minded to use such weapons, whatever their cultural background and experience with machetes, that the courts would discourage such use."

In *Elsayed v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 113 the appellant submitted that the sentencing judge had erred by taking uncharged offending into account as an aggravating circumstance. Rejecting that submission, Kaye & Weinberg JJA said at [56]-[58]:

“In *De Simoni* (1981) 147 CLR 383 the offender pleaded guilty to a charge of robbery. The Criminal Code (WA) provided two penalties for the crime of robbery, with a more substantial penalty being prescribed for robbery accompanied by circumstances of aggravation. Wounding was defined as one of such circumstance. In sentencing the offender, the trial judge took into account, not only that violence was used in the course of the robbery, but that the victim was wounded as a consequence of that act of violence. The High Court (by a majority) held that although the trial judge was entitled to take into account the use of violence by the offender in commission of the offence, he was not entitled to take into account, as an aggravating factor, the wounding that was a consequence of it.

The relevant principle was stated by Gibbs CJ (with whom Mason and Murphy JJ agreed) at pp.389-392 as follows:

‘… the general principle that the sentence imposed on an offender should take account of all the circumstances of the offence is subject to a more fundamental and important principle, that no-one should be punished for an offence of which he has not been convicted…

The combined effect of the two principles, so far as it is relevant for present purposes, is that a judge, in imposing sentence, is entitled to consider all the conduct of the accused, including that which would aggravate the offence, but cannot take into account circumstances of aggravation which would have warranted a conviction for a more serious offence…It is not only in cases in which the offence has been accompanied by circumstances of aggravation that a trial judge may be required, in sentencing, to take an artificially restricted view of the facts. This will be so also in cases where the jury’s verdict is inconsistent with the view of the facts that the judge himself has formed, for the judge cannot act on a view of the facts which conflicts with the jury’s verdict. However, where the Crown has charged the offender with, or has accepted a plea of guilty to, an offence less serious than the facts warrant, it cannot rely, or ask the judge to rely, on the facts that would have rendered the offender liable to a more serious penalty.

See also *R v Teremoana* (1990) 54 SASR 30; *R v Birnie* (2002) 5 VR 426; *Semaan v The Queen* [2017] VSCA 261 [91]; *Rodriguez v DPP* (2013) 40 VR 436, 444 [27]-[29]; *R v Heblos* (2000) 117 A Crim R 49, 55 [33] (Eames AJA); *DPP v McMaster* (2008) 19 VR 191, 200 [41] (Ashley JA); *Pollard v The Queen* [2010] VSCA 156 [23]; *Alejandro Mendieta-Blanco v The Queen*; *Chey Tenenboim v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 265 at [22]-[24]; *Wilson v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 2 at [22]-[26]; *Dalais v The King* [2023] VSCA 195 at [60]-[68].

In *Elsayed’s Case* at [61] Kaye & Weinberg JJA also referred with approval to *R v Newman & Turnbull* (1997) 1 VR 146. The applicants had pleaded guilty to one charge of aggravated burglary and one charge of intentional and unlawful damage to property. In the course of the burglary Newman struck the householder with an axe handle and Turnbull joined in the attack. As a consequence, the victim suffered a broken nose and bruising. In his sentencing remarks the judge took into account that the two applicants had ‘launched quite a fearsome attack’ on the members of the household which was the subject of the aggravated burglary. The Court of Appeal held that by doing so the judge had gone beyond permissible limits in taking into account the serious assault in which each applicant had participated. At p.150 Winneke P said:

‘The common law principle that a person cannot be sentenced for an offence with which he has neither been charged nor convicted is a venerable one, but it is one which has created a tension with another equally venerable principle of sentencing; namely, that a sentencing judge is entitled, and indeed bound, to take into account all the circumstances which are relevant to the commission of the offence with which the prisoner has been charged. The latter principle however must, in the appropriate circumstances, give way to the former because it could never be consistent with fairness and justice to sentence a person for an offence with which he has not been charged or convicted.’”

In *Giri v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 64 the applicant – aged 18-20 and with a full scale IQ of 66 and Autism Spectrum Disorder – had pleaded guilty to sexual and other offending against 3 complainants aged 14 & 15. The applicant had disputed facts in the prosecution opening. Holding that the sentencing judge had erred in taking disputed facts into account, the Court of Appeal allowed the appeal, quashed the sentence of IMP12m + CCO2y and replaced it with IMP40d + CCO2y. At [21]-[26] Priest & Beach JJA said:

[21] “As a matter of principle, an accused person’s entry of a plea of guilty amounts to a formal confession of the existence of every ingredient necessary to constitute the relevant offence: *De Kruiff v Smith* [1971] VR 761, 765 (McInerney J); *R v D’Orta-Ekenaike* [1998] 2 VR 140, 146–7 (Winneke P); *Power v The Queen* (2014) 43 VR 261, 300–301 [169] (Priest JA). By the bare plea, the accused is taken to have admitted guilt of the charge, nothing more. Any dispute as to facts beyond the essential ingredients admitted by the plea must be resolved by the application of ordinary principles that apply in criminal cases. Thus, in *Chow v Director of Public Prosecutions* (1992) 28 NSWLR 593, Kirby P observed at 605:

‘Where an accused person has pleaded guilty, he or she is thereby taken to have admitted to guilt of the offence as charged ‘and nothing more’: see *R v Riley* [1896] 1 QB 309. In this State, that principle has been extended to an acceptance that the plea is to be taken as an admission of the ‘essential legal ingredients of the offence’. Any dispute as to matters beyond such ‘essential ingredients’ admitted by the plea, must be resolved by the application of ordinary legal principles appropriate to a criminal trial. … In this State, disputed facts must be established by accusatorial process; proved by sworn evidence and any doubt about them must be resolved in favour of the prisoner: see *R v O’Neill* [1979] 2 NSWLR 582 at 590; *R v Traiconi* (1990) 49 A Crim R 417 at 418; *Thompson v The Queen* [1973] Tas SR 78 at 91. … To go beyond the facts necessarily contained in the plea requires that any additional facts be admitted expressly or proved by admissible evidence: see *R v Scanlan* (1986) 21 A Crim R 428 at 432. This requirement must be observed because it is of the highest importance and ‘despite whatever inconvenience may be caused’: see Bray CJ in *Law v Deed* [1970] SASR 374 at 377. The rule applies as much to a case where the accused has pleaded guilty as to one where it is necessary for the sentencing judge to derive the conclusions of fact from a jury’s verdict of guilty following contested trial: see *R v Mordecai* (1985) 18 A Crim R 149…’

[22] Of course, the facts asserted in a Prosecution Opening may become evidence against a prisoner if he or she admits those facts: see *Evidence Act 2008*, s.184(1); *Power v The Queen* (2014) 43 VR 261, 277-8; *SLS v The Queen* (2014) 42 VR 64, 121. In the present case, however, whilst it is clear that the majority of what was alleged against him was admitted, the applicant actively disputed the three facts to which reference was made. …

[23] Axiomatically, if, for the purposes of sentencing, the prosecution seeks to rely on facts adverse to the interests of an offender, those facts must be proved beyond reasonable doubt. So much was made clear in *R v Storey* [1998] 1 VR 359, in which, after an extensive review of authority, Winneke P, Brooking and Hayne JJA and Southwell AJA said at 370‑1 [citations omitted]:

‘Having regard to the matters of principle we have mentioned and to the numerous authorities both in this country and elsewhere to which we were referred we consider that the principles to be applied are those which we have earlier identified, namely that the judge may not take facts into account in a way that is adverse to the interests of the accused unless those facts have been established beyond reasonable doubt but if there are circumstances which the judge proposes to take into account in favour of the accused, it is enough if those circumstances are proved on the balance of probabilities.’

[24] *Storey* was cited with approval by the High Court in *R v Olbrich* (1999) 199 CLR 270, 281. Furthermore, in *Strbak v The Queen* (2020) 267 CLR 494, the Court observed at 508 [citations omitted]:

‘A plea of guilty is the formal admission of each of the legal ingredients of the offence. For this reason, as the joint reasons in *R v Olbrich* explain, references to the onus of proof in the context of sentencing may be misleading if they are taken to suggest that some general issue is joined between prosecution and defence. Nonetheless, where the prosecution seeks to have the court sentence on a factual basis that goes beyond the facts admitted by the plea, and which is disputed, it is incumbent on the prosecution to adduce evidence to establish that basis. Absent contrary statutory provision, the prosecution is required to prove matters on which it relies that are adverse to the interests of the offender to the criminal standard.’

[25] The three disputed facts in this case were adverse to the interests of the applicant, in the sense that they tended to aggravate the seriousness of the admitted offence. Through his counsel, the applicant made it clear that they were challenged. Before the judge could take them into account, therefore, they needed to be established to the judge’s satisfaction beyond reasonable doubt. In order to be so satisfied, it was not open to the judge to act upon the bare plea of guilty, or the challenged parts of the Prosecution Summary. Thus, quite clearly, in circumstances in which the prosecution did not undertake the task of proving the three facts to the requisite standard by admissible evidence, the judge was not entitled to take them into account in a manner adverse to the applicant.

[26] We are persuaded that the judge’s sentencing reasons reveal, however, that he impermissibly took the disputed facts into account in a manner adverse to the interests of the applicant.”

### **11.2.5 Purpose of a Youth Justice Centre sentence [formerly YTC]**

In *R v Kenny* [Court of Criminal Appeal, unreported, 02/10/1978] Young CJ, with whom Starke & Marks JJ agreed, said: "The court…cannot in my view proceed upon the basis that a YTC is other than what it is said to be, namely a method of detaining young offenders with a view to training them for rehabilitation."

In *R v Vassalo & Tasioulas* [Court of Appeal, unreported, 07/05/1998] the appellants, aged just under 19 & just under 18 at the time of the offences and 19 & 18 on the day of sentencing, had pleaded guilty at the earliest opportunity in the County Court to one count of burglary (warehouse-breaking) and one count of theft of goods worth about $36,000 wholesale. Each was sentenced to 12 months detention in a YJC. In dismissing their appeals, Brooking JA said (at p.5):

Youth and good character and a plea of guilty and good prospects of rehabilitation do not confer immunity from a sentence of [YJC] detention, which, unlike a prison sentence is, after all, specifically designed to further rehabilitation. It will, from time to time, be quite appropriate to sentence a young first offender to a period of [YJC] detention."

However, in the judgment of the Court of Appeal in *R v PP* [2003] VSCA 100, Callaway JA, referring to a sentence of YJC detention imposed pursuant to the *Sentencing Act 1991*, said at [9]:

"Counsel was at first disposed to submit that the purpose of such a disposition was solely rehabilitation and that there was no element of deliberate punishment. Punishment, in the form of deprivation of liberty, was simply an incident of rehabilitation. I do not accept that submission. All or any of the purposes for which a sentence may be imposed, which are found in s.5(1) of the *Sentencing Act*, may be pursued by a sentence of detention in a youth training centre. It is true that there is much more emphasis on rehabilitation. In the end I think counsel agreed that the difference lies more in the weight to be given to the different purposes of sentencing. Deprivation of liberty is not a mere incident of rehabilitation. It is a punishment, intended as such as well as establishing conditions within which the offender's rehabilitation may be facilitated. There is no need to take the matter further for the purpose in hand."

The Children’s Court has no power to sentence a child or young person to a term of imprisonment. The most intrusive sentence that can be imposed under the CYFA is detention in a youth justice centre or a youth residential centre pursuant to ss.360(1)(i) / 360(1)(j). However, a child or young person sentenced by the County Court or the Supreme Court under the *Sentencing Act 1991* can be sentenced to a term of imprisonment or to detention in a youth justice centre. In *Bower v The King* [2024] VSCA 317 the 19 year old applicant (who was 18 at the time of offending, had a relevant history of offending and guarded prospects of rehabilitation and had been assessed as unsuitable for a YJC order) had been sentenced in the County Court to IMP3y on a charge of armed robbery. In refusing leave to appeal Macaulay JA discussed the purpose of a YJC order at [41]-[46]:

[41] “Under the [Sentencing] Act, a court can only make a YJC order for an offender who is, at the time of offending, at least 15 years old and no more than 21 years old: ss.3 & 32(2A). A YJC order is described in the Act as ‘confinement’ and ‘detention’; it is not a term of imprisonment: *Bradshaw v The Queen* [2017] VSCA 273, [54]. There is no minimum term under a YJC order, and all Youth Justice Centre inmates are immediately eligible for parole.

[42] It has been said that a YJC order is an ‘inherently less onerous sentence than a sentence of imprisonment to be served in an adult prison and it reflects the premium which the judge placed on rehabilitation’: *Gosland v The Queen* [2013] VSCA 269, [30]. In *Moresco v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 336 at [51] this Court said:

'[T]he applicant will serve his sentence, with other young inmates, in a Youth Justice Centre. Such an institution is, by its nature, also punitive, but its focus is on the development and rehabilitation of its detainees. Specifically, s 478(c) of the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* provides for the establishment of youth justice centres “for the care and welfare of persons” who are ordered to be detained under the *Sentencing Act 1991* or the *Crimes (Mental Impairment and Unfitness to be Tried) Act 1997*. Likewise, section 482(2)(a) of the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* provides that persons, who are detained in such a centre, “are entitled to have their developmental needs catered for”.

[43] Sections 32(1)-(2) of the [Sentencing] Act provide:

1. Subject to subsections (2A), (2B), (2C) and (2D), if a sentence involving confinement is justified in respect of a young offender a court may make a youth justice centre order or a youth residential centre order if it has received a pre-sentence report and—
2. it believes that there are reasonable prospects for the rehabilitation of the young offender; or
3. it believes that the young offender is particularly impressionable, immature or likely to be subjected to undesirable influences in an adult prison.
4. In determining whether to make a youth justice centre order or a youth residential centre order, a court must have regard to—
5. the nature of the offence; and
6. the age, character and past history of the young offender.

[44] Thus, s 32 permits, but does not require, a court to make a YJC order if the conditions enlivening the power to make one are met. But the conditions themselves point to the *purpose* of the exercise of the discretion.

[45] That purpose is apparent because such an order is appropriate (not mandatory) if an offender has reasonable prospects of rehabilitation or if, due to his or her impressionable nature, is likely to be subject to undesirable influences in adult prison. These criteria reflect both positive and negative factors relevant to achieving the goal of rehabilitation. On the positive side, there may be favourable prospects of rehabilitation (for example, a willingness to be rehabilitated, or the offender’s criminality is not entrenched). On the negative side, there may be the risk that, if imprisoned in an adult prison, the young offender will be exposed to experienced adult offenders who might increase the young offender’s criminal knowledge and so their possibility of re-offending.

[46] Thus, the choice of a YJC order over adult prison is to be influenced by the relative priority to be given to rehabilitation for those who are at a particularly strategic time in their lives, when influences especially matter. That level of priority is to be assessed on a scale that takes into account the individual offender’s need and suitability for rehabilitation in a specifically youth-focused and less-onerous environment.”

### **11.2.6 Parity of sentencing**

In their majority judgment in *Green v The Queen; Quinn v The Queen* [2011] HCA 49; (2011) 244 CLR 462, French CJ, Crennan & Kiefel JJ said at [28]:

“’Equal justice’ embodies the norm expressed in the term ‘equality before the law’. It is an aspect of the rule of law: Dicey, *Introduction to the Study of the Law of the Constitution*, 7th ed(1908) at 198; Holdsworth, *A History of English Law*,(1938), vol X at 649. . It was characterised by Kelsen as ‘the principle of legality, of lawfulness, which is immanent in every legal order’: Kelsen, *What is Justice?*, (1971) at 15, cited in Sadurski, *Equality Before the Law: A Conceptual Analysis*, (1986) 60 *Australian Law Journal* 131 at 132. It has been called ‘the starting point of all other liberties’: Lauterpacht, *An International Bill of the Rights of Man*, (1945) at 115. It applies to the interpretation of statutes and therebyto theexercise of statutory powers. It requires, so far as the law permits, that like cases be treated alike. Equal justice according to law also requires, where the law permits, differential treatment of persons according to differences between them relevant to the scope, purpose and subject matter of the law…

Consistency in the punishment of offences against the criminal law is ‘a reflection of the notion of equal justice’ and ‘is a fundamental element in any rational and fair system of criminal justice’: *Lowe v The Queen* (1984) 154 CLR 606 at 610 per Mason J; [1984] HCA 46. It finds expression in the ‘parity principle’ which requires that like offenders should be treated in a like manner: *Leeth v The Commonwealth* (1992) 174 CLR 455 at 470 per Mason CJ, Dawson and McHugh JJ; [1992] HCA 29.. As with the norm of ‘equal justice’, which is its foundation, the parity principle allows for different sentences to be imposed upon like offenders to reflect different degrees of culpability and/or different circumstances: *Postiglione v The Queen* (1997) 189 CLR 295 at 301 per Dawson and Gaudron JJ; [1997] HCA 26.”

In *R v Goodwin* [2003] VSCA 120 at [21] Eames JA said that:

“Equal justice is said to require an identity of outcome in cases that are relevantly identical and to require different outcomes in cases that are different in some relevant respect: see *Wong v The Queen* [2001] HCA 64 at [65]. Where such disparity was disclosed the Court may intervene even though the sentence does not otherwise disclose error in the sentencing process: see *R v Wilson* (2002) 116 A Crim R 90.”

In *R v Dare* [2009] VSCA 91 at [25] Nettle JA said:

“It is also necessary to bear steadily in mind that the concept of parity in sentencing ‘is not to be likened to a principle of physics or mathematics which is necessarily to be applied, or necessarily to be withheld from application, in a particular case’: *R v Tien & Ors* [1998] VSCA 6, [39] (Tadgell JA). As Vincent JA stated in *R v Jovica Djukic* [2001] VSCA 226, [25]–[26]:

‘The concept of parity of treatment is fundamental to our notions of justice and is integral to both the procedures and substance of our legal system. It is regarded as inherently unjust to discriminate, in the sentences imposed upon them, between equally culpable and otherwise equally positioned co-offenders. It is also accepted that there is no justice in the imposition of the same penalty upon persons who are not equal in these senses. Equal justice requires identity of outcome in cases that are relevantly identical. *It requires different outcomes in cases that are different in some relevant respect*: citing *Wong v The Queen* (2001) 207 CLR 584, 608, [65] (Gaudron, Gummow and Hayne JJ), my emphasis.’”

In *R v Morgan* [2008] VSCA 24 the Court of Appeal (Hansen AJA with whom Maxwell P & Williams AJA agreed) allowed an appeal by a 20 year old offender who had received a 5 year head sentence and a 3 year non-parole period on a count of armed robbery “which were so out of line with the sentence imposed on [an 18 year old co-offender] as to bespeak error, and to produce in a fair-minded observer a justifiable sense of grievance at the inequality of sentence as between co-offenders”.

In *Kim v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 149 the Court of Appeal (Kaye & T Forrest JJA), in rejecting the appellant’s parity argument, said at [21]:

“The principles governing a contention of disparity of sentence between cooffenders were conveniently summarised in *Collins v The Queen* [2015] VSCA 106 at [23]:

‘The principles governing parity are well-established: see *Khoa v The Queen* [2015] VSCA 80; *McCloskey-Sharp v The Queen* [2015] VSCA 87; *Roujnikov v The Queen* [2015] VSCA 97 [24]–[25]. Equal justice requires that like offences be treated alike, but also that relevant differences between offenders be capable of being treated as justifying different outcomes. If there is a “marked” or ‘manifest’ disparity between sentences which gives rise to a justifiable sense of grievance on an appellant’s part, then the principle of parity may be said to have been infringed: *Lowe v The Queen* (1984) 154 CLR 606; *R v Postiglione* (1997) 189 CLR 295; *Green v The Queen* (2011) 244 CLR 462.15 However, no justifiable sense of grievance can be said to arise where it was reasonably open to the sentencing judge to differentiate between co-offenders in the way in which he or she did: *Roujnikov* [2015] VSCA 97, quoting *McCloskey-Sharp* [2015] VSCA 87 [17] (Osborn JA). When an appellate court considers whether it was open to the sentencing judge to differentiate, or not differentiate, in the way he or she did, the approach is relevantly analogous to that which arises where it is said that a sentence is manifestly excessive: *Hilder v The Queen* [2011] VSCA 192 [38]–[39] (Maxwell P).’”

In *R v Hildebrandt* [2008] VSCA 142 at [42]-[65] Dodds-Streeton JA (with whom Ashley JA & Lasry AJA agreed) discussed and analysed a large number of cases in which the principle of parity of sentencing has been considered and applied. In the process, her Honour stated at [42]:

“Judicial expositions of the meaning of the parity principle are not entirely uniform. The term ‘the parity principle’ is used in at least two senses in the relevant authorities. First, to express the recognition that like cases should be treated alike (itself an emanation of equal justice). Secondly, the phrase is used to describe the requirement to consider the ‘appropriate comparability’ of co-offenders, and in that sense, comprehends the mirror propositions that like should be treated alike, and that disparate culpability or circumstances may mandate a different disposition.”

In *Alejandro Mendieta-Blanco v The Queen*; *Chey Tenenboim v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 265 the Court of Appeal (Priest, Kaye & T Forrest JJA) said at [32]-[33]:

[32] “Recently, in *Nipoe v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 137 at [38]-[40], this Court (Maxwell P, Niall & Emerton JJA) – quoting *Drake v Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs [No 2]* (1979) 2 ALD 634, 639 (Brennan J), *Green v The Queen* (2011) 244 CLR 462, 473 [28] (French CJ, Crennan and Kiefel JJ), *Wong v The Queen* (2001) 207 CLR 584, 608 (Gaudron, Gummow and Hayne JJ) (emphasis in original), and *R v Djukic* [2001] VSCA 226, [25] (Vincent JA) (citations omitted) – restated the principle of parity:

‘Consistency in the application of the law is a fundamental aspect of the rule of law. In a very different context, but in terms that are relevant to discretions generally, Brennan J said that: ‘[i]nconsistency is not merely inelegant: it brings the process of deciding into disrepute, suggesting an arbitrariness which is incompatible with ordinary notions of justice’. The High Court has observed that:

Consistency in the punishment of offences against the criminal law is ‘a reflection of the notion of equal justice’ and ‘is a fundamental element in any rational and fair system of justice’.

Appealable error may be inferred from disparity that is not explained in the reasons for sentence, and the disparity itself may provide a basis for appellate intervention. However, any assessment of an argument based on disparity requires this Court to have regard to the qualitative and discretionary judgments required of the primary judge in drawing distinctions between cooffenders and to recognise that:

Equal justice requires identity of outcome in cases that are *relevantly* identical. It requires different outcomes in cases that are different in some relevant aspect.

The real issue is whether it was reasonably open to the sentencing judge to differentiate, or fail to differentiate, between the co-offenders, having regard to the ‘qualitative and discretionary judgments required’ to arrive at the sentence imposed. It is necessarily a comparative exercise but the process of sentencing is not a mechanical exercise in which the relevant factors must be given a fixed weight, and rarely will two offenders stand in exactly the same position when they fall to be sentenced. As Vincent JA, with whom Brooking and Phillips JJA agreed, said in *R v Djukic*:

Seldom, I suggest, would co-offenders be identically positioned in every respect. There will almost always be aggravating and mitigating factors singular to one or another of them, to which attention can be drawn and often it will simply not be possible to make fine distinctions between them.

[33] Further, in *Chamma v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 232, on the issue of parity, this Court (Priest, Beach and T Forrest JJA) said at [60]:

“Parity is an aspect of equal justice that requires like to be alike. What will constitute ‘like’ as between co-offenders will ultimately require an evaluation based on impression. What will constitute a departure from like and the extent of that departure will require a similarly impressionistic evaluation. Reasonable minds will inevitable differ on these sorts of evaluations. On appeal, disparity in treatment of co-offenders, or its unwarranted absence, is treated within the same analytical framework as manifest excess. An appellate court will rarely resentence based on disparity (or impugned parity) because sentencing, by nature, is imprecise and involves an exercise of judicial discretion. The disparity (or lack of it) must be so ‘marked’ or ‘manifest’ so as not to be reasonably open to the sentencing judge.”

In *Tawfik v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 287 the Court of Appeal (Maxwell P, McLeish & T Forrest JJA) allowed an appeal against sentence on a charge of conspiracy to import a commercial quantity of cocaine. For Tawfik a sentence of IMP25y/16y9m was reduced to IMP20y/14y. For coaccused Saptura a sentence of IMP18y/12y was reduced to IMP14y/9y6m. After citing from *Green v The Queen* (2011) 244 CLR 462 at [28], *Wong v The Queen* (2001) 207 CLR 584, 608 [65] and *Lowe v The Queen* (1984) 154 CLR 606, 610–11, Maxwell P said at [14]-[16]:

[14] “[C]omplaints of unjustifiable disparity are not the exclusive preserve of co-offenders. On the contrary, every offender is entitled to invoke the equal justice norm. And reference to comparable cases is the most common and effective means of doing so. Thus, if an appellant has received a longer sentence than that imposed on another person for ‘relevantly identical’ offending, then — unless the disparity can be justified by material differences in their criminal records or other personal circumstances — equal justice requires that the disparity be corrected: see *Winch v The Queen* (2010) 27 VR 658, 663 [24] (Maxwell P and Redlich JA).

[15] In the present case, there is an unjustifiable disparity in outcome between the sentence imposed on Tawfik and those imposed in *Director of Public Prosecutions (Cth) v Brown* [2017] VSCA 162 and *R v Yuan* [2015] NSWCCA 198 respectively for drug importation offences of comparable scale and seriousness. As the analysis in the joint judgment reveals, the relevant similarities are substantial, and the relevant differences insignificant, such that the disparity in sentences cannot be justified. There has been an infringement of the equal justice norm, which must be corrected.

[16] In my view, it is the engagement of the equal justice norm which both justifies and requires this Court’s intervention, rather than some inferred error of principle on the part of the sentencing judge. For the reasons given by Mason J in *Lowe,* public confidence in the administration of justice is likely to be enhanced if appellate intervention is understood as being necessary to prevent ‘unfairness and unequal treatment’: (1984) 154 CLR 606, 610‑11 As Lord Devlin said more than 40 years ago, ‘a sense of injustice is more easily aroused by the apprehension of unequal treatment than by anything else’: Patrick Devlin, *The Judge* (Oxford University Press, 1979) 85.”

In *Abela-Rogers* *v The Queen*; *Farrugia v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 34 the applicants were 2 of 7 identified young adult offenders who were sentenced for their roles in housebreaking offences involving 8 incidents. Mr Abela-Rogers who had no prior convictions, was 18, turning 19, years old at the time of offending and 20 at the time of sentence and was involved in all 8 incidents. Mr Farrugia, who was on a CCO for possession of cannabis, theft and assaults, was 20 at the time of the offending and 21 at the time of sentence and was involved in 5 of the incidents. A well-organised and sophisticated method was employed by the offenders to locate cannabis crops and steal them. A Forward-Looking Infrared Radar was used to identify areas of higher temperature which were considered likely to be cannabis crop houses. Once a target was identified members of the group would travel to the address in the early hours of the morning in vehicles to which false number plates were affixed. A getaway driver would be nominated and remain with the vehicle. The other members of the team would enter the suspected crop house, their faces covered, and often equipped with crowbars, poles and garden shears. If cannabis was there and readily accessible they would take it along with other readily transportable items of value. There was no identifiable instigator or leader of the group. A 20 year old co-accused, Mr Balshaw, who was involved in 4 of the incidents when he was aged 18, had been sentenced to IMP5y/2y10m. The Court of Appeal (Kaye & T Forrest JJA) had resentenced Mr Balshaw to 3y10m detention in a youth justice facility, saying at [57]: “In accordance with the principles outlined by Batt JA in *Mills*, in view of his youth, immaturity and lack of significant previous convictions, it was important that the appellant not be sent to an adult prison unless that disposition could not be avoided.” The prosecutor conceded that in light of Mr Balshaw’s reduced sentence he could not contend that the parity grounds advanced by Mr Abela-Rogers & Mr Farrugia were not established. In the event the Court of Appeal (T Forrest & Whelan JJA) allowed the appeals and reduced Mr Abela-Rogers’ sentence of IMP11y/8y to IMP7y11m/5y and Mr Farrugia’s sentence of IMP7y/5y6m to IMP5y/3y. In outlining the relevant principles, their Honours said at [15]-[17]:

[15] “The rationale underpinning the parity principle is the need for consistency in the application of the law, which is a fundamental aspect of the rule of law: *Nipoe v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 137 at [38] per Maxwell P, Niall & Emerton JJA. While disparity in the sentences of co-offenders for which there is no ready explanation in the reasons for sentence may bespeak error justifying appellate intervention, it must be borne in mind that consistency in law also at times requires some disparity: ‘Equal justice requires identity of outcome in cases that are *relevantly* identical. It requires *different* outcomes in cases that are different in some relevant respect.’: *Wong v The Queen* (2001) 207 CLR 584, 608 [65] per Gaudron, Gummow & Hayne JJA.

[16] In considering a parity argument this Court must recognise the ‘qualitaive and discretionary judgments’ involved in the primary judge’s task in discerning these relevant differences and similarities between co-offenders: *Nipoe* at [39]. As was said in *Nipoe* at [40]: ‘The real issue is whether it was reasonably open to the sentencing judge to differentiate…between the co-offenders, having regard to the “qualitative and discretionary judgments required” to arrive at the sentence imposed.’ This Court has explained in *Chamma v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 232 at [60] the task presented to appellate courts in determining grounds of appeal that complain of unjustified disparity: [see quote on previous page].

[17] The standard of marked or manifest disparity adheres in cases such as the present where this Court has already reduced the sentence of a co-offender, however, such a circumstance requires us to consider the disparity between the applicants’ sentences and the new sentence imposed on Balshaw by the Court: *R v Simmons* [2008] VSCA 185 at [30] per Weinberg JA.”

See also *R v Taudevin* [1999] 2 VR 402, 404 (Callaway JA); *R v Christopher* [2007] VSCA 290 at [22]‑[23] (Neave JA with whom Chernov & Vincent JJA agreed); *Hili v The Queen; Jones v The Queen* [2010] HCA 45 especially at [46]-[50] per French CJ, Gummow, Hayne, Crennan, Kiefel & Bell JJ; *R v L.T.Lam* [2011] VSCA 140; *R v Ciavarella & Ors* [2011] VSCA 155; *R v Hilder & Sandhu* [2011] VSCA 192 at [10]-[23]*; DPP v Farrugia* [2011] VSCA 201 at [29]-[31]; *R v Emery* [2011] VSCA 212; *Khoa v The Queen* [2015] VSCA 80; *Roujnikov v The Queen* [2015] VSCA 97 [24]-[25]; *Collins v The Queen* [2015] VSCA 106 [23]; *Anthony v The Queen* [2016] VSCA 22; *Jeremy Cox (A Pseudonym) v The Queen* [2016] VSCA 134 at [34]-[37]; *Maele & Ors v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 206 at [32]; *Gorman v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 128 at [41]; *Butler v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 132 at [18]-[39]; *Adam Williamson v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 138; *Kim v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 149 at [19]-[26]; *Roe v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 54 at [36]-[46]; *Salazar v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 125 at [20]-[24]; *Tran v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 278 at [38]-[46].

In *R v Simmons* [2008] VSCA 185 Weinberg JA (with whom Nettle JA & Mandie AJA agreed) said at [33]-[36]:

[33] “I accept, of course, that parity in the punishment of offenders is a basic objective in sentencing. As the High Court has made plain, inconsistency in punishment is regarded as a badge of unfairness and unequal treatment under the law. Such inconsistency is calculated to lead to an erosion of public confidence in the integrity of the administration of justice: see *Lowe v R* (1984) 154 CLR 606, 610-11. Any difference between the sentences imposed upon co-offenders for the same offence ought not to be such as to give rise to a justifiable sense of grievance on the part of the offender who receives the heavier sentence: see *Lowe v R* at 623.

[34] In *Postiglione v R* (1997) 189 CLR 295, the High Court emphasised that the parity principle recognised that equal justice required that as between co-offenders, there should not be a marked disparity giving rise to a justifiable sense of grievance. If there were, the sentence should be reduced notwithstanding that it was otherwise appropriate and within the permissible range of sentencing options. Of course, the imposition of comparable sentences upon co-offenders whose respective conduct and antecedents warranted disparate sentences is also unjust: *Postiglione v R* at 303.

[35] An illustration of these principles may be found in the proposition that a sentencing judge is not obliged to achieve parity in the case of an offender sentenced pursuant to an agreed statement of facts in circumstances where his or her co-offenders do not receive the benefit of such a statement: *R v Mielicki* (1994) 73 A Crim R 72,85.

[36] I accept that the principles of parity must always be taken into account, even where a sentencing judge considers that a sentence previously imposed on a co-offender may be inadequate. See *R v Pecora*  [1980] VR 499; *R v Tisalandis* [1982] 2 NSWLR 430; *R v Capper* (1993) 69 A Crim R 64; and *R v Morrice* (Unreported, Supreme Court of Victoria, Court of Criminal Appeal, Southwell, Ormiston and McDonald JJ, 9 May 1995). The extent to which those principles will operate to constrain the sentencing discretion will, however, vary from case to case.”

In *R v McConkey* [No 2] [2004] VSCA 26, two co-offenders had attacked a taxi driver. The 21 year old was given a suspended sentence of 2 years and a community-based order. The 30 year old appellant was sentenced to 2½ years imprisonment with a non-parole period of 15 months. The Court of Appeal found no appealable disparity. Eames JA - with whom Buchanan JA & Smith AJA agreed - said:

[30] "As stated by Winneke P in *R v Sterling* [2000] VSCA 8 at [40] 'before an appellate court can interfere on the ground of disparity, the disparity should be manifest and such as to engender a justifiable sense of grievance in the offender and that appearance of injustice to the objective bystander'. That principle which derives from *Lowe v R* (1984) 154 CLR 505 was discussed by Callaway JA in *R v Taudevin* [1996] 2 VR 402 where His Honour at 404 [made the same remarks as he was later to make in the above-mentioned extract from *R v Bernath* [1997] 1 VR 271 at 276-7.

[31] In *Postiglione v The Queen* (1997) 189 CLR 295 at 339, Kirby J said of parity between offenders 'due allowance will be made for their respective criminality. Due allowance will also be made for their differing antecedents, personal circumstances and mitigating factors'.

[32] A suspended sentence must be regarded as a sentence of imprisonment, and as a very significant punishment, not merely as being a 'soft option' (Fox & Freiberg, Sentencing, 2nd ed., para.9.403). Such a sentence can serve the function of general deterrence: see *DPP v. Carter* [1998] 1 V.R. 601, at 607-608. Such a sentence might be imposed because the judge considered that it offered the greatest prospect of reformation and, in turn, protection of society: *R. v. Davey* (1980) 50 FLR 57."

See also *DPP v Buhagiar and Heathcote* (1998) 4 VR 540 at 547-548 where Batt & Buchanan JJA made similar comments about the nature of a suspended sentence and *R v Groom* [1999] 2 VR 159 at [40] where Batt JA discussed some of the factors working significantly in favour of suspending, principally prospects of rehabilitation and unlikelihood of re-offending.

There is a dispute in the authorities about whether, on an appeal against sentence by an adult offender, the principle of parity requires reduction of one adult offender’s sentence to the point where it becomes manifestly inadequate when an adult co-offender has received a manifestly inadequate or very lenient sentence. In *Sammy Taleb v The Queen* [2014] VSCA 96 at [36]-[54] the Court of Appeal discussed this conflict between the principle of parity and the principle requiring an offender to receive an adequate sentence. On the one hand the Court noted the cases of *R v William* [2001] VSCA 130 & *Scerri v The Queen* [2010] VSCA 287 at [45]-[47] where the principle of parity prevailed. On the other hand it noted the alternative view expressed in the cases of *Wilson v The Queen* (2000) 116 A Crim R 90; *R v Nguyen* [2005] VSCA 40 at [20]-[21]; *O’Loughlin v R* [2010] VSCA 175 at [31]-[33] & [37]; *Fletcher v The Queen* [2011] VSCA 4 at [31]-[32]; *Farrugia v The Queen* (2011) 32 VR 140 & *DPP v Holder* [2014] VSCA 61 at [5]. Neave & Weinberg JA preferred the latter view, holding at [52] that “we must take account of the sentence imposed on [the co-offender] for the purposes of deciding whether the sentence imposed on the applicant gives rise to a justifiable sense of grievance, but we are not required to reduce the applicant’s sentence to the point where it becomes manifestly inadequate.” Their Honours also noted at [49] that this interpretation was consistent with the observations of French CJ, Crennan & Kiefel JJ in *Green v The Queen* (2011) 244 CLR 462.

There is a particular difficulty in achieving parity – in either sense - between an adult offender and a child co-offender given the substantial difference in the sentencing principles respectively set out in s.5(1) of the *Sentencing Act 1991* and s.362(1) of the CYFA. A very striking example is provided by *R v Dwayne Andrew Evans* [2003] VSCA 223 where Vincent JA said at [44] that the different considerations applicable to the sentencing of children “can and do lead to dispositions which would be regarded as entirely inappropriate in the case of older and presumably more mature individuals.”

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| OFFENDER | AGE | PRIORS | PLEAS OF GUILTY TO | SENTENCE |
| Marks | 22 | 31 (non violence) | Armed robbery x 4  Intent. cause serious injury x 1, Theft x 1 | IMP 8y/6y |
| McDonald | 19 | 16 (non violence) | Armed robbery x 4  Intent. cause serious injury x 1  Reckless endangerment x 1 | IMP 11y/8y |
| **Evans 17/11/1984** | **17** | **73 (non violence)** | **Armed robbery x 4**  **Intent. cause serious injury x 1**  **Possess drug of dependence x 1** | **IMP 9y/7y**  **On appeal 7y/3y6m** |
| **XJ**  **03/04/1985** | **16** | **2 (theft & use cannabis) GBB 6m** | **Armed robbery x 4**  **Intent. cause serious injury x 1** | **YJC 6m** |
| RH  01/06/1985 | 16 | No priors | Armed robbery x 2 | 6m probation no conviction |

Evans who was 17 at the time of the offences was an adult as the law then stood. He was jointly presented with adult co-offenders Marks & McDonald. Notwithstanding the large difference in their prior criminal histories, the disparity between the sentences imposed on Evans and on the child co‑offender XJ – who was only 4½ months younger – is striking.

Although the Court of Appeal was unanimous in allowing Evans' appeal and re-sentencing him to 7 years imprisonment with a minimum of 3½ years, an apparent difference arose between the opinions of Vincent JA & Ormiston JA on whether the principle of parity of sentencing had any application at all as between adult and child co-offenders.

Vincent JA saw some - if very qualified - room for operation of the principle of parity as between very young adult and child co-offenders:

"[41] The Court of Criminal Appeal in *Andrews* (unreported, 10/12/1979) said:

'Children’s Courts are given special powers … and may be regarded as having special responsibilities. Because of these, a comparison between sentences imposed in those Courts and sentences imposed or to be imposed in the County Court or in this Court will not always be a relevant consideration. However, in a case where joint offenders form a group all of about the same age, but where some are under seventeen and some over, it must be accepted that a feeling of injustice will arise if those under seventeen are dealt with upon one basis by the Children’s Court and those over seventeen on an entirely different basis by the County Court or by this Court.'

See also *R v Mapolar* (unreported, Court of Criminal Appeal, 28/05/1993 and *R v Kraja* (unreported, Court of Criminal Appeal, 07/03/1984).

Whilst this may well be justifiably the situation in some situations, there are a number of statements which make clear that the parity principle can have only limited application, in the case of an adult offender where a younger co-offender has been dealt with according to different principles and practices. In *R v Wilson* [unreported, Court of Criminal Appeal, 28/02/1983] [where the 22 year old Wilson had complained unsuccessfully of disparity between his 8 year sentence and a 2½ year sentence imposed on his 16 year old co-accused, E], Lush J. stated:

'The age difference between the two men is a little over five years. The sentence which was received by E came as a result of the provisions of the *Children’s Court Act*. … E’s sentence emerges then as a result of special processes set up in the handling of charges against persons under seventeen. The result of the application of that process cannot exercise any large influence in the fixing of an appropriate sentence by this Court or the County Court for a man aged twenty-two.'

See also *R. v. Angus* [unreported, Court of Criminal Appeal, 01/02/1996] where these passages were cited and applied [by Southwell AJA].

[42] Winneke P. in *Neket* [unreported, Court of Criminal Appeal, 28/05/1997] also considered this issue: (at pp.6-7):

'It is true that the sentence imposed upon the female co-accused seems to pale into insignificance alongside the sentence given to the applicant, but it must be remembered that she was dealt with pursuant to a quite different sentencing regime and in circumstances which make it inappropriate to apply the principles of sentencing parity discussed by the High Court in *Lowe v. The Queen* and by this Court in *R. v. Taudevin*, particularly at p.404, per Callaway, J.A. I refer also to the decision of this Court in *R. v. Angus*, where the Court explained why the so-called parity principle must be qualified in circumstances where co-offenders are sentenced pursuant to different regimes in which quite different sentencing principles apply.'

[43] I observed that in neither of these passages is it suggested that no regard whatever is to be had to the sentence imposed on the younger offender in such situations…

[46] The making of comparisons in order to achieve parity of treatment which may require some disparity in outcome between co-offenders is frequently an extremely difficult task to perform where offenders have been sentenced in the same court and by the same judge. Individuals regularly seek to rely upon quite different factors to differentiate themselves favourably from their confederates in terms of their respective levels of culpability, roles in the offences and prospects of rehabilitation. The task can be considerably more difficult where the sentences have been imposed by different judges on the bases of different information, to the extent that sometimes the exercise may be virtually impossible to perform in the case of adult offenders as no relevant basis for comparison can be seen to be present.

[47] In the present case, not only was J dealt with under a different regime but it is not even possible to ascertain upon what factual foundation his sentence rested. In any event, there were a number of bases upon which his situation could be distinguished from that of the appellant. In his statement he claimed that, although he agreed to go with the others, he remained in the car when each of the offences was committed. He said that he did so because he was scared. There is a distinct possibility that he was sentenced on that foundation. As earlier mentioned, he was the second youngest of the group and he had a significantly less serious criminal history than any of his older companions. The inference can, I think, be reasonably drawn that these features did not escape the attention of the magistrate who sentenced him. H who had not previously appeared before a court was, as earlier indicated, not only the youngest of the group, but charged with only two of the offences committed on that night. He was clearly entitled to a significantly more lenient disposition.

[48] Bray, C.J. in delivering the judgment of the Court in *R. v. Harris (No. 2)* [1971] 2 SASR 255 made the further point that the argument for the application of the principle of parity in such circumstances:

'… amounts to this, that if a man commits a crime in conjunction with a juvenile he ought to be more leniently treated than if he had committed the crime alone or in the company of an adult, because the juvenile will necessarily receive special treatment. We think that proposition bears its own refutation on the face of it.'

[49] Nevertheless, allowing for these obvious differences and the limited bases for comparison as well as the known distinctions which can properly be made between H, J and the appellant, as in *Andrews*, the disparity between their respective sentences appears stark. Had the appellant been only a few months younger, he almost certainly would have been dealt with in the Children’s Court and subject to the handing down of a maximum sentence of 3 years’ detention in a Youth Training Centre, that is, a possible period of incarceration of one-third of that actually imposed and which he would have served in significantly less onerous circumstances. It seems to me that in a situation of this kind, rather than attempting to make a comparison between the dispositions of these two offenders, as we have been urged to do, the focus of the enquiry must be placed upon the appropriateness of the sentence imposed on the appellant. Clearly many of the considerations which have resulted in the development of a separate juvenile justice system, and the balances of principle upon which it operates, may possess as much relevance six months, or, for that matter one day, after an offender attains 17 years as they did on the day before he reached that age. This, I believe, is well recognised and underpins the general approach of the courts to the sentencing of young persons, often leading to the moderation of sentences and the fixing of significantly lower non-parole periods than would be the case where a more mature individual was before the Court."

Ormiston JA saw no room for the operation of the principle in either direction:

[3] "As to parity, I have the gravest doubts as to whether that is applicable in the circumstances…

[4] As Vincent JA has succinctly summarised them (see para.[44] of his judgment), the considerations applicable under [the CYPA] 'can and do lead to dispositions which would be regarded as entirely inappropriate in the case of older…individuals': see e.g. *R v Neket* (C.A. unreported, 28/05/1997) and *R v Harris (No.2)* (1971) 2 SASR 255 at 257 per Bray CJ.

[5] In my opinion, notwithstanding certain dicta and earlier decisions largely directed to the previous legislation, those considerations make any comparisons between sentences under the two regimes entirely unsatisfactory and inappropriate. Consistency in sentencing is no doubt, in general terms, a desirable aim, however difficult it is to achieve in practice having regard to the multifarious factors which must now be taken into account. One of the virtues, however, of the Children’s Court system is that that court can make special allowance for factors which would otherwise be irrelevant under the *Sentencing Act*. Consistency must work both ways and it would be entirely inappropriate that members of the Children’s Court should temper their sentences to reflect what had been done or might yet be done in sentencing offenders pursuant to the *Sentencing Act*. Apart from the effective limit of three years’ detention in a youth training centre, there is also the practical consideration that for the most part the evidence given in that court and more importantly the sentencing remarks are not published generally and certainly are not made available in the ordinary course of events to either trial judges or members of the Court of Appeal. One may wonder, therefore, to what extent any person might *reasonably* be perceived to have a legitimate ground of grievance if they are unable to know what the factual basis was for sentencing in the Children’s Court, what were the factors peculiar to the individual and what were the grounds upon which that court acted, assuming that they have been expressed in full: see generally the useful discussion in Fox & Freiberg: *Sentencing State and Federal Law in Victoria*, 2nd ed., paras. 11.506-11.509….

[8] Logically, and I concede that in sentencing one must be very cautious about the application of logic in every case, the appellant might complain of want of parity even if he were sentenced to three or four years total effective sentence, for such a sentence would be six to eight times that handed out to his younger colleague 'merely because [the appellant] was a few months beyond the jurisdiction of the Children’s Court'. It would be better, in my opinion, to scotch the idea that such comparisons can fairly be made, for it merely gives an impression to those sentenced, especially for serious offences, that they can call in aid the so-called principle of parity in circumstances where objectively there is no basis for proper comparison."

Batt JA regarded the differences between his two brothers as more apparent than real:

[11] "Whilst I would not presume to speak for the other members of the Court, it appears to me that the gap between their views on the question of 'parity' is not as great as it might seem. Although I acknowledge the force of Ormiston, J.A.’s observation that consistency must work both ways, it is, to my mind, difficult when sentencing an offender who had just attained 17 years of age at the time of offending to disregard the sentence imposed in the Children’s Court for the same offending upon an offender with like antecedents who is, say, two months younger. Some – not great – regard is, it seems to me, to be had to the latter sentence and it may be that some moderation in sentence results. That is what I understand Vincent, J.A. to say in paragraph [49] of his reasons for judgment. For myself I would not elevate that process into an application of the principle of parity."

In *CNK v The Queen* (2011) 32 VR 641; [2011] VSCA 228 there was a very large disparity between the roles of the applicant – who was then aged 15 – and most of the other co-offenders, two of whom were his mother and his uncle. At [80] the Court of Appeal said of this:

“The sentencing judge in the present case faced an extraordinarily difficult task in sentencing two very young offenders at the same time as he was sentencing adult offenders for participation in the same offending. As s 4 of the *Sentencing Act 1991* makes clear, the sentencing framework for adults has no application to the sentencing of children in the Children’s Court. And the sentencing regimes are strikingly different, as this Court has remarked previously [*R v Neket* (unreported, Supreme Court of Victoria Court of Appeal, Winneke P, Brooking JA and Ashley AJA, 28/05/1997) at 6], such that there is considerable difficulty in ensuring parity between co-offenders when one is sentenced as an adult and the other as a child.”

This led the Court of Appeal to recommend at [88] separate sentencing hearings for adult and child co-offenders in superior courts:

“Given the very great difficulty of sentencing co-offenders under such different sentencing regimes, we would think it desirable in future that a wholly separate hearing be held to deal with the sentencing of the child offender(s).”

See also *RAC v The Queen* [2011] VSCA 294 where the Court of Appeal re-sentenced another young co-offender in accordance with the judgment in *CNK v The Queen* but drew one minor distinction based on this co-offender’s prior convictions; *Poutai v The Queen* [2011] VSCA 382 where at [21] Harper JA held:

“The two regimes are strikingly different…There is, accordingly considerable difficulty in ensuring parity between co‑offenders when one is sentenced as an adult and the other as a child. Even if the ages of the two are similar, but one is sentenced as an adult while the other is not, difficult issues of parity may arise. But where, as here, the age difference is 13 years, the difficulties generally become almost insurmountable.”

This dicta was expressly approved by Beach & Ferguson JJA in *Leo Clayton (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2016] VSCA 88 [32].

Occasionally, albeit uncommonly, an emphasis on rehabilitation can lead to a young offender receiving a sentence of detention even though an adult co-offender is not sentenced to imprisonment. In *D v B* [2001] VSC 353, D, a 16 year old with an extensive criminal history largely for offences of dishonesty, had pleaded guilty to one count of armed robbery and was sentenced by a Children's Court magistrate to be detained in a YJC for a period of 8 months. The co-accused, O, who was 17 at the date of the offence and 18 at the date of sentencing, also had an extensive criminal history for offences of violence and dishonesty. The contributions of D & O to the armed robbery were not identical but were said by Balmford J to be "not significantly different". Her Honour continued at [9]:

"[O] was one of two people who threatened the service station attendant with knives and yelled at him to lie on the ground; [D] removed $300 from the till and the safe and cigarettes from the shelf. A fourth member of the party kept watch. They all then ran from the service station and left in a car which they had stolen."

O was sentenced in the County Court as an adult on 2 counts of armed robbery, one being in the company of D and the other committed 9 days earlier in similar circumstances and on 2 counts of theft of a motor car. She received a six month Intensive Correction Order [ICO] on the first of the counts of armed robbery and one of the counts of theft, and a three month ICO on the other counts of armed robbery and theft. Two months of the second sentence were made cumulative upon the first, giving a total effective sentence of an eight month ICO. During the plea on behalf of O, the prosecutor had indicated that she would not be accepted for a YJC. His Honour was concerned that, that being so, the only custodial disposition available was confinement in an adult prison. He indicated his view that O should be given whatever chance was reasonable. It was expressly on the basis of giving O an opportunity for a supervised rehabilitation process that the ICOs were made. D appealed, submitting that the disparity between a 6 month ICO and 8 months detention in a YJC was such as to give rise to a justifiable sense of grievance. The role of the appellant in the robbery was lesser, she was involved in an isolated armed robbery rather than a course of serious offending, and her prior convictions were less serious than those of O.

Balmford J was not persuaded there was a sufficient disparity. Her Honour summarised the applicable law at [18]-[20]:

"The leading case on parity in sentencing is *Lowe v The Queen* (1984) 154 CLR 606, where Gibbs CJ, Mason, Wilson and Dawson JJ adopted the principle that an appeal court will intervene only where the disparity in sentences between co-offenders is such as to engender a justifiable sense of grievance in the accused receiving the heavier sentence, or where the disparity gives the appearance that justice has not been done.

In *R v* *Bernath* [1997] 1 VR 271 at 276-77 Callaway JA expanded on that statement of principle as follows:

'An appellate court intervenes on that ground only where the difference between the relevant sentences is manifestly excessive and such as to engender a justifiable sense of grievance or to give the appearance in the mind of an objective observer that justice has not been done. The important words are 'manifestly', 'justifiable' and 'objective'. There is much to be said for the view that all three requirements are variations on the same theme, i.e. that only a manifest discrepancy in the sense of a difference that is clearly excessive will satisfy the other two requirements. However that may be, it is clearly true that a sense of grievance is not justifiable unless it would be shared by an objective observer.''

Both counsel were in agreement, in my view rightly, that the objective observer must be an informed observer."

Having found, at [13], that "the sentence handed down by the Magistrate in respect of [D] must also be seen as directed to rehabilitation, in circumstances where a [YJC] sentence was available, as was not the case with [O]", her Honour held at [32]: "I cannot be satisfied that an informed objective observer would necessarily feel that the discrepancy between the two sentences was so extreme, in all the circumstances, that any resulting sense of grievance or injustice would justify a finding that the exercise by the Magistrate of his sentencing discretion was 'clearly wrong'.”

*D v B* was the converse of the more usual case in which disparity has been, generally unsuccessfully, claimed by an adult on the basis that a child co-offender has been dealt with more leniently: see the cases cited in Fox & Freiberg, *Sentencing: State and Federal Law in Victoria*: 2nd edition at [3.1010].

Another aspect of ‘parity of sentencing’ is whether or not male and female offenders should be treated equally. In *DPP v Ellis* [2005] VSCA 105 upheld a Director’s appeal against a wholly suspended sentence of 22 months’ imprisonment imposed on a female school teacher who had pleaded guilty to 6 counts of sexual penetration of a male child under 16 who was in her care, supervision or authority contrary to s.45 of the *Crimes Act 1958* [as amended]. The respondent was re-sentenced to 32 months’ imprisonment with 6 months to serve immediately and 26 months suspended for 3 years. At [7] Callaway JA said:

“In *R v Jobling-Mann* [2000] VSCA 3, which was concerned with an earlier version of s.45, Winneke P, with whom the other members of the Court agreed, said:

[2] ‘Whilst each breach of the section must be treated on its own merits, its underlying purpose precludes me from accepting the submission made to this Court on behalf of the applicant that the section does, or is intended to, operate differentially depending upon whether the person accused is male or female.’

Later his Honour said of the offender in that case:

[5] ‘In the eyes of the law her conduct is, in my view, no more acceptable than would be the conduct of a 34-year-old male who, in similar circumstances, took advantage of two 14-year-old infatuated girls.’”

The principle enunciated by the Court of Appeal in *DPP v Ellis* is that, whatever the nature of the offence, it is not acceptable to sentence male and female offenders differently **solely** because of their sex: At [10]-[11] Callaway JA, with whom Batt & Buchanan JJA agreed, said:

[10] “The need to treat male and female offenders equally is not limited to sexual offences. In *R. v. Harkness and Ors* [2001] VSCA 87 two young women, Densley and Rye, assisted their male co-offenders to traffic in heroin. They were given very lenient sentences. The principle of parity almost required appellate intervention in favour of the co-offenders. (For an example of a case where undue leniency to a female co-offender did re-open the sentencing discretion, see *R v Izzard* (2003) 7 VR 480 at 483). I said with the concurrence of Winneke ACJ at [58]:

‘The approach of the courts to sentencing female offenders has changed over the years in reflection of the community's views. The principle at stake is equality. The law cannot, and should not, be blind to human nature or to the vulnerability of persons in the position of Densley and Rye and there are other differences between male and female offenders that can legitimately affect the sentencing discretion, but it is no longer acceptable that an offender be given a different sentence *solely* because of his or her sex.’

(In the original I emphasized the word ‘solely’ and said, by way of example, that I expressed no opinion on the argument that, at least in relation to some crimes, general deterrence is less important for female offenders.)

[11] As that passage shows, differences between offenders that are not solely because of their sex may, and where they are relevant should, be taken into account. The law does not require an artificial transposition, treating men as if they were women or women as if they were men. It is not fallacious to detect error in the present sentence because it is completely different from the sentence that would have been imposed on a male offender. It would be an error simply to substitute, after allowance for double jeopardy, the sentence that would have been imposed on a male schoolteacher who had taken part in six acts of sexual penetration with a female student. We must not replace one set of unjust stereotypes by another that is no less unjust.”

In *R v Saenchai* [2005] VSCA 201 the appellant was one of four adult co-offenders sentenced for the trafficking of heroin. He alone had prior convictions. In dismissing his appeal on the grounds of disparity Ormiston JA noted at [24] that “where a sentence is imposed on an offender who has had no convictions, a very wide discretion is given to the sentencing judge and he may properly impose a far lesser sentence than otherwise would be the case. It makes the task of comparison that much harder”. See also *R v Woolley* [2008] VSCA 44 at [21]-[22] where the Court of Appeal imposed a higher sentence on an offender who differed from a co-offender in having six prior convictions in the Children’s Court and who had also been sentenced to an intensive correction order and imprisonment for subsequent offending.

In *R v Ziday* [2006] VSCA 163 the appellant had received the same sentence in respect of a count of recklessly causing serious injury as had her daughter on a count of intentionally causing serious injury arising in the same circumstances. The Court of Appeal held that this did not infringe the parity principle. Callaway JA, with whom Redlich JA & Coldrey AJA agreed, said at [8]:

“Quite often there are legal differences between co-offenders, such as different maximum penalties, that make no practical difference when all the circumstances of the offences and of the offenders are taken into account. In particular, if such a difference gives rise to a sense of grievance, it is not a justified sense of grievance. In most cases of the kind that I have in mind they do not give rise to a sense of grievance at all. The co-offenders well and truly understand that they were in it together and there is no unfairness in treating them in the same way.”

In *R v Kolokythas* [2007] VSCA 80 at [8]-[9] the Court of Appeal referred with approval to the dissenting judgment of Callaway JA in *R v Cooper* [1998] VSCA 39 at [32] where his Honour had specifically approved unequal treatment of an offender in a joint criminal enterprise who had intervened to protect a victim from further harm:

“Joint criminal escapades frequently get out of hand. It is very much in the public interest to reward a participant who not only ceases to take part at that stage but also intervenes, to the best of his or her ability, to protect the victim from further harm. If all the perpetrators received the same or similar sentence, there may not only be a justifiable sense of grievance, but there will also be no incentive to engage in such conduct. Indeed, there may be a positive disincentive because a participant who draws back or goes to the help of a victim often risks reprisals from the continuing offenders, ranging from accusations of cowardice, to ostracism, to physical injury.”

In *DPP (Cth) v Vestic* [2008] VSCA 12 at [29] the Court of Appeal (Coghlan AJA with whom Vincent & Neave JJA agreed) said: “A matter which is so personal to the co-accused which gives rise to a lenient or very lenient sentence based on a call for mercy cannot give rise to the application of principles of parity.” Compare *DPP v Downing* [2007] VSCA 154 at [13]-[14].

In *Hilder v The Queen* [2011] VSCA 192 Maxwell ACJ identified at [37] “the true nature of the question which must be addressed when the ground of parity is advanced” as being “whether it was reasonably open to the judge in the circumstances of the case to differentiate — or fail to differentiate — between the co-offenders in the way that he or she did”. His Honour went on to say that there was a “close analogy with the stringency of the test of manifest excess” and then said at [38] that, for a parity ground to succeed, “it must be shown that the conclusion as to sentence differentials was not reasonably open”: see also *Collins v The Queen* [2015] VSCA 106 [23].

In *Salapura v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 255 at [77] Whelan & Kyrou JJA said:

“In our opinion, the difference of 3 years in the offenders’ ages [25 cf 22] at the time of the offending was not material in the circumstances of this case. Ordinarily, the more youthful the offender, the greater the weight to be given to his or her rehabilitation. However, in the present case, in the light of the seriousness of the aggravated burglary offence and the extensive relevant criminal histories of both offenders, the judge was justified in not treating rehabilitation as a paramount sentencing consideration in relation to either of them. See *Mongrag v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 105 [37]–[39].

In *Tsun Shing Ip v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 211 the Court of Appeal applied *Tregenza v The Queen* [2015] VSCA 163 in allowing an appeal and reducing a sentence for attempting to possess a commercial quantity of methamphetamine and two counts of dealing with money reasonably suspected of being proceeds of crime from IMP9y/5y4m to IMP8y5m/5y. This was because the coaccused’s sentence had been reduced on appeal. At [17]-[18] Maxwell P & Weinberg JA said:

“The applicant also contends that the convergence between the sentences which resulted from the resentencing process ought to be corrected. He argues that the proper approach in such a case is as set out by this Court in *Tregenza v The Queen* at [41].That is, although this Court is not obliged to restore the original relativity between the sentences, the matter should be approached:

‘on the basis that the distinction drawn by [the judge] between the cooffenders should be maintained, in the absence of some identifiable error or further fact which necessitates a different course.’

Counsel for the respondent conceded that the lack of differentiation between the sentences consequent upon the resentencing of Kao could not be justified.”

In *DPP v Rider & Ong* [2023] VSC 466 the two offenders, members of the Mongols OMCG, carried out a carefully planned drive-by shooting on the Eastern Freeway in which multiple shots were fired into the deceased driver’s side door for an undetermined reason. D1 pleaded guilty to reckless murder a couple of days before the commencement of a joint jury trial. D2 ran his trial and was convicted of intentional murder. In relation to their respective roles Beale J said at [2] that he thought it likely that D1 was the shooter and D2 the driver but added: “[I]n my view it doesn’t make any difference in terms of your respective culpability because you were working as a team.” Ultimately D1 was sentenced to IMP30y/21y and D2 to IMP35y/24y6m. In explaining the disparity between the sentences Beale J said at [110]-[113]:

[110] “There will be significant disparity between the sentences I impose on the two of you.

[111] I accept your counsel’s submission, Rider, that your head sentence and non-parole period should be significantly less than that to be imposed upon Ong. The prosecution acknowledged that your plea of guilty is a ‘material distinguishing factor’ between you and Ong. Other distinguishing factors that work in your favour, Rider, are the principles in *Bugmy* and principles 5 and 6 in *Verdins*.

[112] On the other hand, you have a more extensive criminal history than Ong and were on a CCO at the time of the murder. Further, I am guarded about your prospects of rehabilitation, whereas I accept that Ong’s prospects are reasonable.

[113] I have taken all these matters into account as best I can.”

In holding that the ‘parity principle’ had been infringed in *Moussa v The King* [2024] VSCA 113 the Court of Appeal (Kennedy & T Forrest JJA) said at [56]-[59]:

[56] “In *Kellway (a pseudonym) v The King* [2023] VSCA 109 at [124]-[127] {also cited in *Minutolo v The King* [2023] VSCA 300 at [53]}, this Court summarised the parity principle as follows:

The purpose of parity in sentencing is to ensure consistency in punishment: *Abdou v The Queen* [2015] VSCA 359, [62]; see also *Green v The Queen* (2011) 244 CLR 462, 473 [28]; [2011] HCA 49; *Nipoe v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 137, [38]. As Kaye AJA (as his Honour then was) said in *Dawid v Director of Public Prosecutions* [2013] VSCA 64 [43], ‘the principle of parity is based on the broad principle of equal justice’. Significant disparities in sentences ‘should be capable of a rational explanation’: *R v Tien* [1998] VSCA 6, [40]. However, that is not to say that there will be a ‘scientifically precise answer to the quantification of disparities between offenders’: *Ah-Kau v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 296, [51]. The assessment of the amount of disparity between offenders is ‘[u]ltimately … an evaluation based on impression’: *Ibid*.

A ground of appeal complaining about disparity should be approached within the same analytical framework as the ground of manifest excess: *Barbaro v The Queen* (2012) 226 A Crim R 354, 371 [63]; [2012] VSCA 288. As this Court said in *Barbaro v The Queen* at 371-372 [63]:

[T]he question for consideration is whether it was reasonably open to the sentencing judge to differentiate — or fail to differentiate — between the co-offenders in the way he/she did, if proper weight were given to the similarities and differences between them as regards culpability, criminal record and personal circumstances.

For an appellate court to intervene on the basis of disparity, the disparity must be ‘“marked” or “manifest” and such as to produce a legitimate and justifiable sense of grievance in the objective observer: *R v Mercieca* [2004] VSCA 170, [17]. The question whether there is such a sense of grievance depends on whether there were reasonable grounds for differentiation (or lack thereof) between the co-offenders: *Abdou* [2015] VSCA 359, [62]. As Gaudron, Gummow and Hayne JJ said in *Wong v The Queen*: (2001) 207 CLR 584, 608 [65]; [2001] HCA 64 ‘Equal justice requires identity of outcome in cases that are relevantly identical. It requires different outcomes in cases that are different in some relevant respect.’

One differentiating factor may be the role the co-offenders played in the offending. A co-offender who is the principal offender may receive a heavier sentence than another co-offender: see e.g. *Dawid* [2013] VSCA 64, [64]; *Marku v The Queen* [2012] VSCA 51, [48]-[49]. Another differentiating factor is remorse. A co-offender who displays no remorse may receive a heavier sentence than a co-offender who demonstrates some remorse: see e.g. *Case (a pseudonym) v The King* [2023] VSCA 12, [150]-[154].

[57] In the present case, it is undisputed that Georgiou knew that he was carrying a loaded weapon to the premises. It is also undisputed that he discharged a round while still at the front of the premises and that, only nine seconds later, he discharged a second round.

[58] The fact that Georgiou armed himself with a loaded gun in travelling to the premises revealed premeditation on his part, and shed light on hisintentions. It strongly suggested that he had an intention to use the gun, and greatly increased the danger associated with the act of attempted entry. And see *Clark v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 125, [23]. Even though the gun was not ultimately used so as to effect entry, Georgiou’s actions in discharging that gun (twice), shortly after the attempted entry, confirmed such earlier intention. The fact that both Georgiou and Neyland engaged in overt acts of confrontation, while both were armed, further distinguished their role from that of the applicant.

[59] In all the circumstances, we therefore do not consider it was open for the judge to find that the applicant’s role was just ‘as significant’ as that of the other offenders.”

In *Lang & Ors v The King* [2025] VSCA 49 the first-named applicant sought leave to appeal against a TES IMP16y4m/12y on a charge of trafficking in a drug of dependence (heroin) in a large commercial quantity and 3 charges of knowingly dealing with proceeds of crime. A co-offender had been given substantially the same TES and NPP. The Court of Appeal held that it was not reasonably arguable that the head sentence was manifestly excessive or that the orders for cumulation or the TES infringed parity principles. However, given the differences between the co-offenders as to prior criminal history and prospects of rehabilitation it was not open to the judge to impose identical NPPs. Leave to appeal was granted for the first-named applicant and the NPP was reduced to 11y. In relation to parity principles Beach & McLeish JJA said at [65]-[67]:

[65] “The principles governing parity are well known. They were conveniently summarised by this Court in *Anthony v The Queen* [2016] VSCA 22 at [12]:

As has been said before, equal justice requires that like offences be treated alike, but also that relevant differences between offenders be capable of being treated as justifying different outcomes. If there is a ‘marked’ or ‘manifest’ disparity between sentences which gives rise to a justifiable sense of grievance on an appellant’s part, then the principle of parity may be said to have been infringed. However, no justifiable sense of grievance can be said to arise where it was reasonably open to the sentencing judge to differentiate between co-offenders in a way in which he or she did. Where an appellate court considers whether it was open to the sentencing judge to differentiate, or not differentiate, in the way in which he or she did, the approach is relevantly analogous to that which arises when it is said that a sentence is manifestly excessive. See *Lowe v The Queen* (1984) 154 CLR 606; *R v Postiglione* (1997) 189 CLR 295; *Green v The Queen* (2011) 244 CLR 462; *Hilder v The Queen* [2011] VSCA 192, [38]–[39]; *Khoa v The Queen* [2015] VSCA 80; *McCloskey-Sharp v The Queen* [2015] VSCA 87; *Roujnikov v The Queen* [2015] VSCA 97, [24]–[25]; *Collins v The Queen* [2015] VSCA 106, [23]. See also *Marchei v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 58, [49]; *Grey v The King* [2024] VSCA 75, [61]–[66].

[66] *In Abdullahi v The King* [2024] VSCA 156 at [51] Emerton P & McLeish JA noted the similarity between the grounds of manifest excess and want of parity:

An argument based on an apparent disparity in treatment of co-offenders has a close similarity to an argument of manifest excess in a sentence. In both cases, the exercise of the sentencing discretion is impugned on the basis that, without necessarily ascribing the asserted miscarriage in the discretion to any specific error, the sentence imposed lay outside permissible bounds.

[67] The Court [in *Abdullahi*] then set out the...passage from the judgment of Emerton P, Niall & Kaye JJA in *Kellaway (a pseudonym) v The King* [2023] VSCA 109, [124]-[127] [which is reproduced in the above summary of *Moussa v The King* [2024] VSCA 113].”

In *Rose v The King* [2024] VSCA 296 the 24 year old appellant had been sentenced in the County Court to TES IMP 2y/12m as shown below, including IMP21m on a charge of aggravated burglary. On the same day and in the same Court the co-offender, the appellant’s mother, was sentenced on a charge of aggravated burglary to a composite sentence of IMP70d together with a 2-year Community Correction Order.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **COUNTY COURT**  **MOTHER** | **COUNTY COURT**  **SON** | **CHARGE** | **COURT OF APPEAL**  **SON** |
| IMP70d + CCO2y | IMP21m | Aggravated burglary | IMP12m |
|  | IMP9m, 3m cumulative | Recklessly cause injury | IMP9m, 3m cumulative |
|  | IMP1m | Possess weapon | IMP1m |
| **TES IMP70d + CCO2y** | **TES IMP2y/12m** |  | **TES IMP 15m/9m** |

At [36] Walker & T Forrest JJA said:

“Apart from a fleeting reference to the obligation to apply the parity principle, in respect of the aggravated burglary, there is no explanation in the sentencing reasons as to why there is this sentencing disparity. We cannot discern any other difference in circumstances that can explain it. Ms Lagerwey had been a victim of domestic abuse. So had the applicant. Both had a solid work history. Both were drug users. Neither had any significant prior criminal offending. Both were generally of good character. Both had good prospects of rehabilitation. It seems that Ms Lagerwey was traumatised by the proposal of returning to custody; the applicant, apparently not so. However, the applicant, at 24 years of age was entitled to have his youth considered favourably {*R v Mills* [1998] 4 VR 235, 241–242; *Azzopardi v The Queen* (2011) 35 VR 43, 53-55} and the judge acknowledged this.”

Ultimately their Honours allowed the son’s appeal, set aside the sentence of IMP21m imposed on the charge of aggravated burglary and replaced it with a sentence of IMP12m; they left unchanged the sentence of IMP9m on the charge of recklessly causing injury, 3m of which was to be served cumulatively on the IMP12m imposed on the aggravated burglary. This resulted in TES IMP15m/9m. In explaining the requisite level of disparity required the appeal to succeed and why they had nevertheless imposed a greater sentence on the son than on the mother for the aggravated burglary charge, the Court of Appeal said at [30]-[32]:

[30] “Some disparity between sentences will be insufficient to justify intervention by an appellate court. The disparity must be manifestly excessive: *Grey v The King* [2024] VSCA 75, [62]. The appellate court will intervene in this case if the disparity engenders a justifiable sense of grievance in the person sentenced more heavily, or if the disparity gives the appearance that justice has not been done: *Green v The Queen* (2011) 244 CLR 462, 474-5 [31]. A justifiable sense of grievance is to be assessed objectively. The application of the parity principle will not concern itself with the subjective feelings of disparity of the complainant: Ibid; see also *Postiglione v The Queen* (1997) 189 CLR 295, 323 & 338. Ultimately, the Court is concerned with the question whether the disparity between sentences is unjustifiable: *Galea v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 69, [19].

[31] If an appellate court considers a sentence imposed on a co-offender to be inadequate or excessively lenient, this is not an insurmountable obstacle to an otherwise sound parity argument, as found in *O’Loughlan v The Queen* [2010] VSCA 175, [31]‑[32] (citations omitted):

Though [the co-offenders’] total effective sentence of 20 months’ imprisonment was undoubtedly lenient (some might say extremely so), it does not follow that this court should reject what seems to us to be an otherwise compelling parity argument put on behalf of the appellant. On any view, principles of parity must be taken into account, even in circumstances where the sentence imposed upon a co-offender is regarded as inadequate.

That does not mean that principles of parity require an appellate court to impose what is, in its view, a wholly inappropriate sentence. It might mean, however, that a sentence towards the very bottom of the range is called for, even if that sentence, when viewed objectively, is otherwise seen as being too low.

[32] In *Grey v The King* [2024] VSCA 75 at [62], after citing the above passage, the Court said (citations omitted):

Thus, even if this Court were to conclude that the sentence imposed on the applicant offended the principle of equal justice, this Court is not required to reduce the sentence imposed on the applicant to a point where that sentence becomes manifestly inadequate.”

In *R v Alhassan* [2025] VSC 201 the 18 year old offender had pleaded guilty – in a late plea – to homicide by firearm and handling stolen property. The deceased was shot in the chest by the offender in the course of an aggravated home invasion by multiple masked and armed offenders. The offender later sold a stolen firearm to covert operatives. The offender (who was aged 21 at the time of sentencing) had no criminal antecedents and reasonable prospects of rehabilitation. Beale J imposed a sentence of IMP12y on the homicide charge and IMP2y of which 1y was cumulative on the handling charge, resulting in a TES IMP13y/8y. At [65]-[67] Beale J explained why he had imposed a substantially longer sentence than was imposed on 18 & 19 year old co-offenders who had pleaded guilty much earlier to manslaughter on a complicity basis:

[65] “You will be receiving a substantially longer sentence than your two co-offenders. Let me briefly explain why.

[66] Your co-offender Mohamed Mohamed, who was also 18 at the time of the offending, pleaded guilty to manslaughter on 24 November 2023. I sentenced him to four years’ detention in a Youth Justice Centre: *R v Mohamed* [2024] VSC 318. I did not give him credit for the approximately two and a half years of pre-sentence detention. I sentenced him on the basis that he was the driver of the getaway car and did not actually enter the deceased’s home. I also placed great weight on the fact that he spent approximately 10 months in near solitary confinement, which expert evidence indicated had a significantly adverse effect on his mental health.

[67] Your co-offender Daniel Sisal, who was 19 at the time of the offending, also pleaded guilty to manslaughter on 24 November 2023. I sentenced him to nine years’ imprisonment with a minimum term of six years’ imprisonment: *DPP v Sisal* [2024] VSC 589. I sentenced him on the basis that he entered the house. Of course, he was not the shooter. You were. And he pleaded guilty almost a year before you did. He also spent a substantial period on remand in near solitary confinement.”

Other cases – largely involving adult offenders – in which the issue of parity has been discussed include *Lovelock v The Queen* (1978) 33 FLR 132 at 136-7 per Brennan J; *R v Merceica* [2004] VSCA 170 at [6] & [14]; *R v QMN; R v WD* [2004] VSCA 32 at [15]-[19]; *R v Greenslade* [2004] VSCA 213 at [19]-[20]; *R v Rodden* [2005] VSCA 24; *R v Thanh Cong Nguyen* [2005] VSCA 40 at [9]-[14]; *R v Cassar* [2005] VSCA 164 at [14]-[23]; *R v Wade* [2005] VSCA 276 at [17]-[18]; *R v Le; R v Nguyen* [2005] VSCA 284 at [16]-[20]; *R v Eaton* [2006] VSCA 16; *R v Airey* [2006] VSCA 31 at [11]; *R v Hieu Huu Nguyen* [2006] VSCA 39 at [15]-[16]; *R v Bortoli* [2006] VSCA 62 at [26]-[32]; *R v Quang Hung Pham & Anor* [2006] VSCA 68 at [21]-[29]; *R v Lee* [2006] VSCA 80 at [27]-[29]; *R v Lam* [2006] VSCA 162 at [37]-[38]; *R v Asim Selcuk* [2006] VSC 465; *R v Guthrie & Nuttal* [2006] VSCA 192 at [87]; *R v Sibic & Sibic* (2006) 168 A Crim R 305 at [50]; [2006] VSCA 296 at [34] & [50]; *R v Moroz & Mendelis* [2007] VSCA 30 at [57]; *R v Nguyen & Ors* [2007] VSCA 165 at [38]; *R v Rackley* [2007] VSCA 169 at [26]-[31]; *R v Lacey* [2007] VSCA 196 at [19]-[25]; *R v Hall* [2007] VSCA 218 at [15]-[17]; *R v Barbaro & Ors* [2007] VSCA 271 at [39]; *R v Nunno* [2008] VSCA 31 at [35]; *R v Eastham* [2008] VSCA 67 at [16]-[17]; *R v Koumis & Ors* [2008] VSCA 84 at [28]*; R v Van Dat Le* [2008] VSCA 155 at [14]-[19]; *DPP v Tuan Quoc Tran* [2008] VSCA 158; *R v Crabbe* [2008] VSCA 160 at [3]-[4]; *R v Lewis* [2008] VSCA 202 at [15]-[17]; *R v Mundy* [2008] VSCA 184 at [14]-[22]; *R v Simmons* [2008] VSCA 185 at [29]-[38]; *R v Lewis* [2008] VSCA 202; *R v Nguyen, Dang, Ly & Nguyen* [2008] VSCA 235 at [60]; *R v Holmes* [2008] VSCA 271 at [73]-[74]; *R v Wolfe* [2008] VSCA 284 at [9]-[10]; *R v Barbaro* [2009] VSCA 89; *R v Waugh* [2009] VSCA 92 at [15]-[20] esp [19]; *R v Doherty* [2009] VSCA 93 at [17]-[21]; *R v Bloomfield, R v Wilson, R v Davidson* [2009] VSCA 302 at [28]-[31]; *R v Stanbury* [2010] VSCA 49 at [28]-[29]; *R v Velevski* [2010] VSCA 90*; R v Morgan* [2010] VSCA 248 at [7]-[11]; *R v Harrington* [2010] VSCA 249 at [3]-[9]; *R v Boase & Parker* [2010] VSCA 316; *R v Fletcher & Or* [2011] VSCA 4; *R v Kelly* [2011] VSCA 11 at [5]-[7]; *R v Faure* [2011] VSCA 115 at [23]-[24]; *R v Goussis* [2011] VSCA 117 at [59]-[65]; *DPP v Clifford* [2011] VSCA 199 at [15]-[24]; *DPP v Heeman and Rivette* [2011] VSCA 221; *DPP v Jacobs and Ross* [2011] VSCA 238 at [23]-[24]; *DPP v Breuer* [2011] VSCA 244 at [29]; *R v Raylene Sarvak* [2011] VSCA 300 at [32]-[43]; *R v Crawley* [2011] VSCA 131 at [22]-[25]; *The Queen v Kim Man Freeman Tsang* [2011] VSCA 336 at [147]-[154]; *DPP(Cth) v Graziosi* [2011] VSCA 418 at [20]-[24]; *Smith v The Queen* [2012] VSCA 5 at [37]-[40]; *R v Nguyen* [2012] VSCA 119 at [15]-[30]; *R v Saab* [2012] VSCA 165 at [64]-[68]; *DPP v Bonacci and Vasile* [2012] VSCA 170 at [34]-[48]; *R v Morrison* [2012] VSCA 222 at [22]; *DPP v Carr* [2012] VSCA 299 at [75]-[81]*; R v Ulutui* [2012] VSCA 301 at [46]-[54]; *R v Charters* [2012] VSCA 318 at [42]-[48]; *Dawid v DPP* [2013] VSCA 64 at [41]-[48]; *Director of Public Prosecutions (Cth) v Peng* [2014] VSCA 128; *Joseph v The Queen* [2014] VSCA 343 at [62]-[82]; *Johnson v The Queen* [2014] VSCA 283 at [47]-[58]; *Sayeed Hashmi* *v The Queen* [2014] VSCA 291 at [127]-[134]; *Le v The Queen* [2014] VSCA 283 at [31]-[32]; *Ngaa v The Queen* [2015] VSCA 336 at [7]; *Philp v The Queen* [2017] VSCA 320 at [5]; *Terry Darren Mitchell v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 158 at [46]-[53]; *Azaan Rosales (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 130; *Moresco v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 33 at [43]-[67]; *Ah-Kau v The Queen; Ofamooni v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 296; *Buovac v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 302 at [54]-[65]; *Ghannoum v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 25 at [47]-[65]; *Shakhanov v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 38; *Wood v The Queen; Bell v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 39 at [76]-[79]; *Anderson v The Queen; Smith v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 42 at [82]; *Neil v R* [2019] VSCA 64 at [31] & [39]-[44]; *Simpson v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 82 at [26]-[31]; *Miller v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 108; *Qui v The Queen*; *Ng v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 147; *Piacentino v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 153 at [43]-[47]; *DPP v O’Brien* [2019] VSCA 254; *Topal v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 289 at [21]-[28]; *Chatters v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 309 at [20]-[24]; *Zaia v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 9 at [83]-[97]; *Levy v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 44 at [70]-[84]*; Charlie Galea v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 69 at [19]-[23]; *Brad Freedman (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 287 at [22]-[26]; *Taleb v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 329 at [19] & [24]-[34]; *Hennig v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 40 at [35]-[48]; *Sinclair v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 144 at [13]-[18]; *Lau v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 162 at [26]-[35]; *Lam v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 241 at [39]-[65]; *Lucas v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 314 at [23]-[28]; *Judge v The Queen; Dix v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 315 at [111]-[118]; *Goh v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 24 at [40]‑[47]; *Thuy Thanh Thi Tran v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 44 at [27]-[36]; *Thi Thuy Tam (Lina) Tran v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 45 at [44]-[55]; *Hochkins v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 91 at [23]-[28]; *Rajeev Singh v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 93 at [60]-[68]; *Farrugia, Ali, Monro & Synan v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 104 at [21]-[22]; *Booker v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 150 at [28]-[29]; *Shbaro v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 190 at [42]‑[48]; *McBain v The King* [2022] VSCA 257 at [28]-[32]; *Garipoli v The King* [2022] VSCA 260 at [38]-[70]; *Edgar Case (a pseudonym) v The King* [2023] VSCA 12 at [148]-[154]; *Obian v The King* [2023] VSCA 18 at [410]-[412]; *Kannan v The King* [2023] VSCA 58 at [82]-[84]; *Ka Ming Chong v The King* [2023] VSCA 62 at [59]-[64]; *Khoshaba v The King* [2023] VSCA 65 at [23]-[33]; *DPP v McCartin & Anor (Sentence)* [2023] VSC 193 at [79]-[80]; *Biba v The King* [2023] VSCA 122 at [33]‑[40]; *Chaarani v The King* [2023] VSCA 275 at [24]-[29]; *Minutolo v The King* [2023] VSCA 300 at [53]-[57]; *Deng v The King* [2024] VSCA 19 at [37]-[40]; *Stefani v The Queen* [2024] VSCA 29 at [42]‑[52]; *Younis v The King* [2024] VSCA 64 at [27]-[29]; *Gar v The King* [2024] VSCA 96 at [70]-[76]; *Abdullahi v The King* [2024] VSCA 156 at [53]-[64]; *Chapman v The King* [2024] VSCA 205 at [39]-[40]; *DPP v Farah* [2024] VSC 551 at [33]-[37]; *Needham v The King* [2024] VSCA 270 at [39]-[50]; *Almatrah v The King* [2024] VSCA 301 at [16]-[28]; *Hu v The King* [2025] VSCA 60 at [53]-[90]; *Udemba v The King* [2025] VSCA 61 at [74]-[89]; *Everett v The King* [2025] VSCA 96 at [41]-[49]; *Cullinan-Smayle v The King* [2025] VSCA 109 at [177]-[180]; *Abbas v The King* [2025] VSCA 116 at [29]-[41]; *Raymond Stephan v The King* [2025] VSCA 121 at [51]-[68]; *Fenton v The King* [2025] VSCA 168 at [51]-[65].

### **11.2.6A Current sentencing practices**

The basis of “parity of sentencing” is to avoid a justifiable sense that justice has not been done. A similar basis underpins the requirement that a judicial officer in sentencing an offender must take into account ‘current sentencing practices'. Section 5(2)(b) of the *Sentencing Act 1991* expressly requires a court sentencing under that Act to have regard to ‘**current sentencing practices**’. Although there is no express provision in the CYFA to that effect, it is also a relevant consideration – as a corollary of the common law principle of “parity of sentencing” – for a court sentencing under the CYFA.

In *Hasan v The Queen* (2010) 31 VR 28; [2010] VSCA 352 the Court of Appeal (Maxwell P, Redlich & Harper JJA) stated at [48] – with reference to dicta of Mason J in *Lowe v The Queen* (1984) 154 CLR 606, 611 and Gleeson CJ in *Wong v The Queen* (2001) 207 CLR 584, 591 – that “**it is contrary to the rule of law for there to be unjustified inconsistency of sentencing between offenders in comparable circumstances**”. The Court went on to detail at [56]-[58] a large number of cases illustrating current sentencing practice for the offence of rape. These included *DPP v Maynard* [2009] VSCA 129; *DPP v Patterson* [2009] VSCA 222; *DPP v Moses* [2009] VSCA 274; *R v Schubert* [1999] VSCA 25; *R v Brown* (2002) 5 VR 463; *R v Mason* [2001] VSCA 62; *DPP v Fellows* [2002] VSCA 58; *Nous v The Queen* [2010] VSCA 42; *DPP v Sibanda* [2010] VCC 605; *Coulson v The Queen* [2010] VSCA 146; *Simon v The Queen* [2010] VSCA 66; *R v Yankovski* [2007] VSCA 259. At [60] the Court of Appeal said that but for the constrains of current sentencing practice and the requirement for consistency, it would have dismissed the appeal. It went on to stress “the need for a review of current sentencing practices for rape”.

In *Bernard (a pseudonym) v The King* [2024] VSCA 293 the 78-year old appellant had been sentenced after a trial in 2022 to TES IMP4y6m/2y9m on 4 charges of unlawful and indecent assault of his adopted daughter between 1973 & 1975. The Court of Appeal allowed his appeal and resentenced him to TES IMP3y/21m as shown below:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **COUNTY COURT** | **CHARGE** | **COURT OF APPEAL** |
| IMP2y, 12m cumulative | 1. Unlawful and indecent assault of a girl | IMP15m, 6m cumulative |
| IMP2y, 3m cumulative | 1. Unlawful and indecent assault of a girl | IMP9m, 3m cumulative |
| IMP3y, Base | 1. Unlawful and indecent assault of a girl | IMP2y, Base |
| IMP3y, 3m cumulative | 1. Unlawful and indecent assault of a girl | IMP15m, 3m cumulative |
| **TES IMP4y6m/2y9m** |  | **TES IMP3y/21m** |

At [93]-[96] Priest, Taylor & Orr JJA said [emphasis added]:

[93] “Neither end of the Bar table drew the sentencing judge’s attention to current sentencing practices for the offence of unlawfully and indecently assaulting a girl under 16 as they applied in 1973 and 1975. **That was a significant omission since,** **although s 5(2)(b) of the *Sentencing Act 1991* requires a sentencing court to have regard to ‘current sentencing practices’ — so that the court must have regard to the sentencing practices which apply at the time of sentence {*Stalio v The Queen* (2012) 46 VR 426 at [9] & [11]; [2012] VSCA 120} – sentencing practices applicable at the time of the commission of the offence are not thereby rendered irrelevant.** **Indeed, regard should be had to sentencing practice at the date of offending for the purpose of ascertaining just punishment in accordance with the principle of equal justice: Ibid. at [52]-[53] & [78].** {See also *Bradley v The Queen* [2017] VSCA 69; *Thrussell v The Queen* [2017] VSCA 386; *Mush v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 307.} Hence, the Court observed in *Stalio* at [9] that the concept of equal justice requires regard to be had to sentencing practices at the date of the offence if those practices can be demonstrated to have required the imposition of a materially lesser sanction for like offences than current sentencing practices would impose for the offence.

[94] The applicant’s counsel provided us a list of ‘comparative’ sentencing cases [listed in footnote 39]. Even before we reviewed the cases on this list, our impression was that the offences charged in the indictment would not have attracted sentences of the order imposed by the judge had they been dealt with at a time proximate to the offending.

[95] Our review of the cases confirmed that impression. The 14 cases listed, with one exception, concerned offending in around 1964–82. In all but one case, the offender had pleaded guilty to the charges for which he was to be sentenced. The gravest individual sentence imposed on a count of indecent assault in each case was as follows: in two cases (14.2%), a good behaviour bond; in three cases (21.4%), 9 months’ imprisonment; in seven cases (42.8%), 12 months’ imprisonment; in two cases (14.2%), 2 years’ imprisonment; and in one case (7.1 per cent), 3 years’ imprisonment.

[96] The case in which a sentence of three years’ imprisonment was imposed, *Van Loon* (16/07/1975), was exceptional. The offender had antecedents for incest, indecent assault, and buggery against his daughter, for which he had been placed on a period of probation, during which he re-offended against his daughter...”

In *Leslie v The King* [2025] VSCA 13 the 27 year old Aboriginal applicant had pleaded guilty in the County Court Koori Court Division to charges of aggravated burglary, common assault, theft, intentionally damage property and two charges of threat to kill and was sentenced to TES IMP676d (already served) + IMP12m & CCO 2y. He had an intellectual disability, an acquired brain injury, complex mental health issues and a severely disadvantaged upbringing. In granting leave to appeal but dismissing the appeal, the Court of Appeal (Emerton P & J Forrest JA) said at [109]-[110]:

[109] “As to the submission that the sentence was out of step with current sentencing practice, this Court and the High Court have pointed out that there is limited utility in comparing and contrasting decisions of other judges involving different circumstances and antecedents: see, eg, *Wong v The Queen* (2001) 207 CLR 584, 591 [6]; *Hili v The Queen* (2010) 242 CLR 520, 534 [44], 535–6 [48]–[49]; *Barbaro v The Queen* (2014) 253 CLR 58, 74 [40]–[41]; *R v Pham* (2015) 256 CLR 550, 558–9 [26]–[28]; *Dalgliesh* (2017) 262 CLR 428, 453–4 [82]–[83]; *Hudson v The Queen* (2010) 30 VR 610, 617–18 [28]–[33]; *Nguyen v The Queen* (2016) 261 A Crim R 1, [71]–[72]; *DPP (Cth) v Thomas* (2016) 53 VR 546, 606–11 [171]– [187]; *Hasan v The Queen* (2010) 31 VR 28, 38 [44]; *Fichtner v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 297, [100]; *Staples v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 307, [88]; *Lieu v The Queen* (2016) 263 A Crim R 173, [46]–[47]; *DPP (Cth) & DPP (Vic) v Edge* [2012] VSCA 289, [60]; *R v Stratton* (2008) 20 VR 539, [93], citing *R v Arney* [2007] VSCA 126, [14]. In sentencing, the judge must instinctively synthesise the factors relevant to the offender and the offending, and dispense individualised justice.

[110] In any event, we do not consider that the sentence imposed was out of step with current sentencing practice. In *Tufue* [2024] VSCA 22, the appellant had a limited criminal history and in *Raoof* [2016] VSCA 180, the applicant required involuntary psychiatric treatment immediately following the offending. He did not have prior convictions for aggravated burglary.”

Other cases in which the issue of “current sentencing practices” has been discussed include *R v Ashdown* [2011] VSCA 408; *Hogarth v The Queen* (2012) 37 VR 658; [2012] VSCA 302; *Jawahiri v The Queen*; *Eser v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 287; *Lawrence (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 291; *Weatherburn v The King* [2023] VSCA 283; *R v MA* [2023] VSC 613; *DPP v Ali & Ors* [2024] VSC 601; *DPP v Sako* [2024] VSC 77; *Haddara v The King* [2024] VSCA 269; *R v Loughnane* [2025] VSC 41 at [72].

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### **11.2.7 Double Jeopardy**

Where the ultimate facts establish the proof of 2 offences of a similar character based on the same act or omission, it is a doctrine of the common law that an offender cannot be convicted of both offences: *Falkner v Barba* [1971] VR 332.

This doctrine was applied by Phillips J in *Reardon v Baker* [1987] VR 887 in holding that as possession for sale of heroin was the essential basis of the charge of trafficking with which the defendant was convicted, she should not also be convicted of the offence of possession of the same heroin at the same place on the same date. See also *DPP v Collins* [2004] VSCA 179.

In *R v Mason* [2006] VSCA 55 the applicant had been convicted on one count of trafficking and one count of cultivation of cannabis. At [8]-[9] Buchanan JA (with whom Maxwell P & Redlich AJA agreed) held that although the elements of both offences were not identical – and hence a conviction on count 1 could not give rise to a plea of autrefois convict on count 2 – the applicant should not be punished for both offences given that the same acts of cultivation were relied upon as the basis of both counts. See also *R v Van Xang Nguyen* [2006] VSCA 158; *R v Ngo* [2007] VSCA 240; *R v Filipovic; R v Gelevski* [2008] VSCA 14.

In *R v Nunno* [2008] VSCA 31 the appellant had admitted to police that he had engaged-

(1) in actual cultivation of cannabis (for the purpose, in part, of trafficking); and

(2) then, later, in actual trafficking of part of the cultivated crop; and

(3) then, later again, in actual possession (partly for the purpose of further trafficking and partly for his own use).

Cavanough AJA (with whom Buchanan JA & Coldrey AJA agreed) rejected an argument that the imposition of sentences on the counts of cultivation and possession as well as trafficking constituted double punishment, holding that “the offending in each case was distinct” and adding: “To the extent that the three counts involved what I would call ‘linked’ rather than ‘overlapping’ behaviour, I consider that the same should be reflected in the sentences imposed, rather than the convictions recorded.”

For the purpose of the doctrine of double jeopardy, punishment includes the recording of a conviction even if unaccompanied by any further order: *R v Sessions* [1998] 2 VR 304, 313; *RR v The Queen* [2013] VSCA 147 at [141] per Ashley JA.

In *Pearce v The Queen* (1998) 194 CLR 610, the offender, who had broken into a house and had inflicted grevious bodily harm on the victim, had been sentenced to identical terms of imprisonment on both counts. In allowing an appeal from the Supreme Court of NSW, the High Court held that the offender had been doubly punished for one act. At p.623 McHugh, Hayne & Callinan JJ said:

"To the extent to which two offences of which an offender stands convicted contain common elements, it would be wrong to punish that offender twice for the commission of the elements that are common. No doubt that general principle must yield to any contrary legislative intention, but the punishment to be exacted should reflect what an offender has done; it should not be affected by the way in which the boundaries of particular offences are drawn. Often those boundaries will be drawn in a way that means that offences overlap. To punish an offender twice if conduct falls in that area of overlap would be to punish offenders according to the accidents of legislative history, rather than according to their just desserts.”

A similar consequence flows from s.51(1) of the *Interpretation of Legislation Act 1984*: "Where an act or omission constitutes an offence under two or more laws, the offender shall, unless the contrary intention appears, be liable to be prosecuted under either or any or all of those laws but shall not be liable to be punished more than once for the same act or omission." See also *R. v. Sessions* (1997) 95 A Crim R 151.

An illustration of s.51(1) is to be found in *R v Bowen* [2002] VSCA 199 where:

* the first count presented that the accused unlawfully and maliciously caused by an explosive substance an explosion of a nature likely to cause injury to property contrary to s.317(2) of the *Crimes Act 1958*; and
* the second count presented that on the same date and at the same place the accused intentionally and without lawful excuse destroyed a motor vehicle contrary to s.197(1).

The Court of Appeal commented with approval at [3]: "On count 1 [the accused was] convicted and imprisoned for three years. On count 2 no conviction was recorded. The judge was of the opinion that s.51(1) of the *Interpretation of Legislation Act 1984* meant that the appellant was not liable to be punished more than once for an offence arising out of the same act as the offence of causing an explosion".

In *Lecornu v The Queen* (2012) 36 VR 382; [2012] VSCA 137 Maxwell P distilled three distinct propositions concerning double punishment from the majority judgment of McHugh, Hayne and Callinan JJ in *Pearce v The Queen* (1998) 194 CLR 610 at 616, 620-621 & 623, propositions which for ease of reference he called Rules 1, 2 & 3:

**“Rule** **1** A plea in bar (autrefois convict or autrefois acquit) is available only in relation to an offence the elements of which are the same as, or are included in, the elements of an offence for which an accused has been tried to conviction or acquittal.

**Rule 2** Where no plea in bar is available in relation to the second offence, prosecution of that offence may nevertheless be stayed as an abuse of process if it would be vexatious or oppressive or unfair.

**Rule 3** As a matter of sentencing, persons found guilty of two offences must not be punished twice for an act which is common to the two offences.

These rules could equally have been based on s.51(1) *Interpretation of Legislation Act 1984*. As the Court of Appeal noted in *R v Nor* (2005) 152 A Crim R 118 at 123, Rules 1 and 2 go to conviction “in the sense that, if conviction has been secured in breach of either of the two aspects of double jeopardy it will ordinarily be set aside.” Rule 3, on the other hand, goes to sentence. See also *Lipp v The Queen* [2013] VSCA 384 esp at [23]-[24].

In *Neill v County Court of Victoria & Anor* [2003] VSC 328 at [65] Redlich J noted that the fact that offences are similar or arise substantially out of the same facts is not determinative of whether the principle of double jeopardy applies:

“Whether as a consequence of the common law or by virtue of s 51 *Interpretation of Legislation Act 1984* an offender cannot be punished twice for the same act or omission. Whilst the boundaries of the doctrine remain uncertain they extend to prohibit conviction where the elements of the offences are the same, or where the two offences contain elements established by the same act unless there are different consequences from the same act. Though the doctrine has a scope of operation beyond such circumstances, the fact that the offences are similar or arise substantially out of the same facts is not determinative of whether a conviction on both offences offends these principles.”

In *R v WWS* [2009] VSCA 125 at [27] Vincent, Nettle & Neave JJA approved the aforementioned dicta of Redlich J in *Neill’s Case* and made it clear at [30] that the prohibition on double punishment does not prevent the prosecution of an offender for more than one offence where an offender’s single action causes harm to more than one person. Referring with approval to-

* *Phillips v Carbone (No.2)* (1992) 67 A Crim R 392 where the Full Court of the Supreme Court of Western Australia held that double jeopardy did not apply in a situation where an offender caused bodily harm to two persons by a single act of dangerous driving; and
* dicta of the Court of Appeal in *R v Bekhazi* (2001) 3 VR 321 holding that an offender who drove a car while under the influence of drugs, killing one victim and recklessly endangering another, could be convicted of two offences arising out of that action-

their Honours concluded at [33]:

“The applicant’s act of masturbation affected each of the three young girls who were present when this action was performed. The situation is therefore similar to that arising in *Phillips*. If the applicant had been convicted of only one of these offences, the judge would not have been able to sentence the applicant for the effects of his action of the other two girls.”

In *Atkinson v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 127 at [15]-[35] Priest & T Forrest JJA discussed several of the above cases and concluded at [24] that:

“Section 51 of the *Interpretation [of Legislation] Act* permitted the applicant to be ‘prosecuted’ under s 131A(2) of the *Firearms Act 1996* for the ‘act’ of using the firearm in each case to discharge a bullet (or bullets) with the relevant intent, and also to be ‘prosecuted’ for stalking under s 21A of the *Crimes Act 1958*, where that ‘act’ of discharging the firearm in each case was also an ‘act’ which was part of a series of acts establishing the proscribed course of conduct. What s 51 did not permit, however, was the applicant to be ‘punished’ more than once for the ‘same act’.”

In dismissing the appeal, their Honours held at [26] that “the proposed ground of appeal touching conviction is without substance” and at [30] that “the judge was astute to avoid double punishment”.

In *Hutchinson v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 235 the appellant had pleaded guilty to 4 charges including (1) recklessly exposing an emergency worker to risk by driving and (3) recklessly causing injury to that emergency worker. He was sentenced to IMP4y9m/3y on the four charges, including a base sentence of IMP3y on the reckless endangerment charge and IMP20m 12m cumulative on the recklessly causing injury charge. The appellant had been in a distressed and suicidal state, speeding and driving eratically on the highway. The police deployed ‘stop sticks’ to deflate his tyres. The appellant’s car changed direction and headed towards a second police car parked on the verge. The appellant’s car collided with that police car which then struck a police officer and injured him. The appellant submitted that a conviction on both charges (1) & (3) had resulted in double punishment. At [55]-[57] the Court of Appeal discussed and distinguished *R v Sessions* [1998] 2 VR 304, saying *inter alia*:

“[T]he conduct giving rise to charges 1 and 3, while both arising from the appellant’s reckless driving, is not a single, inseparable act, as was the case in *Sessions*. In *Sessions*, the digital rape involved violent penetration of the vagina and, concurrently and inseparably, the infliction of injury to the vagina. The act that constituted the rape was entirely co-extensive with the act that caused the injury.

It is plain that, in the present case, the offending in charge 1 could have been committed without committing the offence in charge 3 (or charge 2). The elements of the offences are not the same. Had the appellant veered away from Sergeant French’s vehicle at the very last moment and continued down the highway, the offence in charge 1 would still have been committed. Whilst there is a degree of overlap between the conduct which gave rise to charges 1 and 3, it is not a complete overlap.”

In dismissing the appeal on this ground, Kyrou, Emerton & Sifris JJA concluded at [62]-[63] & [79]:

[62] “We do not accept, on the facts of this case, that the authorities relied on by the appellant are analogous or that the appellant has been punished twice for the same act. He has been punished once for exposing Sergeant French to risk to his safety and once for actually injuring Sergeant French.

[63] For these reasons, we accept the respondent’s submission that the separate criminality involved in the conduct causing injury could be recognised in conviction and sentencing.

[79] Conviction and sentencing under s 317AE of the *Crimes Act* does not preclude conviction and sentencing under s 18 of the *Crimes Act* where, as here, there is additional actus reus involved in causing injury to the emergency worker.”

In *Neskovski v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 86 the Court of Appeal rejected the applicant’s submissions that the charges of failing to stop after a motor vehicle accident and failing to render assistance charged the same offence and that the applicant had been punished twice for the same conduct. At [5]-[6] Maxwell P, Emerton & Whelan JJA said: “Decisions of this Court over almost two decades have consistently accepted that the provisions create two separate offences…[T]he two offences are concerned with separate failures on the part of the driver – the failure to stop and the failure to render assistance – which are conceptually and legally distinct.”

Double jeopardy may also arise where cumulation has been ordered in respect of two offences which share some common elements in circumstances where those elements have already been taken intoaccount in sentencing for one of the offences. In *R v Orgill* [2007] VSCA 236 the appellant had been sentenced to 4 years imprisonment on a count of stalking and to partly cumulative sentences of imprisonment on 2 counts of burglary. At [17]-[18] Redlich JA, with whom Chernov & Vincent JJA agreed, said:

“It is arguable that entry to the premises for the purposes of the offence of stalking is of a different character to entry for the purposes of the offence of burglary. The same may be said of the *actus reus* of the offence of theft and interference with the victim’s property in the offence of stalking. But if there be a distinction in the present circumstances between acts constituting the *actus reus* of those offences, it was a distinction which should not be drawn. As the joint judgment of McHugh, Hayne and Callinan JJ and the judgment of Gummow J in *Pearce v The Queen* (1998) 194 CLR 610, 614, 624, 628-9 illustrate, to the extent that offences of which an offender stands convicted contain common elements, it would be wrong to punish that offender twice for the commission of the elements that are common. That has been understood to mean that the offender is not to be punished twice for the same act: *R v Henderson, supra*, 836; *R v Chhom Nor* [2005] VSCA 46 at [15] (Chernov JA). The joint judgment in *Pearce* cautioned [at 623] against the use of ‘excessive subtleties and refinements’ in determining whether the same act is common to two offences and that the task should be approached with common sense.

In my view, the order for cumulation amounted to double punishment for each of those acts had already been taken into account in fixing the sentence on the count of stalking. The sentence imposed on that count and the remarks of the sentencing judge shows that the appellant’s invasion of the victim’s residence with the intent to steal personal property of the victim and the subsequent theft of the victim’s property were reflected in the sentence of four years’ imprisonment fixed on the count of stalking. To characterise the appellant’s acts of entry to the premises differently for the counts of stalking and burglary was to engage in excessive refinement of the feature common to both counts.”

It is not uncommon in the Children’s Court for an offender to be found guilty of an offence which breaches a supervisory order such as probation. This is complicated by the fact that the breach is frequently not heard at the same time as the substantive offence. A question arises as to whether imposition of an additional sentence in respect of the breach constitutes double jeopardy. Of course, if the breach is constituted by general non-compliance as opposed to commission of a breaching offence, there will be no real issue. But what if the Court, sentencing on the substantive offence, has treated as an aggravating factor the fact that the offence was committed at a time when the offender was on probation? The relevant law is discussed in *R v Loader* (2011) 33 VR 86; [2011] VSCA 292 where the applicant had been sentenced, *inter alia*, on eight charges of indecent assault and charges of failing to comply with a condition of an Interim Extended Supervision Order and of failing to comply with a condition of an Extended Supervision Order. The breaches of the Supervision Orders were constituted by committing the eight offences of indecent assault. Some cumulation was ordered on each of the two breaches. A ground of appeal alleged that this constituted double jeopardy. In dismissing the appeal, the Court of Appeal distinguished the case of *R v Audino* [2007] VSCA 381 at [115]–[119], a case where an offender was charged both with exceeding the prescribed concentration of alcohol (reading 0.141) and with culpable driving. Nettle JA (with whom Warren CJ & Ashley JA agreed) said at [29]-[30] & [53]-[54]:

[29] “There is no injustice in charging or convicting an offender of more than one offence committed in the course of the one episode of criminal behaviour if each offence is comprised of or includes different elements. As the Court said *Pearce v The Queen* (1998) 194 CLR 610, 621 [31]:

‘To hold otherwise would be to preclude the laying of charges that, together, reflect the whole criminality of the accused and, consonant with what was held in *R v De Simoni*, would require the accused to be sentenced only for the offence or offences charged, excluding consideration of any part of the accused's conduct that could have been charged separately.’

[30] Of course, as was also made clear in *Pearce*, to the extent that two or more offences are comprised of the same criminal behaviour, a sentencing judge must take care to modify the sentences imposed for each offence in order to avoid the offender being punished more than once for the same conduct. But that is a matter of sentencing. There is no double punishment in the fact of entering a conviction on each offence.”

…

[53] [In *Audino*], it was held that it was double punishment to impose any penalty on more than one of the offences. But, in this case, there is only a partial overlap between the [indecent assault offences and the offences of breaching the Supervision Orders].

[54] Certainly, to the extent of the overlap, the sentences imposed on the offences of failing to comply with conditions of the [Supervision Orders] must be moderated in accordance with *Pearce v The Queen* (1998) 194 CLR 610, 623–4; *R v Wei Tang* (2009) 23 VR 332, 338 [28].But the offences of failing to comply with the conditions of the orders involved the added criminality of failing to comply with orders of the court. That warrants additional punishment.”

In *Lecornu v The Queen* (2012) 36 VR 382; [2012] VSCA 137 the Court of Appeal applied similar reasoning, rejecting the appellant’s submission that the decision in *R v Loader* was “plainly wrong”. In 2007 L had been made subject to an extended supervision order (ESO), a condition of which was that he not commit a relevant offence while the order is in force. Possession of child pornography is a relevant offence. In 2011 L pleaded guilty to two charges of possessing child pornography and two charges of failing, by committing the CP offences, to comply with a condition of the ESO. He was sentenced to IMP 15m on the CP charges and IMP 6m, of which 5m was cumulative, on the breach charges. The Court of Appeal found no abuse of process and no double punishment in L being prosecuted for and convicted of both the CP offences and the breach offences. At [8]-[10] Maxwell P (with whom Hollingworth & Cavanough AJJA agreed) said:

[8] “The offences were different in important respects and it was appropriate to proceed to conviction on charges which, together, reflected the full criminality of L’s conduct.

[9] Nor, in my view, did the sentences imposed on L infringe the rule against double punishment. L does not dispute that, in sentencing him on the CP offences, the sentencing judge was entitled to treat as an aggravating feature of *those* offences the fact that he had committed them while subject to the ESO. Having done so, her Honour was also entitled to impose sentence for the corresponding breach offences – but only for the separate criminality constituted by L’s disobedience of a Court order.

[10] Had the sentences on the breach counts also punished L (to any extent) for the criminality involved in his acts of possessing child pornography, the rule against double punishment would have been infringed. But there is nothing in the sentences imposed to suggest that this occurred, and the sentencing reasons explicitly addressed the need to avoid double punishment.”

However, in *Price v R (No 2)* VSCA 44 the Court of Appeal (Whelan AP, McLeish & T Forrest JJA) – although applying *Pearce v The Queen* (1998) 194 CLR 610, *Loader v The Queen* (2011) 33 VR 86, *Lecornu v The Queen* (2012) 36 VR 382, *Heath (a pseudonym) v The Queen* (2014) 45 VR 154 and while noting that the breach of a court order involved separate and distinct criminality – did find an element of double punishment expressed in the sentencing judge’s reasons, allowed the appeal and resentenced the appellant. See especially [52]-[60], [62], [64] & [66].

In *Dang v The Queen* [2014] VSCA 49 at [39]-[85] the Court of Appeal discussed in detail the principle of double punishment as applied in *Pearce v The Queen* (1998) 194 CLR 610 and its application to circumstances where the offences have been charged as *Giretti* charges: *R v* *Giretti and Giretti* (1986) 24 A Crim R 112.

In *Shaun Page (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 364 the applicant – who was aged 27-30 at the time of offending and was in receipt of a disability support pension for a mild intellectual disability – had pleaded guilty to 7 charges of sexual offending against four children aged 12 or 13 who were the daughters of two women he was close to or their friends. He was sentenced to IMP9y/5y6m. In refusing leave to appeal the Court of Appeal rejected what it described at [51] as “the applicant’s ‘double counting’ argument”. At [45]-[47] T Forrest JA & Macaulay AJA said:

[45] “In short, the applicant contended that having permissibly taken into account that his offending involved a breach of trust, the judge excessively diminished the weight to be given to his good character by wrongly finding an enabling link between his good character and the breach of trust and, further, impermissibly used the breach of trust again as an aggravating factor for penalty.

[46] In our opinion there are a number of reasons why these contentions lack substantive merit. Overall, we think there is an air of unreality in the degree to which the judge’s reasons have been parsed in order to make out these arguments. In explaining our reasons it is useful, both for parallels and contrasts, to set out what was said by McHugh J in *Ryan v The Queen* (2001) 206 CLR 267, 278 [33]–[34] (citations omitted) when considering the interplay between the offender’s (in that case, a priest) ‘otherwise good character’ over his years of parish work, and his sexual offending against children committed in the course of that work:

‘Sentencing is not a mathematical process. Various factors have to be weighed. The otherwise good character of the prisoner is one of them. It is a mitigating factor that the sentencing judge is bound to consider. But the nature and circumstances of the offences for which he or she is being sentenced is a countervailing factor of the utmost importance. The nature of the offences for which the appellant was being sentenced meant that his otherwise good character could only be a small factor to be weighed in the sentencing process. First, there were multiple offences involving repeated acts committed over a number of years. They were not isolated incidents which might be said to be out of character. Secondly, the appellant was, as his counsel conceded before Judge Nield, leading a double life. Over many years, the appellant was doing ‘good works’ while he was committing grave offences. This contradiction indicates that the appellant’s otherwise good character was a minor factor to be weighed. Thirdly, the appellant committed the offences in the course of his priestly duties and it was as a priest that he did the ‘good works’ which are at the heart of his claim of good character. This reduces the weight that ought to be given to his otherwise good character. Fourthly, and related to the third point, the offences involved breaches of trust.’

[47] First, by way of contrast, in the present case the applicant’s relevant ‘good character’ consisted in little, if anything, beyond an absence of prior convictions at the time of offending. That is not to say that the applicant was bereft of any favourable character attribute by not having any prior convictions (at least for child sexual offending). But it must be realistically acknowledged that the applicant’s ‘previous character’ did not loom as a prominent mitigatory factor. This immediately distinguished the applicant from the offenders in *Ryan*, *SD* *v The Queen* (2013) 39 VR 487 and *Torrefranca* *v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 157 where, in each case, the offender had identifiable positive attributes by which it could be said that they were of ‘otherwise good character’.”

For further discussion of the principles prohibiting "double punishment" see the decision of the High Court in *R v Hoar* (1981) 148 CLR 32 at 38, the decision of the Full Court in *R v Wedding* [1959] VR 298 and the decisions of the Court of Appeal in *R v Gruber, Ridgeway & Rowley* [2004] VSCA 100 at [18]-[19] per Callaway JA (with whom Warren CJ & Vincent JA agreed); *R v Langdon* (2004) 11 VR 18; *R v El-Kotob* (2002) 4 VR 546; *R v Langdon & Langdon* (2004) 11 VR 18; [2004] VSCA 205 at [1] per Batt JA, [35]-[37] & [88]-[97] per Gillard AJA; *R v Ly & Others* [2004] VSCA 45 at [29]-[30]; *R v Zaydan & Others* [2004] VSCA 245 at [42]; *R v Chhom Nor* (2005) 11 VR 390, 396 [15], 400 [22];[2005] VSCA 46 at [13]-[23]; *R v Chin Poh Tan* [2005] VSCA 54 at [10]; *R v Carne* [2006] VSCA 2 at [33]-[34]; *R v Lacey* [2006] VSCA 4 at [22]-[26]; *R v Spero* [2006] VSCA 58 at [53]; *R v Duncan* [2007] VSCA 137 at [28]-[30] per Nettle JA; *R v Alashkar – R v Tayar* [2007] VSCA 182 at [47]-[53]; *R v Henderson-Drife* [2007] VSCA 211 at [26]-[29]; *R v Norris* [2007] VSCA 241 at [44]-[49]; *R v King - R v Ngyouen* [2007] VSCA 263 at [29]; *R v Ahmed* [2007] VSCA 270 at [18]-[19]; *R v Audino* [2007] VSCA 318 at [12]-[18]; *R v Healey* [2008] VSCA 132 at [27]-[34]; *R v Mario Katsoulas* [2008] VSCA 278 at [7]; *R v Bidmade* [2009] VSCA 90 at [24]-[27]; *R v Doherty* [2009] VSCA 93 at [22]-[24]; *R v Stamenkovic* [2009] VSCA 185; *R v Le* [2009] VSCA 247 at [5]-[13]; *R v Bradley* [2010] VSCA 70 at [23]-[25]; *R v Nguyen* [2011] VSCA 139 at [15]; *DPP v Farrugia* [2011] VSCA 201 at [24]-[25]; *R v Grixti* [2011] VSCA 220 at [9]-[12]; *DPP v Salisbury* [2011] VSCA 366 at [26]-[27]; *R v Azzopardi, R v Baltatzis, R v Gabriel* [2011] VSCA 372 at [26]-[28]; *R v Kam Tin Ho & Ors* [2011] VSCA 344 at [123]-[125] applying *R v Wei Tang* (2009) 23 VR 332, 340-1, [32]-[34]; *R v Tran* [2011] VSCA 363 at [14]-[22]; *Shields v The Queen* [2011] VSCA 386 at [11]-[12]; *R v Charles* [2011] VSCA 399 at [187]-[195]; *R v White* [2011] VSCA 441 at [62]-[66]; *R v Orbit Drilling Pty Ltd; R v Smith* [2012] VSCA 82 at [68]-[70]; *DPP v Gangur* [2012] VSCA 139 at [10]-[25]; *DPP v El-Waly* [2012] VSCA 184 at [88]-[93]; *SD v The Queen* (2013) 39 VR 487, 494 [31]; *Nguyen v The Queen* [2013] VSCA 63 at [27]-[30]; *Lipp v The Queen* [2013] VSCA 384 at [23]-[39]; *Kruzenga v The Queen* [2014] VSCA 10 at [14]-[21]; *Buddle v The Queen* [2014] VSCA 232 at [18]-[22]; *Wakim v The Queen* [2016] VSCA 301; *Jakob Sutic v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 246 at [82]-[90]; *Salapura v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 255 at [40]-[68]; *Dale Cairns (a Pseudonym) v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 333 at [39]-[40]; *Fox v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 3 at [30]; *McMillan v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 189 at [22]; *Torrefranca v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 157 at [39]; *Sawyer v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 282 at [36]-[61]; *Tokarahi v The King* [2023] VSCA 293 at [36]-[40]; *Aden v The King* [2024] VSCA 21 at [48]; *Andrews v The King* [2025] VSCA 26 at [36]-[52]; *Tarasinski v The King* [2025] VSCA 162 at [19]-[33].

In the interlocutory appeal of *Justin Allison (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 308 the applicant had indicated an intention to plead guilty to a charge of possessing child abuse material but sought a permanent stay of charges of using a carriage service to access child pornography and to access child abuse material. The Court of Appeal dismissed the appeal, rejecting the applicant’s contention that the charges were duplicitous in that the conduct of accessing child pornography/child abuse material using a carriage service is an element of, and therefore subsumed by, the possession charge on the indictment. After considering *Pearce v The Queen* (1998) 194 CLR 610 and *R v Fulop* [2009] VSCA 296, T Forrest & Walker JJA and Macaulay AJA held:

* at [43] that “there was distinct and separate criminality involved in the applicant’s intentional possession of the child abuse material and in his intentional accessing of that material”; and
* at [46] that this “is not a case where there would be nothing left to be punished once the applicant is convicted and sentenced for the possession offence: cf. *R v Langdon* (2004) 11 VR 18,38 [117]; [2004] VSCA 205”.

For discussion of the issues of “commonality between offences” and “minimal additional criminality” see *Dang v The Queen* [2014] VSCA 49 at [86]-[96]; *Mustica v The Queen; DPP v Mustica* (2011) 31 VR 367 and *Trajkovski v The Queen* (2011) 32 VR 587.

In *Kettyle v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 220 the applicant had been convicted of being a prohibited person in possession of a firearm and of owning a general category handgun without a licence in respect of the same firearm. The Court of Appeal – applying *Pearce v The Queen* (1998) 194 CLR 610 at 618, 623 & 629 and referring to *R v Langdon* (2004) 11 VR 18, 39 & *R v Sessions* [1998] 2 VR 304, 313 – dismissed the application for leave to appeal against conviction on the ground of duplicity. At [55] Whelan & Kyrou JJA stated:

“In our opinion there was criminality involved in the applicant’s possession of the firearm both because he was a prohibited person and because he was unlicensed. This is not a case where there was nothing left to be punished. The judge has approached the matter in the way *Pearce* requires because clearly he treated the residual criminality involved in the summary offence as minor, but, in our view, he was correct not to treat it as amounting to nothing.”

Croucher AJA agreed but added a cautionary note for prosecutors, saying at [84]-[86]:

[84] “[Counsel for the respondent] quite properly conceded that, in the sound exercise of prosecutorial discretion, many a prosecutor would not have bothered to proceed with the charge for the summary licensing offence when the charge of prohibited person in possession of the same firearm was already on the indictment.

[85] He was also right, however, in the particular circumstances of this case, to defend both the propriety of the decision to persist with the licensing charge and the subsequent sentencing order made by the judge on the basis that there was some additional criminality, albeit slight, in that particular offence beyond that which was covered by the prohibited person offence that was properly capable of punishment by way of conviction and discharge.

[86] That said, prosecutors (and informants) should exercise great care in deciding whether to prosecute additional offences of this type when plainly one will do. Consistent with [counsel’s] sensible concession, in all the circumstances, it was unnecessary to lay the additional charge in the present case. Laying, or persisting with, additional charges of this type serves only to complicate the sentencing court’s task unnecessarily, to waste judicial and related resources on (legitimate) arguments on appeal that simply need not have been had, and to risk giving a false impression of an offender’s criminal record by suggesting that more instances of illegal behaviour than just the one occurred. There is also the risk that, in future, having two previous convictions where one will do might give rise to other adverse but unjustified consequences for the offender, whether they relate to sentencing on subsequent offences or to the prospects of overseas travel or employment opportunities or the like. None of these consequences is conducive to the sensible and orderly administration of the criminal justice system or the interests of justice.”

### **11.2.8 Effect of guilty plea, remorse, admission of offence, assistance to the authorities**

There do not appear to be any superior court cases specifically dealing with the effect on the sentencing of a child offender of a guilty plea and/or assistance to the authorities. Nor is there any provision in the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* akin to s.5(2)(e) of the *Sentencing Act 1991* which provides that in sentencing an adult offender a court must have regard to "whether the offender pleaded guilty to the offence and, if so, the stage in the proceedings at which the offender did so or indicated an intention to do so". Nevertheless there seems no reason why the cases dealing with adult offenders should not also be relevant for juvenile offenders, at least so far as any non-rehabilitative component of the sentence is concerned.

A number of relevant principles are set out in the judgment of Callaway JA in *R v Duncan* [1998] 3 VR 208 at 214-215. These include:

* Both a plea of guilty and significant assistance to the authorities usually justify some mitigation of sentence in the exercise of the wide discretion conferred on a sentencing judicial officer. It is referred to as a 'discount' to make it clear that a sentence is never increased or made more severe because an accused person puts the Crown to its proof or declines to give such assistance.
* This distinction is practical, whether or not it is logical or easily understood. In that respect it is like the proposition that, whilst remorse is a circumstance of mitigation, its absence is not an aggravating factor.
* In appropriate circumstances the discount for assistance may be very considerable indeed. Even where it does not evidence repentance or foreshadow amendment of life, a large reduction may be made for purely utilitarian reasons dictated by the public interest.
* In the case of a plea of guilty it is necessary to distinguish between the plea as indicating contrition or some other quality or attribute that is relevant to sentencing and the plea in its own right, but again the public interest is important.
* A plea that evidences genuine remorse and prospects of rehabilitation, that is entered at the earliest practical opportunity and that saves the State a trial and the witnesses both trauma and inconvenience normally justifies a high discount.
* An early plea that does nothing except save time and expense is still entitled to consideration, and should usually attract a significant discount, for the reasons explained by Hunt CJ at CL in *R v Winchester* (1992) 58 A Crim R 345 at 350 and by King CJ in *R v Shannon* (1979) 21 SASR 442 at 451. See also *R v Morton* [1986] VR 863 at 866-8.
* In a time of rising sentences, in conformity with community concerns to which Parliament has given expression in legislation, the discount for pleading guilty should be more rather than less: *R v Bolton and Barker* [1998] 1 VR 692 at 698.

In *R v P & Ors* [2007] VChC 3 the President of the Children’s Court, Judge Grant, imposed youth supervision orders or probation on eight young co-offenders. Each had pleaded guilty to:

* representative counts of procuring by intimidation a young woman FS described as “mildly delayed in her intellectual development” to take part in an act of sexual penetration with two of them;
* assault of FS; and
* making child pornography, namely a film depicting FS engaging in sexual activity.

At [22]-[23] Judge Grant highlighted to the offenders the significance of their guilty pleas:

“The offending here is so serious that, in the absence of a plea of guilty and your willingness to participate in an appropriate treatment regime, you would have been at significant risk, had you been found guilty after trial, of being detained in a Youth Justice facility. It follows from what I have just said that I give great credit to your pleas of guilty. They are so significant because they relieve the victim of the burden of giving evidence. She is not compelled to re-live these terrible events.

Importantly, your pleas of guilty also indicate your remorse. The pleas of guilty indicate your understanding of the importance of accepting responsibility for what you have done.”

In *R v Davy* [2011] VSCA 98 at [34] Bongiorno JA (with whom Harper & Hansen JJA agreed) said:

“The practical benefit of a plea of guilty and the consequent sentence discount, particularly in a child sex abuse case, should not be undervalued. Not only is the trauma of a trial on a 19-count presentment avoided for the victims, but the recognition by the justice system of a real discount for such a guilty plea has an encouraging effect on those subsequently charged with such offences.”

It is clear from the above that a plea of guilty does not necessarily connote genuine remorse but is nevertheless entitled to consideration. In *R v Fulop* [2009] VSCA 296 at [15] Buchanan JA (with whom Nettle JA agreed) said:

“As to remorse, her Honour was not bound to find that the pleas entailed remorse. As Gleeson CJ and Gummow, Hayne and Callinan JJ said in *Saganto v The Queen*: ‘A plea of guilty is usually evidence of some remorse on the part of the offender.’ In the present case, there were countervailing factors bearing upon remorse, and in my view the sentencing judge was entitled to take them into account.”

In *R v WWS* [2009] VSCA 125 at [56] Vincent, Nettle & Neave JJA said:

“[H]er Honour made no error in finding that the applicant was not genuinely remorseful. Further, even if her Honour should have found that the applicant displayed some limited remorse, that remorse was so qualified and rationalised by the applicant that we do not consider it should have been given any weight in addition to that given for the guilty plea. Her Honour said she had given considerable weight to that plea, even though the applicant did not plead guilty to the offences at the first available opportunity.”

In *R v Fisher* [2009] VSCA 100 an attempt had been made to deceive the sentencing court for the purpose of obtaining a lesser sentence than that which justice requires. While noting at [80] that “it cannot be said that there has been an unqualified desire to submit to just punishment for the offence”, nevertheless Redlich & Dodds-Streeton JJA said at [81]:

“[T]he deception did not relate to any aspect of the offending but to one aspect of the personal circumstances of the applicant. We doubt that the deception supported the inference that the appellant had no remorse at all. Rather, the discount for a plea of guilty was to be reduced to reflect the extent to which the offender’s remorse was qualified by such conduct. And that part of the discount for the guilty plea that was to be afforded on utilitarian grounds, was not to be reduced: *R v Pajic* [2009] VSCA 53.”

In *Va v The Queen* [2011] VSCA 426 at [17] Maxwell P and Redlich & Weinberg JJA – citing *Cooper v The Queen* (1998) 103 A Crim R 51, 55 (Winneke P with Tadgell JA agreeing) – stated that a sentencing court should always distinguish between regret and remorse. In *R v Kells* [2012] VSC 53 – after referring to *Va v The Queen* – Macaulay J said at [29]: “I accept that even genuine remorse is never likely to be entirely ‘pure’ and devoid of some degree of self interest: *R v Whyte* (2004) 7 VR 397, 403 [21]. Nevertheless, I am satisfied that your expressions of remorse at the time were much more than mere self-pity at the situation in which you had placed yourself.”

In *R v Pajic* (2009) 23 VR 527 Redlich JA had stated at [19]-[20]:

“One of the matters which may affect the appropriate discount to be allowed for a plea of guilty is the strength of the Crown case: see *R v Donnelly* [1998] 1 VR 645, 648. Thus, a plea of guilty in the context of a weak Crown case will generally warrant an additional level of discount. It will be proper for a sentencing judge in some particular cases to find that the circumstance of a plea of guilty which might otherwise attract leniency is absent: *Siganto v The Queen* (1998) 194 CLR 656, [22]-[23] (Gleeson CJ, Gummow, Hayne and Callinan JJ). Where the Crown case is a strong one, the conclusion may sometimes be justified that the plea has resulted from the recognition of the inevitable and so qualifies the extent of genuine contrition: *R v Shannon* (1979) 21 SASR 442, 452; *R v Winchester* (1992) 58 A Crim R 345, 350 (Hunt CJ at CL).

It must not be overlooked that whatever arguments there be about the degree of remorse shown by the plea, the strength of the Crown case will have no bearing upon that part of the discount which is to be allowed by virtue of utilitarian considerations: *see R v Thompson*; *R v Houlton* (2000) 49 NSWLR 383, [137]-[138] (Spigelman CJ); *R v Cameron* (2005) NSWCCA 357, [22]-[24].. And a reduction in the discount because the strength of the Crown case shows that the plea reflects only limited remorse should only occur where conditions exist which justify such a conclusion.”

Although *Pajic* has been followed in numerous cases {*R v Fisher* (2009) 22 VR 343, [81]; *R v RLP* [2009] VSCA 271, [42]–[44]; *Andrick v The Queen* [2010] VSCA 238, [35];  *Ciantar v The Queen; Rose v The Queen* [2010] VSCA 313; [31]; *Chalmers v The Queen* [2011] VSCA 436, [51]; *Cliffard v The Queen* [2011] VSCA 56, [16]}, certain aspects of it were challenged in *R v Phillips* [2012] VSCA 140 one of the issues. Accordingly a Full Bench was assembled. None of the five judges dissented from the reasoning of Ashley & Redlich JJA in *Pajic*. In a joint judgment with which Maxwell P, Nettle JA & Harper JA separately agreed, Redlich JA & Curtain AJA said at [36]:

“[T]he following are the relevant matters which should inform a determination of the extent of the discount to be given for a plea of guilty:

1. A discount for the utilitarian benefit of the plea must always be allowed on the sentence to be imposed, save for the exceptional category of case.

2. The exceptional case arises where the gravity of the offending conduct is of such an order that no discount from the maximum sentence is appropriate.

3. The strength of the Crown case is irrelevant to the discount to be allowed for the utilitarian benefit of the plea as it does not bear upon the objective benefits of the plea: *Chalmers v The Queen* [2011] VSCA 436, [51].

4. A greater discount for the utilitarian benefit may be justified where the plea involves very considerable savings of costs to the community or where some other very significant benefit can be seen to flow from the plea.

5. It is always a question for the sentencing judge whether remorse, a willingness to facilitate the course of justice and an acceptance of responsibility are to be inferred from a plea of guilty.

6. Where there is evidence or a submission accepted by the sentencing judge as to the unqualified existence of these subjective criteria, they should be fully reflected in the discount.

7. The utilitarian benefits which flow from the plea may also inform the extent of the discount to be allowed for the offender’s willingness to facilitate the course of justice.

8. The weakness of the Crown case, if apparent, may also inform the extent of the offender’s willingness to facilitate the course of justice.

9. The sentencing judge will not need to separately deal with the objective criteria of the utilitarian benefit of the plea and the subjective criteria, unless there is reason to conclude that less than the full discount should be allowed for the subjective criteria.

10. The strength of the Crown case can only support an inference that these subjective criteria played little or no, role in the decision to plead guilty where the state of the contextual evidence on the plea permits such a conclusion.”

In *DPP v Bourke* [2020] VSC 130 at [32] Jane Dixon J accepted a substantial utilitarian value of the accused’s guilty plea in the light of public health concerns regarding the COVID-19 pandemic which may have impacted on the practical management of a jury and given that new jury trials have been suspended.

In *DPP v Carr* [2012] VSCA 299 at [70] the Court of Appeal – citing earlier decisions in R v Bartlett [1996] 2 VR 687, 698-9 and *Sherna v The Queen* [2011] VSCA 242 at [18], [41] & [88] as well as a number of decisions from other states – held that “a rejected offer to plead guilty to a lesser offence than that upon which the Crown has proceeded may also be considered to have a utilitarian value when the offender has ultimately been convicted of that lesser offence”.

See also *R v Rogers* [2008] VSCA 114 at [48]-[52]; *Dawid v DPP* [2013] VSCA 64 at [20]-[29].

In *Jesse Deacon (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 257 at [154] and *Jenni Smith v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 258 at [85] Kaye & T Forrest JJA & Taylor AJA cautioned against the inverse proposition, saying:

“It is well established that while remorse and related concepts such as concern for the welfare of a victim have been treated by sentencing courts as factors that may tend to mitigate sentence, their absence may not be regarded as constituting a feature of aggravation: see for example *Mune v The Queen* [2011] VSCA 231; *R v Duncan* [1998] 3 VR 208; *R v Kumar* [2002] VSCA 139. Callaway JA put the proposition succinctly: “Whilst remorse is a circumstance of mitigation, its absence is not an aggravating factor: *R v Duncan* [1998] 3 VR 208, 215; *Mune v The Queen* [2011] VSCA 231 [12].”

In *Shaptafaj v The King* [2023] VSCA 93 the applicant had pleaded guilty to murder of his daughter and her husband, having waited outside their home and shot them in the head at close range. The murders were motivated by feelings of being insulted and offended by the victims. Tinney J had imposed a sentence of life imprisonment with a non-parole period of 35y on each charge. Noting that this was extremely serious, pre-planned and premeditated offending with a high degree of moral culpability, the Court of Appeal refused the application for leave to appeal. At [54]-[56] Priest, Kaye & Hargrave JJA said:

[54] “It is well-recognised in the authorities that, notwithstanding the utilitarian value of a plea of guilty, nevertheless, in a case in which the offending is exceptionally serious, the only appropriate sentence for murder may be one of life imprisonment.

[55] In *Phillips v The Queen* (2012) 37 VR 594 at [65] & [67] Redlich JA and Curtain AJA (with whom Maxwell P agreed) expressed that proposition in the following terms:

The mitigatory effect of the plea is a component of the instinctive synthesis, but the weight to be attached to it should be the result of specific and sound consideration. That is not to say that it will usually be necessary or desirable for the sentencing judge to deal separately in the sentencing remarks with the allowance to be made for the utilitarian benefits separate from the allowance for subjective criteria. But if there is to be some reduction in the discount to be allowed for the subjective criteria, then it should be so stated to make clear what part of the discount has been reduced…

The exceptional case arises where the gravity or aggravating features of the offending conduct are of such an order that even allowing the mitigatory effect of the plea, the maximum sentence remains appropriate. That is because the offender’s criminality so outweighs any circumstances of mitigation that are present. For example, for the offence of murder, a sentence of life imprisonment is sometimes imposed, notwithstanding a plea of guilty, because of the degree of criminality of the offence. In such cases the enormity of the offender’s criminality may be such as to require that, albeit exceptionally, the mitigatory effect of the utilitarian benefit yield to considerations of greater weight such as proper protection of the public, and the maintenance of the rule of law. The exception may also arise in the case of lesser offences where imposition of the maximum sentence for that offence is considered necessary notwithstanding the plea or other mitigatory factors.

[56] That proposition has been reflected in decisions of this Court, in which, notwithstanding a plea of guilty, the Court has upheld sentences of life imprisonment for murders which have involved particularly serious instances of the crime of murder. See, for example, [*R v Quarry*](https://jade.io/article/71732) (2005) 11 VR 337; [2005] VSCA 65 (Warren CJ, Batt and Eames JJA); [*Hunter v The Queen*](https://jade.io/article/312063) (2013) 40 VR 660; [2013] VSCA 385 (Maxwell P, Priest and Coghlan JJA); [*Cardamone v The Queen*](https://jade.io/article/661787) [2019] VSCA 190 (Ferguson CJ, Maxwell and Weinberg JA); [*Todd v The Queen*](https://jade.io/article/719923) [2020] VSCA 46 (Kyrou, Kaye and Emerton JJA); [*Noori v The Queen*](https://jade.io/article/791151) [2021] VSCA 46 (Priest, Niall and T Forrest JJA)…”

### **11.2.8.1 Remorse**

In *Lyddy v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 35 the appellant had pleaded guilty to 11 armed robberies, one robbery and 1 attempted armed robbery committed over a two-week period. In sentencing the appellant to a TES of IMP8y1m/5y7m the trial judge did not accept that the appellant had demonstrated remorse. In allowing his appeal and substituting a TES of IMP7y3m/5y Kyrou JA & Taylor JJA applied *Broadbent v The Queen* [2009] VSCA 320 and considered *Barbaro v The Queen* (2012) 226 A Crim R 354, 365-6 and held at [62]-[69] (emphasis added):

[62] “For some time, courts have drawn a distinction between the sorrow of an offender for being caught and punished, and the regret of an offender for the harm caused by his or her actions. Only the latter is remorse for sentencing purposes. If such remorse is to be relied upon as a mitigating factor, the burden falls upon an offender to identify evidence of it.

[63] In *Barbaro v The Queen* (2012) 226 A Crim R 354, 365-6 [38]–[41], this Court said the following:

‘A person wishing to rely on remorse as a mitigating factor needs to satisfy the court that there is genuine penitence and contrition and a desire to atone. In many instances, the most compelling evidence of this will come from testimony by the offender. A judge is certainly not bound to accept secondhand evidence of what the offender said to a psychiatrist or psychologist or other professional, let alone testimonials from family or friends, or statements from the Bar table.

If there is evidence of remorse, and if that remorse is genuine, it is a very important element in the exercise of the sentencing discretion. Remorse of this kind enhances prospects of rehabilitation and reduces the need for specific deterrence. An offender who pleads guilty because he or she has an accurate appreciation of the wrongfulness of his or her offending, and of its impact upon its victim or victims, and who desires to do what reasonably can be done to repair the damage and to clear his or her conscience, is someone to whom mercy — in the form of a material reduction in what would otherwise be an appropriate sentence — is very likely due.

But sentencing discounts, and especially significant sentencing discounts, should not be given unless remorse is established by proper evidence, or unless on a proper basis the judge is content to relieve the offender of the need to discharge that burden. In adopting the necessary “precision of approach...in complying with the obligation to take the plea of guilty into account”, sentencing judges should approach with caution assertions that the plea itself is a sufficient basis for a conclusion that remorse is present, warranting a discount over and above that which is to be granted on the basis of utility. As Redlich JA and Curtain AJA point out in *Phillips*, “[t]he conduct and statements of the offender over time provide a more informative and precise guide than the plea alone as to whether genuine and deep contrition exists”.

We respectfully agree with Redlich JA and Curtain AJA that “[i]n every case the genuineness of the contrition and the time and manner in which it is manifested in association with the plea of guilty will require evaluation by the sentencing judge in the light of the overall complexity of the facts before the court”.’

[64] It is clear that the time at which a sentencing judge is to determine whether an offender has demonstrated genuine remorse in this sense is subsequent to the offending. As this Court observed in *Broadbent* [2009] VSCA 320 at [19]:

‘[W]e do not think that Broadbent’s (admitted) lack of consideration for others at the time of the offending justified any “qualification” of the Court’s acceptance of the remorse which he expressed subsequently. In our view, Broadbent’s expressions of “deep remorse” — to which both the prosecutor and defence counsel had drawn attention — reflected his subsequent realisation of, and deep regret for, the very lack of consideration for others which had characterised the offending. The expressions of remorse were couched in unusually emphatic terms. There being no suggestion by the prosecutor in the course of the plea that Broadbent’s remorse was other than genuine and heartfelt — as it appeared to be — he was entitled to have it given full weight in the sentencing process.’

[65] It is beyond doubt that at the time of his offending the appellant well understood the impact of his continuing actions upon his victims. But this was neither an aggravating factor of his offending {*Broadbent* at [18]} nor relevant to the task of the judge in assessing whether he had demonstrated genuine remorse.

[66] While the fact of the appellant’s “ice” use was not mitigatory of his conduct, it is relevant to describing that conduct as a spree. Over a short period of time, the appellant’s ongoing focus was the repeated need to obtain money for illicit drugs or to pay drug debts.

[67] When that spree ended with his arrest and remand, the appellant moved his focus to the broader consequences of his actions. **It is from the conduct of the appellant at that time and subsequently that the assessment of his claimed remorse should have been made.**

[68] The judge was not bound to accept the evidence of remorse as relied upon by the appellant, and did not. However, this rejection of evidence of remorse was not made because her Honour was not satisfied by that evidence. Rather, as accepted by the respondent, the judge decided not to accept the evidence of remorse because it was inconsistent with a lack of remorse at the time of offending. In this regard, her Honour erred.

[69] In our view, the evidence available to her Honour as to the expressions and actions of the appellant subsequent to the offending should have anchored a finding that the appellant had demonstrated a measure of remorse. This is apparent from his words and demeanour in the recorded interview, which, as we have said, we have watched. It is also demonstrated by the appellant’s expression of regret to Dr Scally and his then counsel. The evidence did not support a finding of “deep regret” but in the circumstances of the case, a measure of remorse was established.”

### **11.2.8.2 Discount for guilty plea and/or admission of offence**

In *R v Robertson* [2005] VSCA 190 at [12] Chernov JA – with whom Maxwell P & Callaway JA agreed – cautioned against the granting of a sentencing discount which was “illusory”:

“Given his full and frank admissions to the police about the offending conduct, I think that his pleas of guilty evidenced genuine remorse, his acceptance of responsibility for the offending conduct as well as a willingness to facilitate the administration of justice. I consider that these factors justify, in this case, a sentencing discount that is considerably greater than ‘minimal’. But, even if it could be properly said that the pleas of guilty did not demonstrate genuine remorse and acceptance of responsibility by the appellant, they do nevertheless show a willingness on his part to facilitate the course of justice and, for that reason alone, a discount greater than "minimal" would have been warranted in this case. On either basis, the sentencing discount should not be illusory but should be seen to be reflected in the sentence imposed.”

In *R v DTR* [2005] VSCA 291 at [9] Buchanan JA – with whom Callaway & Vincent JJA agreed – noted that the appellant had pleaded guilty at the first opportunity, had regretted his actions immediately and was clearly truly remorseful. At [11] His Honour referred with approval to *R v Ellis* [1986] NSWLR 603 at 604 where Street CJ said:

“Where it was unlikely that guilt would be discovered and established were it not for the disclosure by the person coming forward to sentence, then a considerable element of leniency should properly be extended by the sentencing judge. It is part of the policy of the criminal law to encourage a guilty person to come forward and disclose both the fact of an offence having been committed and confession of guilt of that offence."

In *R v Doran* [2005] VSCA 271 at [14] Buchanan JA – with whom Eames & Nettle JJA agreed – explained that the consequences of the appellant’s voluntary confessions of crimes which might otherwise not be detected were that “they reduce the need for a sentence to personally deter the appellant, they increase the prospects of his successful rehabilitation and they demonstrate genuine remorse for his actions”. See also *Ryan v R* (2001) 206 CLR 267 especially at 295 per Kirby J; *R v Brazel* (2005) 153 A Crim R 152 at 159 per Callaway JA; *R v CLP* [2008] VSCA 113 at [22]-[24] where Neave JA noted that “weight should also be given to an admission of sexual offences because it may help the victims to recover from the harm caused to them”. See also *JBM v The Queen* [2013] VSCA 69 at [39]-[50].

In *R v DW* [2006] VSCA 196 Nettle, Neave & Redlich JJA said at [19]:

“In our view the judge was entitled to take into account, as a factor which limited the discount to be allowed for the appellant's plea of guilty, that the appellant was so little concerned about the effects of his offending upon his granddaughter that he should choose to subject her and her parents to the ordeal of a committal hearing and, worse, prolonged cross-examination. It is one thing to plead guilty at the door of the court when it looks like the game may be up. The law takes the view that that is worth a discount. But it is quite another to plead guilty immediately and thereby save the victims and the community any further burden. That is likely to attract a much larger discount and a good deal more respect.”

In *R v Guthrie & Nuttall* [2006] VSCA 192 at [75]-[79] Chernov, Vincent & Redlich JJA - adopting dicta from *R  v Hall* (1994) 76 A Crim R 474 and *R v Ioane* [2006] VSCA 86 – held that it was a sentencing error to balance the plea of guilty against the seriousness of the offence as the sentencing judge had done when he said: “The extreme gravity of your conduct outweighs the benefit to which you might otherwise be entitled for your plea of guilty.”

The sentencing remarks of King J in *R v Williams* [2007] VSC 131 make it clear that it is “pragmatic and utilitarian” to give a discount to an offender who has pleaded guilty even though he had no genuine remorse for his crimes. In sentencing the offender to life imprisonment with a minimum of 35 years on 3 counts of murder and one count of conspiracy to murder, her Honour said at [129]:

“I do intend to impose a minimum term, but that is on the basis of one significant factor only, which are your pleas of guilty to these offences. Whilst I find that you do not have any genuine remorse for the crimes, I am still obliged to take into account in your favour that you have entered pleas of guilty. It is pragmatic and utilitarian to give you a discount for entering those pleas, for by doing so you have prevented this Court from spending anywhere between 5 to 10 years hearing your trials and the appeals from those trials. Equally you have released the police officers involved in this task force to move onto other pressing cases that need investigating, and enabled those in the Office of Public Prosecutions to pursue other prosecutions. The amount of money that has been saved as a result is considerable. That behaviour must be encouraged. It must be made clear to all charged with offences, of whatever type, that if they do enter a plea of guilty to the offences that they will receive a real and significant discount. Without your pleas of guilty I would not have imposed a minimum term for these offences, even allowing for the other mitigating material upon which your counsel relied.”

In *R v BF* [2007] VSCA 217 the Court of Appeal held at [31] & [52]-[57] that the appellant’s early guilty plea entitled him to some reduction of sentence and that “he was entitled to an added element of leniency because his admission of digitally penetrating his niece [who was herself uncertain whether she had been penetrated] provided the basis for the charge of digital rape: *R v Ellis* (1986) 6 NSWLR 603, 604 per Street CJ.” However, the Court of Appeal noted at [56] that the appellant’s admission should not be given as much weight as the admission to offences against unknown victims in *Ryan v R* (2001) 206 CLR 267, 272 [12] (McHugh J), 295 [95]–296 [98] (Kirby J) or the admission of an offence to which the offender had not previously been linked in any way in *R v Brazel* (2005) 153 A Crim R 152, 159 [21] per Callaway JA; [2005] VSCA 152. See also *R v Marcus* [2004] VSCA 155 (appellant who pleaded guilty to cocaine importation was entitled to leniency because he had disclosed two previous offences unknown to authorities); *R v Doran* [2005] VSCA 271 (appellant who was being investigated for particular sexual offences admitted committing other offences against children).

In finding specific error in *R v Andrick* [2010] VSCA 238 – a case in which the appellant had pleaded guilty to two counts of theft, two counts of obtaining property by deception, one count of burglary and one count of attempting to obtain property by deception – Weinberg JA (with whom Ashley JA agreed) said at [34]:

“A discount of only six months on a putative sentence of six years and six months, and six months on a putative non-parole period of five years, does not adequately reflect the utilitarian value of a plea of guilty, still less accord sufficient weight to such remorse as might otherwise be thought to attached to that plea.”

In *DPP v Noori* [2019] VSC 172 Hollingworth J had imposed a sentence of life imprisonment on one charge of murder and concurrent individual terms of imprisonment on 11 charges of recklessly causing serious injury and 5 charges of reckless conduct endangering life. A non-parole period of 30y was fixed. The 35 year old offender – who pleaded guilty to the charges – had driven a motor vehicle into the interection of Flinders & Elizabeth Streets Melbourne against a red light and had deliberately run down a number of pedestrians who were crossing. In *Noori v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 46 the Court of Appeal refused leave to appeal. At [53]-[54] Priest, Niall & T Forrest JJA said:

[53] “Contrary to the thrust of submissions advanced by the applicant’s counsel, **it should not be thought that a plea of guilty alone in all cases will automatically result in something less than the maximum sentence being imposed**. As was said in *Phillips*:

‘The exceptional case arises where the gravity or aggravating features of the offending conduct are of such an order that even allowing the mitigatory effect of the plea, the maximum sentence remains appropriate. That is because the offender’s criminality so outweighs any circumstances of mitigation that are present. For example, for the offence of murder, a sentence of life imprisonment is sometimes imposed, notwithstanding a plea of guilty, because of the degree of criminality of the offence. In such cases the enormity of the offender’s criminality may be such as to require that, albeit exceptionally, the mitigatory effect of the utilitarian benefit yield to considerations of greater weight such as proper protection of the public, and the maintenance of the rule of law. The exception may also arise in the case of lesser offences where imposition of the maximum sentence for that offence is considered necessary notwithstanding the plea or other mitigatory factors.’

[54] We consider that, in the circumstances of this case, the applicant’s plea of guilty must have influenced, first, the sentencing judge’s decision to afford the applicant the possibility of conditional release on parole; and, secondly, the judge’s assessment of the minimum period that he would have to serve before justice permitted that possibility to crystallise.”

In *Chenhall v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 175, *Worboyes v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 169 & *Schaeffer v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 171 an identically constituted Court of Appeal (Priest, Kaye & T Forrest JJA) discussed whether a plea of guilty during the COVID-19 pandemic augmented the utilitarian value of the plea. In *Chenhall*, in reducing the head sentence and the non-parole period by 6 months, the Court said at [33]-[36]:

“In [*Worboyes*](https://jade.io/article/819967) we set out our reasons for concluding that where an accused person has made a plea of guilty during the COVID-19 pandemic, in certain cases that fact should be accepted as augmenting the utilitarian value of the plea,  so that it should therefore be accorded additional weight as a mitigating circumstance.

Specifically, in *Worboyes*, the Court said at [39]:

‘For these reasons, we consider that — all other things being equal — a plea of guilty entered during the currency of the COVID-19 pandemic is worthy of greater weight in mitigation than a similar plea entered at a time when the community and the courts are not afflicted by the pandemic’s effects.  A plea of guilty during the pandemic ordinarily should attract a more pronounced amelioration of sentence than at another time.  Although a sentencing judge need not quantify the extent of any ‘discount’, he or she must ensure that the plea of guilty results in a perceptible amelioration of sentence.’

In [*Worboyes*](https://jade.io/article/819967) the applicant’s counsel had not asked the sentencing judge to attribute greater weight to the plea of guilty given that it was entered during the pandemic, and the ground was thus rejected.  In the present case, however, the sentencing judge was asked to do this and specifically declined to do so.  In the circumstances of this case, we have concluded that the judge erred in so declining.  The plea, entered during the pandemic, did its bit to ease the trial backlog, and the applicant, who was on bail, submitted himself to more onerous conditions than would otherwise have been the case.  Further, had a greater utilitarian benefit been allowed, it would have provided some incentive to others in a similar position to this applicant to plead guilty, with the concomitant benefit to a justice system under great pressure.

We consider this to be a material error and the applicant has established ground 1.  The sentencing discretion is thus reopened.

Other cases in which the mitigatory effect of a plea of guilty has been discussed include *R v Gray* [1977] VR 225; *R v Rostom* [1996] 2 VR 97; *R v Donnelly* [1998] 1 VR 645; *Cameron v R* (2002) 209 CLR 339; *R v Diep* [2003] VSCA 203; *R v Saw* [2004] VSC 117 at [36]; *DPP v Bennett* [2004] VSC 207 at [33] per Cummins J; *R v Bulger* [1990] 2 Qd R 559; *R v Tan* (1993) 117 FLR 38; *Pavlic v R* (1995) 5 Tas R 186; *R v Tasker* *& Tasker* (2003) 7 VR 128 {[2003] VSCA 190}; *R v Ly* [2004] VSCA 45 at [19]-[22] per Coldrey AJA; *R v Taing* [2004] VSCA 46; *R v Kittikhoun* [2004] VSCA 194 at [9]; *R v Stephen Mark Makin* [2004] VSC 485 at [25]-[28]; *R v Nikodjevic* [2004] VSCA 222 at [28]-[33]; *R v HNT* [2005] VSCA 12 at [14]; *R v Brazel* [2005] VSCA 56 at [21]-[22]; *R v Le; R v Nguyen* [2005] VSCA 284 at [8], [13] & [17]; *R v Sullivan* [2005] VSCA 286 at [26]; *R v Slattery (Sentence)* [2008] VSC 81 at [35]; *R v Morrison* [2011] VSC 311 at [27]; *R v Coombes* [2011] VSC 407 at [75]-[83]; *R v Sherna* [2011] VSCA 242 at [16]-[22] & [52]-[97]; *DPP v Breuer* [2011] VSCA 244 at [17]-[22]; *R v Rintoull* [2011] VSCA 245 at [34]-[36]; *John Gordon v The Queen* [2013] VSCA 343 at [31]-[42] & [70]-[72]; *Hunter v The Queen* [2013] VSCA 385 at [13]-[24] & [107]-[135]; *DPP v Green* [2020] VSCA 23 at [74]-[78]; *Biba v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 168 at [26]-[32]; *Tyson Ralph v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 185 at [50]-[51]; *Bleakley v The King* [2024] VSCA 88 at [30]-[35]; *R v Fenwick* [2025] VSC 95 at [209]-[215].

Until 30/06/2008 it had been the law in Victoria that a sentencing judge was not obliged to quantify any discount which he or she had given for a plea of guilty: see e.g. dicta of the Court of Appeal in *R v McIntosh* [2005] VSCA 106 [25] (Chernov JA), [30] (Batt JA) and *R v Rowlands* [2007] VSCA 14 at [10]. However that was altered by s.362A of the CYFA, introduced as and from 01/07/2008 by s.4 of the *Criminal Procedure Legislation Amendment Act 2008* [Act No.8/2008]. That section provides:

**362A Sentence discount for guilty plea**

1. If-
2. in sentencing a child, the Court imposes a less severe sentence than it would otherwise have imposed because the child pleaded guilty to the offence; and
3. the sentence imposed on the child is or includes a youth attendance order, a youth residential centre order or a youth justice centre order-

the Court must state in respect of-

1. each offence; or
2. if an aggregate sentence is imposed in respect of two or more offences, those offences-

the sentence that it would have imposed but for the plea of guilty.

1. In the case of a sentence other than a sentence referred to in subsection (1)(b), the Court may state the sentence that it would have imposed but for the plea of guilty.
2. If the Court makes a statement under this section, it must cause to be noted in the records of the Court in respect of-
   1. each offence; or
   2. if an aggregate sentence is imposed in respect of two or more offences, those offences-

the sentence that it would have imposed but for the plea of guilty.

1. The failure of the Court to comply with this section does not invalidate any sentence imposed by it.
2. Nothing in subsection (4) prevents a court on an appeal against sentence from reviewing a sentence imposed by the Court in circumstances where there has been a failure to comply with this section.

In *DPP v BC* [2024] VSC 716 at [52] Fox J noted that s.362A did not apply in the case where she had imposed a youth supervision order on the offender and her Honour declined to state the sentence she would have imposed but for the plea of guilty.

Section 6AAA of the *Sentencing Act 1991*, introduced on the same day by s.3 of the amending Act, imposes a broadly similar obligation on a Court sentencing an offender under the *Sentencing Act* to a term of imprisonment or imposing a fine exceeding 10 penalty units or an aggregate fine exceeding 20 penalty units. Ironically s.6AAA is less onerous on a court ordering imprisonment under the Sentencing Act than is s.362A on a court ordering sentences of detention on a child under the CYFA in that s.6AAA(2) does not require the court to make a declaration in respect of each individual offence whereas s.362A(1)(c) requires the Children’s Court to make a declaration in respect of each individual sentence of detention.

In his ruling on s.6AAA handed down on 22/07/2008 in *R v Flaherty (No 2)* [2008] VSC 270; (2008) 19 VR 305 Kaye J held at [8]:

* It was not the intention of the *Criminal Procedure Legislation Amendment Act 2008* to abrogate, in its entirety, the fundamental approach to sentencing, as an “instinctive synthesis” of all relevant circumstances (see e.g. *R v Williscroft* [1975] VR 292, 300).
* It was not the intention of the legislature that s.6AAA should operate to make sentences either more or less severe.
* It was the clear legislative intention that the sentencing judge should identify, in terms of an actual period of imprisonment, the effect on a sentence of a plea of guilty. The underlying object of s.6AAA appeared to be to advance the public interest in guilty persons pleading guilty, and to provide for a conspicuous reward to those who do so.

However, his Honour went on to discuss the considerable difficulties in putting that legislative intention into effect, describing the process at [11] as “artificial and difficult from an intellectual point of view” and referring at [13]-[14] to the divergent approaches of the Courts of Criminal Appeal in NSW and South Australia in quantifying an appropriate ‘discount”. At [15] his Honour concluded:

“[I]n the circumstances of this case, it is not possible to hypothesise, realistically, what sentence I would have imposed on the prisoner if he had not pleaded guilty, but if all the other circumstances of the case were the same. Nonetheless, in pronouncing sentence, I must endeavour to do so, in order to comply with s 6AAA, and to inform the prisoner of the term of imprisonment he has been spared as a result of his guilty plea. The only method by which I can achieve that object is to determine, first, the appropriate sentence to be imposed on the prisoner by an instinctive synthesis of all the circumstances, including his guilty plea, as attended by remorse and an endeavour to be cooperative. I have then attempted to identify how much longer the sentence would have been if the prisoner had not pleaded guilty. In that way I have, somewhat artificially, arrived at the hypothetical sentence postulated by s 6AAA, if the prisoner had not pleaded guilty. Doing the best I can, I estimate that the prisoner’s guilty plea, which I consider to be made with remorse and with the intention to facilitate the course of justice, has operated to reduce the prisoner’s head sentence, and minimum non-parole period, each by a period of two years. Thus, hypothetically, if the prisoner had not pleaded guilty, for the purposes of s 6AAA, I state that I would have imposed a sentence of 23 years’ imprisonment with a minimum non-parole period of 18 years.”

A similar approach has been adopted in *R v Churchill, McGillivray and Whittaker* [2008] VSC 393 at [37] per Kaye J and in *R v Diver* [2008] VSC 399 at [67] per Coghlan J. See also *R v Cedic* [2011] VSCA 258 at [37]-[41]; *SD v The Queen* [2013] VSCA 133 at [63]; *DPP v Couper* (2013) 41 VR 128; [2013] VSCA 72.

In *R v Johnston* [2008] VSCA 133 at [17], Nettle JA (with whom Buchanan & Ashley JJA agreed) pointed out that s.6AAA says “nothing of the additional discount which is to be allowed for a plea of guilty and cooperation with the Crown”.

In *R v Whitlow* [2009] VSCA 103 at [47] Dodds-Streeton JA (with whom Redlich JA agreed) held that there was no requirement that the reduction of a sentence announced pursuant to s.6AAA must apply proportionately to the head sentence and the non-parole period but rather that the contrary was more the norm:

“In my opinion, a significantly greater or arithmetically disproportionate reduction of the non-parole period (compared with the head sentence) due to a guilty plea, particularly where it promotes or bespeaks rehabilitation, is consistent with, rather than precluded by, the principles expressed in applicable authorities.”

In *R v Burke* [2009] VSCA 60 the Court of Appeal rejected a submission that the ‘notional’ sentence announced in accordance with s.6AAA is appealable, holding at [30] that this notional sentence “is not part of the sentence imposed”.

There appears to be a conflict of authority on whether the discount allowed on a plea of guilty is examinable for specific error rather than merely being a particular ground of manifest excessiveness. In *R v Scerri* [2010] VSCA 287 Maxwell P & Buchanan JA held that it was not so examinable. In *R v Howard* [2009] VSCA 281 at [15] the Court of Appeal held that where a sentencing judge has grossly undervalued the importance of the discount for pleading guilty, it may be viewed as a sentencing error and the sentencing discretion re-opened. In *R v Ciantar and Rose* [2010] VSCA 313 at [36] Nettle & Bongiorno JJA left the question open, stating that to the extent that there is a difference between *Howard* and *Scerri*, it should be resolved in the context of a case where it is likely to effect the outcome. In *R v Rizzo* [2011] VSCA 146 at [33] the Court of Appeal (Warren CJ, Neave JA & Lasry AJA) referred to *R v Scerri* with apparent approval. In *Saab v The Queen* [2012] VSCA 165 the Court of Appeal (Buchanan, Weinberg & Mandie JJA) discussed the cases of *Burke, Scerri, Howard, Ciantar and Rose* & *Rizzo* – as well as the cases of *Orbit Drilling Pty Ltd v The Queen* [2012] VSCA 82 at [67], *Lunt* *v The Queen* [2012] VSCA 62, *Cedic* *v The Queen* [2011] VSCA 258, *Phillips* *v The Queen* [2012] VSCA 140, *DPP v Terrick* (2009) 24 VR 457,459-60, *Gorladenchearau v The Queen* [2011] VSCA 432, *Pesa v The Queen* [2012] VSCA 109 & *R v Giles* [1999] VSCA 208 – and favoured the *Scerri* dicta, holding at [58]: “We think that the line of authority holding that a s 6AAA statement is generally not to be taken to exhibit error should be followed.”

In *Thuy Thanh Thi Tran v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 44 the applicant had submitted that a member of the same drug trafficking syndicate – but not a coaccused – who had been given the same sentence as the applicant {see [2022] VSCA 45} must have been given a greater benefit for her plea than the applicant by reference to a 6 month difference in their respective s.6AAA statements. The Court of Appeal (Maxwell P & Priest JA) – endorsing the approach in *Saab v The Queen* [2012] VSCA 165, [59] (Buchanan, Weinberg and Mandie JJA), in turn quoting *Wong* (2001) 207 CLR 584, 612 [76] (Gaudron, Gummow and Hayne JJ) – strongly rejected the submission, saying at [35]-[36] [emphasis added]:

[35] “**This Court has repeatedly cautioned against structuring arguments on appeal against sentence around s 6AAA statements. These statements are not part of the sentence imposed**:

‘The principal obstacle to a determination that the notional sentence stated pursuant to s 6AAA can reveal specific error lies in the fact that sentences are the product of a process of instinctive synthesis. Judges do not fix sentences by adding to and subtracting from a starting point periods of time they attribute to particular sentencing factors. In order to comply with s 6AAA, a sentencing judge is required to guess the part played by one of a number of conflicting and contradictory elements in a synthesis of all the elements and ascribe a number to that element. As Gaudron, Gummow and Hayne JJ said in *Wong v The Queen*:

So long as a sentencing judge must, or may, take account of *all* of the circumstances of the offence and the offender, to single out some of those considerations and attribute specific numerical or proportionate value to some features, distorts the already difficult balancing exercise which the judge must perform.

It may be thought that there is more chance of an error in this artificial, contrived exercise than in the original synthesis.’

[36] The applicant proposes in this part of proposed ground 3 that we compare two ‘artificial, contrived’ exercises in order to conclude inequality of treatment. We decline to do so.”

In *Alicia Mason (a pseudonym) v The King* [2023] VSCA 75 the applicant had pleaded guilty to a charge of importing a commercial quantity of a border controlled drug described by the Court as “enormous”, namely around 1.2 tonnes of methylamphetamine and just under 30kg of heroin. She had been sentenced to IMP11y/7y. Pursuant to s.16AC *Crimes Act (Cth)* the sentencing judge specified that the applicant’s sentence would have been IMP29y had she not cooperated with law enforcement agencies. He did not specify the non-parole period that would have been imposed. In granting leave to appeal but dismissing the appeal Beach & Niall JJA held that-

* a s.16AC specification is not a starting point for sentence nor is it a sentence or part of a sentence;
* a s.16AC specification is not useful to contend a sentence is manifestly excessive;
* failure to specify a non-parole period in the s.16AC specification was not a vitiating error; and
* it was not reasonably arguable that the head sentence and the non-parole period were manifestly excessive.

### **11.2.8.3 Assistance to authorities (Informer’s discount)**

In *R v QMN; R v WD* [2004] VSCA 32 at [30]-[31] O'Bryan AJA said:

"It is sentencing principle that an informer is entitled to an informer’s discount when the circumstances of assistance given to the police are made known to the sentencing court. A substantial discount should be given to an offender who volunteers useful information about offences not known to the police: *R v Macedo* [unreported, Court of Criminal Appeal, 04/02/1993] at 7.

Leniency is extended to an informer, firstly because it is in the interests of the community to encourage informers, secondly because the informer is exposed to a risk in prison and within the community when the informer’s conduct becomes known: *R v Shane Anthony Pividor and Bruce Alan Dale* [2002] VSCA 174 at 7."

In *R v Bright* [2006] VSCA 147 at [11] Bongiorno AJA, with whom Buchanan & Nettle JJA agreed, said:

“Co-operation with authorities in the prosecution of other criminals is a mitigating factor of a high order. The discount given to a person who pleads guilty and assists or offers to assist in other prosecutions is sometimes extremely large indeed, particularly perhaps in a drug case. See *R v Ritter* [2000] VSCA 135 and *R v Rostom* [1996] 2 V.R. 97.”

In *R v DS* [2005] VSCA 99 the Court of Appeal re-sentenced the appellant, allowing a substantial discount for her assistance to the authorities, her giving of evidence in court and her provision of an undertaking to provide co-operation to the authorities in the future. At [19] Chernov JA (with whom Batt & Vincent JJA agreed) noted in relation to “the obviously significant help that she has provided to the police and immigration authorities” that “serving a term of imprisonment will be of particular difficulty for the appellant given her cultural background and isolation in Australia”.

In *DPP v Karipis* [2005] VSCA 119 at [9] the Court of Appeal considered the 17 year old respondent’s **willingness** to supply information regarding his co-offenders was relevant even though the information was of no real assistance.

*R v Mr Z* [2005] VSC 90 may well represent the high-water mark for discounts for past & promised future assistance to the authorities. In sentencing Mr Z to 3 years’ imprisonment wholly suspended for 3 years upon his pleading guilty to a charge of trafficking in a commercial quantity of amphetamine, Teague J said at [8]:

“Your choice to assist the authorities has several implications. It warrants a very large reduction in the sentence imposed for purely utilitarian reasons dictated by the public interest. It is now imperative that you be provided with a high level of protection. If it had not been for the co-operation, past and future and the other mitigating factors, you would have been sentenced by me to a period of imprisonment of at least eight years. Given the significance of the co-operation and other matters, it was understandable that, at the plea hearing, [the prosecutor] should say that a sentence of imprisonment, wholly suspended, was within the range of appropriate sentencing dispositions.”

In *R v DJ* [2007] VSCA 148 at [14]-[15] Maxwell P said:

“The passages which his Honour has read from the letter which was before the sentencing court underline the quite exceptional courage which the appellant has shown, and has been required over some years to continue to show. He has, in my view, performed a notable public service by giving evidence, on successive occasions, about a violent killing in jail. The risks of giving evidence in relation to a crime of that kind are well known.

There is a clear public policy behind encouraging, and recognising, that kind of cooperation in the solving of crime. Given that the evidence was in such strong terms about the quality of the assistance given, it was in my opinion incumbent on the sentencing court to identify very clearly the character of the assistance, to acknowledge its public importance, and to make quite clear that a significant discount has been applied.”

In *R v Johnston* [2008] VSCA 133 Nettle JA (with whom Buchanan & Ashley JJA agreed) pointed out at [16]-[19] that generally Victorian courts have not quantified the informer discount:

[16] “By and large courts in this state have been loath to quantify the amount of such informer discount as they may allow. Despite observations of McGarvie J in *R v Perrier* (No 2) [1991] 1 VR 717 and *R v Nagy* [1992] 1 VR 637, 644-5 as to the desirability of identifying the extent of the discount, other judges have castigated the idea as inconsistent with the notion of intuitive synthesis (*Ibid.* 638 Crockett J, with whom Phillips J agreed); *R v Schioparlan and Georgescu* (1991) 54 A Crim R 294, 305 (Young CJ). More recently, this Court has recognised that it may be acceptable to identify the amount of a discount in some circumstances: *R v ZMN* (2002) 4 VR 537, 542 (Charles JA). But in *R v Markarian* (2005) 228 CLR 357,375 the majority of the High Court restricted such occasions to simple cases in which, for example, the circumstances of the crime have to be weighed against one or a small number of other important matters. See too *R v Sahari* [2007] VSCA 235 at [18] per Kellam J. This is not such a case. It is a complex case in which the need for denunciation, general deterrence and just punishment must be weighed against the social utility of granting substantial sentencing discounts to offenders who agree to inform: *R v Su* [1997] 1 VR 1,77.

[17] Following *Markarian*, Parliament amended the *Sentencing Act 1991* to require sentencing judges to state the sentence and non-parole period which but for a plea of guilty would have been imposed: s.6AAA. But those amendments say nothing of the additional discount which is to be allowed for a plea of guilty and cooperation with the Crown…

[18] There is also a further difficulty that, in the absence of legislative prescription or authoritative appellate pronouncement, there is no necessarily correct amount of the informer discount in a given case. While there are decisions which suggest a discount of 50%, or perhaps even as much as two thirds (see e.g. *R v Perrier (No 2)* [1991] 1 VR 717, 726 (McGarvie J), it is inevitable that circumstances will differ between cases. For example, in some cases the quality of information which an informer is able to provide to authorities may be of such limited utility that any discount would be thought of as excessive: *R v Cartwright* (1989) 17 NSWLR 243, 252-3; *R v Su* [1997] 1 VR 1, 78-9. In others, it could be that the information which the informer is able to provide is so valuable, and the risks to which he may expose himself by informing are so great, that a discount of 50% would not be enough: *R v Lindstrom* [2008] NSWCCA 160 at [58]-[60]. Other relevant considerations include the nature and gravity of the crime, the offender's moral culpability, prevalence and the need for deterrence of the crime in question (*R v Downie and Dandy* [1998] 2 VR 517, 520–522; cf *R v Lim and Ko* [1998] VSCA 54 [31]–[34]) and whether it is perceived that there is a need to encourage offenders to inform against other offenders concerning crimes of that kind.

[19] Under a more perfect sentencing regime, the level of informer discount might be worked out as a matter of social policy and provided for expressly in legislation. But as it is, sentencing judges must make do with their own conceptions of what is desirable. Effectively, the only safeguard is the relatively rough and ready measure of manifest excessiveness or inadequacy as a ground of appeal.”

See also *R v Crossley* [2008] VSCA 134 where Ashley JA (with whom Buchanan & Nettle JJA agreed) after quoting with approval some of the above dicta of Nettle JA in *R v Johnston* said at [31]: “In this instance, I think that the informer’s discount should be accounted considerable, though not of the highest order.”

In *Azaan Rosales (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 130 the applicant had provided assistance to the authorities categorized by the Court of Appeal as “medium level assistance”. In refusing leave to appeal against a sentence of IMP7y/4y on a charge of attempting to possess a commercial quantity of methamphetamine, Priest & Beach JJA said at [25]-[27]:

“The principles relating to the sentencing of offenders who render assistance to authorities were recently discussed in *DPP v Cooper* [2018] VSCA 21 at [42]-[45] (Weinberg, Priest and Beach JJA). As was there observed, the extent of any sentencing discount given to an informer will, of course, vary from case to case: *Cottee v The Queen* [2010] VSCA 285, [23]. In *R v Johnston* (2008) 186 A Crim R 345 a discount of fifty per cent on sentence was thought to be justified because of the very high level of assistance provided to authorities. There is, however, no standard discount, so that the assessment of an appropriate discount cannot be approached in a mechanical or mathematical way: *R v Kohunui* [2009] VSCA 31, [25] and compare ss 16A(2)(h) & 16AC of the *Crimes Act 1914* (Cth). It is the genuine cooperation of the person furnishing the assistance which is important (whether or not the information turns out in fact to have been effective), although the information must be such as could significantly assist the authorities: *R v Freeman* (2001) 120 A Crim R 398, 405 [37] (Coldrey AJA).

Given the seriousness of the applicant’s offending, had it not been for the applicant’s assistance to authorities, we would have considered the sentence imposed on him to have been remarkably lenient (if not inadequate). It is his assistance to authorities which justifies the imposition of the same sentence upon him as was imposed on his co-offender (whose offending, we accept, was of a lower order than the applicant’s).

In those circumstances, we are not persuaded that the principle of parity has been infringed, or that the sentence imposed on the applicant is otherwise manifestly excessive. Moreover, we are not persuaded, in any event, that any different sentence should now be imposed.”

In *Collins (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 131 the applicant had provided eye witness information clearly identifiying his co-offenders in a serious arson and had done so at an early stage. He was the only offender to have done so. The prosecutor accepted that the applicant’s cooperation was of “high value”. The applicant had also given an undertaking to assist, after sentencing, law enforcement authorities in the prosecution of offences. Allowing an appeal against a TES IMP5y6m/2y6m on charges of arson and handling stolen goods, the Court of Appeal imposed a TES IMP3y4m/20m and declared pursuant to s.6AAA(2) of the *Sentencing Act 1991* that “but for the applicant’s pleas of guilty and his cooperation” the Court would have imposed a TES IMP8y/5y.

In *Safi Haamid (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 330 the Court of Appeal rejected the applicant’s submission that the discount of approximately 30% ‘wrapped up’ both in his guilty plea and his cooperation was inadequate. At [24]-[25] the Court said:

“The principles governing the discount on sentence for an offender who cooperates with the authorities are well known…For the purposes of the current application, it suffices to refer to the following:

1. There is no set ‘tariff’ or standard discount to be provided for cooperation: *R v Cartwright* (1989) 17 NSWLR 243, 255–6 (‘*Cartwright*’); *R v Johnston* (2008) 186 A Crim R 345, 350–1 [18], [21] (‘*Johnston*’); *DPP v Cooper* [2018] VSCA 21 [45] (‘*Cooper’); Ooi* [2018] VSCA 78 [54].
2. Factors relevant to the determination of the discount to be provided include:
   * 1. the quality and reliability of the information provided by the offender and its value to law enforcement authorities: *Johnston* (2008) 186 A Crim R 345, 350 [18]; *Collins v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 131 [23] (‘*Collins*’);
     2. whether the offender fully and frankly discloses all relevant information of which he or she is aware: *R v Su* [1997] 1 VR 1, 79 (‘*Su*’); *R v Golding* (1980) 24 SASR 161, 173 (‘*Golding*’);
     3. whether, in addition to providing information, the offender has undertaken to continue to provide assistance and to give evidence against other offenders: *Cooper* [2018] VSCA 21 [45];
     4. the nature and gravity of the offences disclosed by the information provided by the offender and the number of people implicated: *Johnston* (2008) 186 A Crim R 345, 350 [18];
     5. the nature of the offender’s involvement in the offending in respect of which he or she provides information and his or her moral culpability: *Johnston* (2008) 186 A Crim R 345, 350 [18];
     6. the extent to which the offender and his or her family are exposed to the risk of harm as a result of the offender’s cooperation: *Cartwright* (1989) 17 NSWLR 243, 255; *Cooper* [2018] VSCA 21 [45]; *Collins* [2018] VSCA 131 [24]; and
     7. whether the offender’s cooperation has already achieved positive law enforcement outcomes, such as recovery of stolen or dangerous goods, the interception of a shipment of illicit drugs, the prevention of an act of terrorism or the arrest or conviction of offenders: *Golding* (1980) 24 SASR 161, 173.
3. The offender is entitled to a discount even if his or her motive is self-interest. However, if the motive is remorse, contrition, acceptance of responsibility or rehabilitation, a greater discount may be warranted based on the application of norml sentencing principles: *Cartwright* (1989) 17 NSWLR 243, 252.
4. The discount to be provided to a ‘true informer’ may be as high as 66 per cent: *Cottee v The Queen* [2010] VSCA 285 [23] (‘*Cottee*’); *Cooper* [2018] VSCA 21 [43]. An example of a ‘true informer’ is a person who is a member of an organised crime syndicate who provides information against other members of the syndicate in circumstances where his or her personal safety, and that of members of his or her family, is placed at grave risk.
5. There are a number of cases in which a discount of 50 per cent has been provided: See, eg, *Johnston* (2008) 186 A Crim R 345, 350 [20].
6. The magnitude of any discount provided is not always apparent. Unlike the discount for a plea of guilty which must be quantified under s 6AAA of the *Sentencing Act 1991*, s.5(2AC) of that Act provides that a sentencing court need not quantify any discount provided for cooperation.
7. As long as the offender provides genuine cooperation, the fact that, for reasons unconnected to the offender, the cooperation is ultimately not required to achieve a law enforcement outcome does not disentitle him or her to a discount: *Cartwright* (1989) 17 NSWLR 243, 253; *R v Freeman* (2001) 120 A Crim R 398, 405 [37] (‘*Freeman*’); *DPP v Nazari* [2010] VSCA 293 [31]–[32]; *Cottee* [2010] VSCA 285 [24]. An example is where the offender undertakes to give evidence against a co-offender but is not required to do so because the co-offender decides to plead guilty: *Cartwright* (1989) 17 NSWLR 243, 253; *Freeman* (2001) 120 A Crim R 398, 405 [37].
8. The discount allowed for cooperation will necessarily affect both the head sentence and the non-parole period: *R v Duncan* [1998] 3 VR 208, 214–5 (‘*Duncan*’).

The Court will give considerable weight to any assessment in a letter of assistance in relation to matters such as the value of the offender’s assistance and the degree of risk to his or her safety. However, the Court will make its own assessment of these matters.”

At [34]-[48] the Court discussed four ways in which references to the applicant’s cooperation with authorities might be addressed in sentencing remarks and ultimately preferred separate confidential and public versions of sentencing remarks, the former fully explaining how cooperation informed exercise of the sentencing discretion.

In *Farmer v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 140 the Court of Appeal drew a clear distinction between providing assistance to authorities within the meaning of ss.5(2AB) & 5(2H)(a) of the *Sentencing Act 1991* and admissions made in a record of interview. With reference to *R v Cartwright* (1989) 17 NSWLR 243 & *R v Su* [1997] 1 VR 1 Maxwell P, Kaye & Niall JJA said at [72]:

“Assistance is treated quite differently to admissions and confessions. Although it is true that an admission is helpful to police, it is not, in the usual sense, treated as assistance in the sentencing context. It does not carry the same burden or stigma on the offender and does not attract the same moderating force. Of course, admissions and pleas of guilty attract their own benefits as evidence of remorse and for their utilitarian value.”

See also *Makieng v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 52 at [29]-[35] where dicta from *Farmer v The Queen* was referred to and applied.

In *Nguyen (a pseudonuym) v The King* [2022] VSCA 284, in rejecting a submission that the sentencing judge had given insufficient discount for the applicant’s offer to assist authorities, the Court of Appeal (Kyrou JA, Kidd & Lasry JJA) said at [39]-[40] & [48]-[50]:

[39] “The principles which apply to the way in which a sentencing judge may give weight to cooperation by an offender with law enforcement authorities in the intuitive synthesis process of sentencing are not in contention. They were set out in detail by this Court in Haamid v The Queen [2018] VSCA 330. In the subsequent judgment of *Farmer v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 140, referring to *Haamid*, those principles were shortly summarised at [71] as follows:

‘It is well-established that providing assistance to law enforcement authorities can be a powerful mitigating factor in sentencing. The potency of its mitigation depends on various factors, including the nature and gravity of the crime, the benefit to authorities, the risk posed to the offender and the extent to which the offender will require protective measures in prison, making incarceration more onerous. Underpinning these factors is the very powerful public interest in encouraging offenders to cooperate with law enforcement authorities. In order to determine the extent to which assistance might moderate a sentence, it is necessary to have regard to the relevant factors. As a comparison of *R v Johnston* and *Director of Public Prosecutions v Cooper* shows, there can be a marked difference in the weight accorded to assistance in the bringing together of the various integers relevant to sentence.’

[40] The statements of the applicable principles in *Haamid* and *Farmer* demonstrate the breadth of the discretion residing in a judge sentencing an offender who has cooperated with authorities by the provision of information about an accomplice.”

[48] This Court in *Haamid* emphasised at [24] the lack of a tariff or standard discount for the provision of information, which acknowledges the broad variety of circumstances which can arise. Among the list of factors relevant to the determination of a sentencing discount are the quality and reliability of the information and its value to law enforcement authorities.

[49] As to the quality or usefulness of the applicant’s information, the judge had evidence from the police that the applicant’s disclosures, without any corroborating evidence, were not of significant value for the reasons we have already identified. The police had long considered Hoang as being involved in a Vietnamese drug syndicate which conducted cultivation ‘set-ups’. The problem, which was not solved by the applicant’s information, remained the lack of physical or forensic evidence which linked her to this offending.

[50] For an 18 month period between his arrest in March 2020 and the provision of his ‘can say’ statement in September 2021, the applicant gave no indication of a willingness to assist police in any prosecution of Hoang. Self-evidently, information given to police by an offender about a co-offender soon after the offender’s arrest is likely to be much more valuable than information that is provided over a year later. That is particularly so where the offender assisted the co‑offender by informing him or her that the offender had been arrested and thus potentially hindered the apprehension and prosecution of the co-offender.”

Other cases in which an informer’s discount has been discussed include *R v Gavin James Brown* [2005] VSC 63 and the cases cited therein by Whelan J at [9]: *R v Culleton* [1999] VSC 478; *R v Drummond* [2000] VSC 206; *R v Rees* [2002] VSC 37; *R v Newton* [2002] VSC 182; *R v Miller* [2002] VSC 456; *R v Stanbury* [2003] VSC 93; *R v Hewitt* [2004] VSC 487 at [12]; *R v Hentschel* [2005] VSC 6 at [11]-[12]; *R v Tania Lee-Anne Herman* [2005] VSC 234 at [11]; *R v Miller* [2006] VSCA 140 at [11]; *R v Tame Kohonui* [2007] VSC 180 at [36]; *R v John Kohunui* [2007] VSC 181 at [34]; *R v Herbert* [2007] VSC 264 at [16] & [20]; *R v EDB* [2008] VSCA 18 at [13]; *R v Koumis & Ors* [2008] VSCA 84 at [13]-[18]; *R v CP* [2008] VSCA 272 at [16]-[17]; *Safi Haamid (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 330 at [24]-[27] & [34]-[48]; *Anderson v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 42 at [66]-[69] & [76]; *Niko Robers (a pseudonym) v DPP Cth* [2019] VSCA 230 at [7] & [12]-[15]; *Levy v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 44 at [73]‑[75]; *Quah v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 164; *Al Janabe v The Queen* [2021] VCA 252 at [27]-[34]; *Goh v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 24 at [28]-[33]; *Brendan Lowell (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 134 at [38]‑[46]; *ABC (a pseudonym) v The King* [2023] VSCA 280 at [50]-[61].

### **11.2.8.4 Undertaking to give evidence against co-accused**

In *R v Johns* [2010] VSCA 63 the trial judge had given the accused a less severe sentence than she would otherwise have imposed because of her undertaking to give evidence against a co-accused but said that “it will not be as substantial a discount as would have been the case had [she] been able unreservedly to accept [the] undertaking”. Allowing an appeal the Court of Appeal held that assessment of the likelihood of the undertaking being fulfilled is irrelevant in sentencing the undertaker. At [11]-[12] Buchanan JA (with whom Maxwell P & Harper JA) agreed said:

“In my view there is a distinction between evaluating the assistance which an offender can give and assessing whether an undertaking to give assistance will be fulfilled. The former is a factor to be taken into account in determining an original sentence. See for example *R v Johnson* 2008 [VSCA] 133, [18] (Nettle JA); *R v Cartwright* (1989) 17 NSWLR 243, 252-3 (Hunt and Badgery-Parker JJ). The latter may found a later appeal by the Director.

In my view the existence of the safeguard of appeal by the Director rules out consideration of the likely performance of the undertaking in sentencing the person who has given it. Parliament has determined that the matter is to be judged with the benefit of hindsight. Accordingly I consider that the sentencing judge erred in taking into account a matter to the prejudice to the applicant which was strictly irrelevant.”

In *DPP v Mann* [2006] VSCA 228 the respondent had failed to comply with an undertaking he had given at the sentencing hearing to give evidence against a co-accused. At [10] Warren CJ said: “When the respondent gave the undertaking, he in effect entered into a contract with the community. He breached that agreement and falls to be considered for re-sentencing.” Referring to *DPP v Akkari* [2003] VSCA 98, *DPP v DJT* [2005] VSCA 270 & *DPP v Kolalich* [2006] VSCA 208, the Court of Appeal said that the principles which apply to re-sentencing upon breach of undertaking to assist authorities are as follows:

(1) A more severe sentence will be imposed unless exceptional circumstances arise.

(2) In re-sentencing a respondent, the constraints of the principles of double jeopardy do not arise.

(3) The sentence cannot exceed that which the judge at first instance specified would have been imposed but for the undertaking.

(4) Threats made in prison do not alter the fact that a respondent has failed to pay the price of the reduced sentence given at first instance.

See also *DPP v Tong Yang* [2011] VSCA 161; *DPP (Cth) v Carey* [2012] VSCA 15 at [42].

In *DPP v DJT* [2005] VSCA 270 the Court of Appeal allowed a Crown appeal following failure by the young respondent to honour an undertaking to give evidence against an alleged co-offender. There had been a delay in serving the notice of appeal and the respondent had already been released on parole. The respondent was described by the Court of Appeal as “damaged and more than usually vulnerable”. However, he had “made a real effort, whilst in prison and since his release, to turn his life around”. There had been threats to the respondent in prison if he gave the promised evidence. In declining to impose no different sentence but in merely increasing the head sentence and not the non-parole period, the Court of Appeal noted at [12]:

“The threats that were made in prison do not alter the fact that the respondent failed to pay the price for the reduced sentence that the judge gave him, but they do bear on an assessment of his character. To go back on an undertaking because one fears for one's personal safety is a very different matter from deciding that one simply does not wish to assist the authorities.”

In *R v James Lee Briggs* [2010] VSCA 82 the sentencing judge had imposed a total effective sentence on 3 presentments involving charges of intention & recklessly causing serious injury, armed robbery and theft of 5 years imprisonment with a non-parole period of 3 years. His Honour had said that but for the guilty pleas, the undertaking to give evidence, the indications of remorse and ‘all other relevant matters,’ he would have imposed total effective sentence on all three presentments of 10 years’ imprisonment with a non-parole period of 7 years. Ultimately the respondent had breached his undertaking to give evidence against his co-offender. His excuse was that he had been placed in cells with his co-offender prior to the hearing. In re-sentencing the respondent to 7 years imprisonment with a non-parole of 4 years, Habersberger AJA (with whom Redlich & Harper JJA agreed) said:

[24] “It goes without saying that the respondent should not have been placed in this situation. It is very worrying that counsel for the Director stated that this was not an isolated event. When a prisoner makes the difficult decision to give evidence against another offender, he or she is entitled to expect that the authorities will take the appropriate steps to provide the necessary protection for the co-operating prisoner. Anything less may give rise to a breach of the duty of care owed to every prisoner, but in particular to a prisoner who has agreed to give evidence. To say that this situation was brought about by ‘human error’ is simply not good enough. This failure was particularly inexcusable when the respondent, with the assistance of his solicitor, had made every effort to maximise the chances of him giving the evidence against Kelly.”

[59] The re-sentencing of the respondent is not tabula rasa as the sentence cannot exceed that which the judge at first instance would have imposed but for the undertaking: *DPP v Mann* [2006] VSCA 228 at [8] & [10] per Warren CJ. The purpose of s.567A(1A) and (4A) is not punitive but to enable the sentence to be adjusted to the extent considered appropriate: *DPP v S [No.2]* [2009] VSCA 127 at [20] per Vincent, Nettle and Redlich JJA.

[60] …Although the respondent is no longer entitled to a discount for the undertaking to give evidence, he is still entitled to the full benefit of the mitigating factors to which I have referred. First, he did plead guilty and he is clearly entitled to an appropriate discount for that.

[61] Secondly, the respondent’s remorse was to a large degree evidenced by his willingness to assist the authorities. It is apparent, however, that as the respondent’s failure to comply with that undertaking was due primarily to matters beyond his control, the failure to fulfil the undertaking should not alter the finding that there were genuine feelings of remorse expressed by the respondent at the plea.

[62] Thirdly, there is no reason not to continue to give weight to the learned sentencing judge’s remarks about the possible rehabilitation of the respondent. Whilst the giving of false evidence at Kelly’s committal hearing could reflect on the prospects of the respondent’s rehabilitation it is not a major consideration, in my opinion, when one takes into account the circumstances of the respondent at that time. Through no fault of his own, he was placed in an invidious situation.”

In *DPP v Connally* [2010] VSCA 301 the Court of Appeal imposed a wholly suspended sentence of 2y in lieu of a 3y adjourned undertaking on a charge of being an accessory to murder. Nettle JA (with whom Hansen JA & Ross AJA agreed) said at [16]:

“The respondent having been sentenced on the basis of an undertaking to give true evidence for the Crown, and he having repudiated his undertaking by giving false evidence to the extent I have identified, the respondent stands to be re-sentenced. The onus is upon the respondent to show by way of exceptional circumstances why the sentence which was imposed on him should not now be increased to reflect all or part of the discount which the judge allowed: *DPP v DJT* [2005] VSCA 270, [12] (Callaway JA); *DPP v S [No2]* [2009] VSCA 127, [22].”

In *Mohinder Singh v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 178 at [55]-[59] the Court of Appeal discussed the issue of the appellant’s undertaking to give evidence against a coaccused, citing *Mejia* [2020] VSCA 141 that “any ‘cooperation discount’ must not frustrate the principle of adequate punishment for the offender.”

See also *R v Dimitrakis* [2010] VSC 614; *R v Yang* [2011] VSCA 161; *R v Johnson* [2012] VSCA 38; *DPP v Duhovic* [2017] VSC 689 at [65]-[70]; *Bonnie Kate Sawyer-Thompson v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 161 at [48]-[56] per Maxwell P & Tate JA; *Alicia Mason (a pseudonym) v The King* [2023] VSCA 75; *R v Guillerme* [2023] VSC 36; *R v Fenwick* [2025] VSC 95 at [209]-[215].

### **11.2.9 Relevance of risk to offender’s safety while in custody / relevance of protective custody**

In *York v The Queen* [2005] HCA 60 the appellant, who had pleaded guilty to serious drug offences, had cooperated with prosecuting authorities to secure a conviction in relation to a very brutal execution style murder. There was “clear and unchallenged” evidence that the appellant’s life would be endangered in prison. She had been sentenced at first instance to a wholly suspended term of imprisonment because of that risk. On an Attorney-General’s appeal the Queensland Court of Appeal, by majority, re-sentenced the appellant to serve a term of actual imprisonment. The High Court allowed the appellant’s appeal and restored the trial judge’s sentence. In holding that the safety of the prisoner is a relevant sentencing consideration, Mc Hugh J said at [21]-[23]:

[21] “With great respect, the Court of Appeal erred in finding that ‘the risk to a criminal's safety whilst in prison’ was not a consideration that was relevant to whether ‘the otherwise appropriate penalty, namely imprisonment, ought not be imposed’. In fixing an ‘appropriate penalty’, a sentencing judge is entitled to take into account any matter that ensures that, to some extent, the fixing of the sentence ‘discharge[s] the true function of the criminal law and the purposes of punishment’ [*Leach* (1979) 1 A Crim R 320 at 327] in the instant case. The common law's conception of the "purposes of punishment" is settled. Sentences are imposed to further ‘the public interest’ [*Ball* (1951) 35 Cr App R 164 at 165] – which may include the rehabilitation of the prisoner – and to enhance the liberty of society by ensuring ‘the protection of society’ [*Veen v The Queen [No 2]* (1988) 164 CLR 465; *Leach* (1979) 1 A Crim R 320 at 327; *R v Jackway; Ex parte Attorney‑General* [1997] 2 Qd R 277] from the risk of a convicted criminal re-offending [*R v Morris* (1958) 76 WN (NSW) 40; *R v Radich* [1954] NZLR 86] or others engaging in similar criminal activity [*R v McCowan* [1931] St R Qd 149; *R v Skeates* [1978] Qd R 85; *R v McGlynn* [1981] Qd R 526; *R v Radich* [1954] NZLR 86].

[22] The common law's conception of liberty is not limited to ‘liberty in a negative sense’, that is, ‘the absence of interference by others’ [Braithwaite and Pettit, *Not Just Deserts: A Republican Theory of Criminal Justice*, (1990) at 55].. It extends to a conception of liberty in a ‘positive’ sense, which is ‘exemplified by the condition of citizenship in a free society, a condition under which each is properly safeguarded by the law against the predations of others.’ [*op.cit*., p.57]. Thus, sentencing judges must impose sentences that are apt, not merely to prevent a convicted criminal from interfering with others, but also to enable the prisoner's rehabilitation so as to resume citizenship in the free society[*Duncan v The Queen* (1983) 47 ALR 746; *Bell* (1981) 5 A Crim R 347 at 351-352]. They must seek to ensure that each and every citizen, including a convicted criminal, ‘is properly safeguarded by the law against the predations of others.’ [Braithwaite and Pettit, *Not Just Deserts: A Republican Theory of Criminal Justice*, (1990) at 57]. That means that a sentencing judge must endeavour not only to protect society from the risk of a convicted criminal re-offending but also to protect the convicted criminal from the risk of other prisoners re-offending while in jail.

[23] The common law's equal concern for the physical safety of each citizen makes it appropriate for a sentencing judge to take into account the grave risk that a convicted criminal could be killed while in jail. What weight should be given to the risk of a prisoner being killed or injured will depend on all the circumstances of the case including the likelihood of its occurrence.”

In *R v Bangard* [2005] VSCA 313 all 3 members of the Court of Appeal held that the trial judge had been in error in entirely disregarding the fact that the offender was in protective custody as a result of having been assaulted in prison. At [14] Buchanan JA relied on the cases of *R. v. Roston* [1996] 2 VR 97; *R. v. ZNN* (2002) 4 VR 537; *R. v. Slater* (2001) 121 A Crim R 369 at [26]-[29]; *R. v. Fraser* [2004] VSCA 145 at [15] & *R. v. Wilhelm* [2005] VSCA 192 at [5] in holding:

“In my view his Honour ought not to have entirely dismissed what was a factor relevant to sentence. It was an administrative arrangement which the courts do take into account as a matter of course in sentencing. The fact that the appellant was unable to predict the duration of the need for his protection did not wholly devalue its relevance.”

Eames JA agreed at [35] and Nettle JA agreed at [38].

On the other hand, in *R v Stevens* [2009] VSCA 81 Maxwell P, Vincent JA & Hargrave AJA held at [22]-[23] that the circumstances giving rise to the placing of a prisoner in protection are clearly relevant as are the actual restrictions which result. However, the appellant’s placement in protection was attributable to his own past conduct and conformed with his own wishes. Accordingly no significance can be attributed to it when considering the sentence to be imposed.

In *DPP v Milson* [2019] VSCA 55 Priest & Weinberg JJA found that sentences of IMP 5y and IMP 12m on charges of intentionally causing serious injury and robbery were manifestly inadequate but nevertheless exercised a residual discretion and dismissed the appeal. At [58]-[59] their Honours said:

“[A] far more significant feature mitigating the respondent’s sentence is the undeniable fact that the respondent’s custody had been more burdensome for him than for other prisoners. He was stabbed in the neck (and underwent necessary surgical intervention); had spent a year or so in solitary confinement, being permitted to leave his cell for only an hour a day; and had other restrictions imposed upon him. Thus, unlike those cases where, for example, a sentencing judge is required to make a prediction of whether an offender’s custody may be more burdensome because of impaired mental functioning [*R v Verdins* (2007) 16 VR 269] the burdensome nature of the respondent’s confinement has empirically been shown. It is not a matter of prediction or mere speculation.

Perhaps ironically, the respondent’s time on remand had also gone some way towards demonstrating his good prospects for rehabilitation. In very unusual circumstances, through his direct intervention with prison authorities, he had himself moved into the mainstream prison population, where he has undertaken educational programs and shown himself to be a ‘model’ prisoner.”

In *Yat v The King* [2024] VSCA 93 the applicant – who was in his early 20s – had pleaded guilty to 3 offences involving the assault of 3 corrections officers while he was serving a sentence for other offending and was sentenced to a TES IMP 14m/8m. He sought and was granted leave to appeal against the sentence on the sole ground that it was manifestly excessive, relying in particular upon the fact that he spent a total of 1,079 days in a management unit with severe restrictions on his time outside his cell and his interactions with other prisoners, conditions which “were, in effect, solitary confinement”. This was comprised of 433 days attributable to the present offending, followed by a further 646 days due to a further incident in prison. The Court of Appeal (Walker & Boyce JJA) allowed the appeal and resentenced the applicant to TES IMP12m1d/6m, saying at [88]-[91]:

“Yat’s first period of time in a management unit was a form of extra-curial punishment to which, in the exceptional circumstances of this case, significant weight ought to be given. We also accept that, although the second period of time in a management unit was not related to the present offending, and thus is not properly characterised as ‘extra-curial punishment’, it is nevertheless relevant to the sentencing exercise…

By the time of his sentence, Yat had spent more than a third of his adult life in solitary confinement. As was the case in *R v Milson* [2019] VSCA 55, [58], the burdensome nature of Yat’s confinement was established – it was ‘not a matter of prediction or mere speculation’.

Although the judge expressly considered this matter and said that she had moderated the sentences as a consequence, we consider that her Honour must have failed to give appropriate weight to this factor. A period of close to three years in solitary confinement is quite extraordinary and required a significant mitigation of sentence.”

In the course of a detailed discussion about the relevance to the sentencing process of the conditions under which a sentence of imprisonment is served, Walker & Boyce JJA said at [65]-[67]:

[65] “It is well accepted that the conditions under which a sentence of imprisonment is served are to be taken into account when considering the severity and impact of the penalty imposed in the particular circumstances: *Bekink v The Queen* (1999) 107 A Crim R 415 at [11]-[14] & [29]; [1999] WASCA 160; *R v Faure* (2005) 12 VR 115, 121 [28]; [2005] VSCA 91.. There are various circumstances where it has been accepted that the fact that the prisoner’s experience of custody is more burdensome when compared to the general experience of other prisoners will warrant mitigation of penalty. These include the following:

where the harshness of conditions of incarceration arises due to a prisoner’s need for protection on account of his or her status as an informer {*R v Liddy [No 2]* (2002) 84 SASR 231 at [113] & [214]; [2002] SASC 306}, or as a person who had previously held a position of authority (where the offences are not related to the prisoner’s previous office): *R v Lian* [2023] SASCA 122, [68];

where the harshness arises due to ill health or other personal issues affecting the prisoner: *R v Liddy [No 2]* (2002) 84 SASR 231 at [111] & [214]; [2002] SASC 306; *Packard (a pseudonym) v The Queen* (2022) 300 A Crim R 55, [97]-[99]; [2022] VSCA 128.

[66] It can be seen that these involve circumstances of imprisonment that cannot be attributed to the prisoner’s own misbehaviour.

[67] A more vexed question is whether mitigation can flow if the harshness of a prisoner’s custodial experience arises due to the nature of their offending, or of their behaviour while in custody, or as result of risks that are voluntarily assumed by a prisoner. Suggesting that the nature of a prisoner’s offending may not matter: see *R v AB [No 2]* (2000) 117 A Crim R 473, 483 [56]; [2000] NSWCCA 467; *R v Everett* (1994) 73 A Crim R 550, 566; *Liddy [No 2]* (2002) 84 SASR 231, 269 [146]; [2002] SASC 306. To the contrary: *Liddy [No 2]* (2002) 84 SASR 231, 263 [119]; [2002] SASC 306; *Western Australia v O’Kane* [2011] WASCA 24, [69]; *Milenkovski v Western Australia* (2014) 46 WAR 324, 330 [16] [2014] WASCA 48.

At [72]-[79] Walker & Boyce JJA discussed aspects of the judgment of the Court of Appeal in *R v Stevens* [2009] VSCA 81 before holding that “we do not take *Stevens* as having decided that a prisoner’s endurance of sufficiently harsh conditions in custody will always be irrelevant as a mitigatory matter pertaining to sentence if those conditions arise as a result of the prisoner’s own misbehaviour.”

At [70]-[71] & [84] Walker & Boyce JJA said (emphasis added):

[70] “…In *R v Males* [2007] VSCA 302 this Court left open the question whether the fact that a prisoner was kept in ‘protection’ was a legally relevant consideration in circumstances where the protective custody was the result of the offender’s conduct in custody in the period leading up to the date of sentencing or a decision of the prison authorities that the offender presented an unacceptable risk of violent behaviour while in gaol.

[71] Kellam JA at [36] and Whelan AJA at [5] declined to decide that issue but considered that, in circumstances where the reasons for Males’ protection status were a matter of controversy, his status as a ‘protection prisoner’ was a relevant consideration to be taken into account in favour of the appellant. Maxwell P said that the issue would ‘require careful attention in an appropriate case, and a close examination of the authorities’. Maxwell P went on to say at [49] that:

‘until that occurs, sentencing judges are entitled to treat the matter of protection as a relevant consideration. The weight to be attached to it will of course depend on the circumstances of the case and the evidence before the court. No authority has been cited by the Crown which holds that protection is irrelevant in any particular class of case. That is the decision which the Crown has made clear it wants this Court to make.’”

[84] There was no submission by either party that this Court should., in the present case, decide the question left open in *Males*. Were that exercise to be undertaken, it would be appropriate to convene a bench of three, rather than two, judges. In those circumstances, **we consider that we ought to follow the remarks of Maxwell P in *Males* to the effect that it is permissible for a sentencing judge to take into account the burdensome conditions of custody, even where those conditions arise from the prisoner’s own misbehaviour.**”

### **11.2.10 Effect of forgiveness by the victim**

By s.5(2)(da) of the *Sentencing Act 1991* the sentencing judge must have regard to “the personal circumstances of the victim of the offence” and by s.5(2)(db) the judge must have regard to “any injury, loss or damage resulting directly from the offence”. In *R v Skura* [2004] VSCA 53 the appellant, who had been found guilty of incitement to murder her husband, was the beneficiary of a very supportive victim impact statement from him. At [48] Smith AJA said:

"It may be said that neither of the above provisions change the long-standing position that it has always been relevant for a sentencer to have regard to the impact on the victim: *R. v Mallinder* (1986) 23 A Crim R 179,183; *R. v Webb* [1971] VR 147,150. So far as the attitude of the victim to the degree of sentence is concerned, that is generally irrelevant: *R. v Pritchard* (1973) 57 Cr App R 492, 494. But evidence that the victim has forgiven the offender may indicate that the effects of the offence had not been long-lasting: *R v Marasovic* [unreported, CCA Vic, 16/2/1982]. It may mean that:

'psychological and mental suffering must be very much less in the circumstances. Accordingly, some mitigation must be seen in that one factor': *R v Hutchinson* (1994) 15 Cr App R (S) 134,137.

Where the offence occurs in a domestic situation, the attitude of the victim may also be relevant to the question of rehabilitation: *R v H* (1995) 81 A Crim R 88."

In *R v Hester* [2007] VSCA 298 at [9] Chernov JA, with whom Vincent JA agreed, said:

“[T]o the extent that a victim impact statement evidences forgiveness or support for the victim those factors must be given appropriate weight: *Skura* [2004] VSCA [13] (Eames JA). In particular, a favourable or supportive victim impact statement may bear on the questions whether there has in fact been an adverse impact on the victim and on the offender's prospects of rehabilitation: *Skura* [2004] VSCA 53; *R v Wise* [2004] VSCA 88; *R v Rowley* [2007] VSCA 94. Thus, as Smith AJA said in *Skura* at [48], evidence of forgiveness by the victim may indicate that the consequences of the offence on the victim have not been long-term or debilitating, thereby affording some mitigation: Furthermore, particularly ‘[w]here the offence occurs in a domestic situation, the attitude of the victim may be relevant to the question of rehabilitation’.”

While agreeing generally with Chernov JA, Neave JA added a cautionary note at [27]:

“It is a common pattern of behaviour for perpetrators of domestic violence to express penitence and persuade their victims to reconcile. For a number of complex reasons which have been discussed in the social science literature dealing with this issue [see the Victorian Law Reform Commission, *Review of Family Violence Laws Report* (2006) 32‑36; and Shirley Patton, *Pathways: How Women Leave Violent Men* (2003) 36] many victims are assaulted on several occasions before they summon the courage to leave an abusive relationship. Often they require considerable support in order to do so. In my view, these are matters which should be given considerable weight by a judge who is considering the weight that should be given to a victim impact statement made by a person who has been the victim of domestic violence. I therefore agree with the comments of Simpson JA in *R v Glen* (Unreported, NSW Court of Criminal Appeal, Grove & Simpson JJA and Loveday AJ, 19 December 1994) at p.4 that evidence of forgiveness of the victim of domestic violence should be treated with extreme caution.”

In *R v Sa* [2004] VSCA 182 the appellant, a 28 year old Australian citizen of Samoan descent, had pleaded guilty to one count of aggravated burglary and one count of intentionally causing serious injury to his 47 year old cousin, also of Samoan descent. One of the grounds of the appeal was that the trial judge had not given sufficient weight to the victim's forgiveness of the appellant. In rejecting that ground Callaway JA said at [5]: "The community and not just the immediate victim of an offence, has a right to peace and order: *Attorney-General v. Tichy* (1982) 30 SASR 84 at 93 per Wells J." And Eames JA, with whom Callaway & Buchanan JJA agreed, said:

"[38] The statement of his Honour that the attitude of the victim could not 'govern' the sentencing approach was consistent with the principles stated in *Skura*. In the present case, however, there was good reason why the judge would be cautious in evaluating the weight to be given to the evidence of the victim. In the first place, he was not the only victim of the appellant’s crime; the two children also witnessed what must have been a horrifying incident, although there was no evidence of any long lasting adverse effects on the children. Crimes of violence frequently create alarm and distress to people other than the immediate victims, and in assessing the need for general deterrence a sentencing judge must have regard to the impact of crime more broadly than merely upon the immediate victim.

[39] An additional reason for being cautious about the weight to be given to the evidence of the victim related to the nature of [his] evidence. One reason why courts do not allow the wishes of the victim to determine the sentence to be imposed is that the victim might not always be able to assess what is in his or her own best interest. For example, when considering what weight to give to factors of general and specific deterrence in a case of a woman assaulted by her partner a sentencing judge would be minded to have regard to the imperatives which might motivate a battered wife to plead for leniency towards her attacker. In such circumstances the sentencing judge might be cautious about giving undue weight to such a plea for leniency.

[40] In the present case, the victim was himself in a difficult position among other members of the Samoan community, and his acceptance of the apology might have been motivated by a range of considerations.'

In *R v LFJ* [2009] VSCA 134 Maxwell P & Kellam JA approved the sentencing judge’s reliance on dicta of the NSW Court of Criminal Appeal in *R v Rowe* (1996) 89 A Crim R 467 when holding at [15]: “The importance of general deterrence in such cases [viz. incest] overrides any minor relevance that evidence of forgiveness might have.”

In *R v Wise* [2004] VSCA 88 the 34 year old appellant had stabbed his 17 year old partner. She gave evidence that she loved the appellant and wanted him home with her and their son and that she believed herself to be at fault with respect to the assault because she had been suffering post-natal depression and amphetamine psychosis. Eames JA said at [36]: "The support offered to the appellant by his victim is also a significant factor when assessing his prospects of rehabilitation. It is, of course, an unfortunate fact that victims of violent, drunken partners, to their own cost, often seek to forgive their partner and to resume a dangerous relationship. The courts must offer protection even when the potential victims deny its need, but the forgiveness of an offender by a victim of crime and the positive effect that has on prospects of rehabilitation is not an irrelevant factor in sentencing."

In his dissenting judgment in *DPP v Reynolds (a pseudonym)* (2022) 71 VR 336; [2022] VSCA 263 at [18] Priest JA said:

“One cannot ignore the fact that the respondent’s offending was extremely serious…In particular, choking his wife into unconsciousness on two occasions was very grave conduct. All other things being equal, a sentence of imprisonment of the order proposed by the other members of the Court would clearly be within the appropriate range. In the present case, however, the respondent’s victims had forgiven him. Most importantly, they had forgiven him because he had undertaken a process of radical reformation. In my view, no sentencing principle — including the need to uphold proper sentencing standards (see *R v Clarke* [1996] 2 VR 520, 522) — requires that process of rehabilitation to be impaired (if not obliterated).”

See also *R v Lidonnici* [2007] VSC 3 at [20]; *The Queen v CLP* [2008] VSCA 113; *DPP v Marsh* [2011] VSCA 6; *R v K-B* [2011] VSC 124 at [22]-[24]; *Treloar v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 6 at [20]-[21].

**11.2.11 Effect of mental illness / mental disorder / intellectual disability**

Though each of the following cases deals with adult offenders - some of whom were young - the principles enunciated therein are no less relevant for juvenile offenders.

### **11.2.11.1 Effect of mental illness/mental disorder – Cases prior to *R v Verdins* (2007) 16 VR 269**

In *R v Tsiaras* [1996] 1 VR 398 at 400 the Court of Appeal, in allowing an appeal against sentence by a 29 year old man and after referring to *R v Anderson* [1981] VR 155 & *R v Man* (1990) 50 A Crim R 79, held:

"Serious psychiatric illness not amounting to insanity is relevant to sentencing in at least five ways.

* First, it may reduce the moral culpability of the offence, as distinct from the prisoner's legal responsibility. Where that is so, it affects the punishment that is just in all the circumstances and denunciation of the type of conduct in which the offender engaged is less likely to be a relevant sentencing objective.
* Second, the prisoner's illness may have a bearing on the kind of sentence that is imposed and the conditions in which it should be served.
* Third, a prisoner suffering from serious psychiatric illness is not an appropriate vehicle for general deterrence, whether or not the illness played a part in the commission of the offence. The illness may have supervened since that time.
* Fourth, specific deterrence may be more difficult to achieve and is often not worth pursuing as such.
* Finally, psychiatric illness may mean that a given sentence will weigh more heavily on the prisoner than it would on a person in normal health."

In *R v Ross* [2005] VSC 428, in sentencing a schizophrenic woman for the manslaughter of her mother, Kellam J held at [41] that each of the five factors identified by the Court of Appeal in *R v Tsiaras* had application and accordingly that - to the extent that the interests of society permitted and the interests of the offender required - the sentence to be passed was reduced from what would otherwise be appropriate.

Differing opinions have been expressed by judges as to whether psychologists, as opposed to psychiatrists, are qualified to diagnose mental illness. Opinions that psychologists are not so qualified are to be found in *R v Kucma* [2005] 11 VR 472 at 482; [2005] VSCA 58 at [26] per Batt JA; *R v MacKenney* (1983) 76 Cr App R 271; *R v Forde* (1986) 19 A Crim R 1; *R v Peisley* (1990) 54 A Crim R. The contrary view is to be found in *R v Whitbread* (1995) 78 A Crim R 452; *Nepi v Northern Territory* (unreported, NT Supreme Court-Martin CJ, 02/05/1997). See also Dr Ian Freckleton’s article “Psychologists’ entitlement to diagnose” (1998) 5 Psychiatry, Psychology and Law 159. In *R v Kucma* [2005] 11 VR 472 at 488; [2005] VSCA 58 at [57] Eames JA said that he did “not consider the issue to be beyond argument”. In *R v D’Aloisio* [2006] VSC 216 at [35]-[36] Eames JA, referring to *R v Kucma*, assumed – without deciding the question – that a psychologist was entitled to make a diagnosis of major depression.

In *R v Bowen* [2002] VSCA 199 the 21 year old appellant was sentenced to 3 years imprisonment, 27 months of which was suspended. The appellant "was affected to some degree at the time of offending by a bipolar disorder". Although dismissing the appeal, the Court of Appeal - referring to *R v Champion* (1992) 64 A Crim R 244 at 254-5, *R v Giles* [1999] VSCA 208 & *R v Williams* [2000] VSCA 174 - commented at [17] that the appellant "was entitled on account of his mental disorder to sensible moderation of his sentence".

In *R v. JAD* [2003] VSCA 132 the Court of Appeal dismissed an appeal by a 21 year old man with a lengthy criminal record against a sentence of 3 years imprisonment with a non-parole period of 18 months imposed in relation to 8 counts of burglary, 9 counts of theft, one count of aggravated burglary, one of causing an explosion, one of attempted burglary and one of obtaining property by deception. A consultant psychiatrist, Dr Ruth Vine, had said of the appellant:

"Although Mr [D] describes heavy marijuana use, it is not clear that this had significantly impacted upon his behaviour, although it is clear that the offences largely related to him seeking funds in order to purchase marijuana. In addition, although Mr [D] describes having experienced a sense of being able to see and hear spirits, and a perhaps delusional belief that he is a son of God and that something significant will happen on 16 March, it is not clear that there had been any significant change in his behaviour or deterioration in his level of psychosocial functioning. Although Mr [D] describes that his belief in spirits makes him feel powerful and unassailable, it is not clear that the behaviour which led to the current charges was significantly different from behaviour which had occurred long before such symptoms were experienced. However, it is likely that both consumption of marijuana and the symptoms he describes affected his judgment and full awareness of the consequences of his actions.

I note that Mr [D] is currently receiving antipsychotic treatment. I also note that he spent a considerable time in the Atherton Unit at Thomas Embling Hospital…[I]t would be my opinion that it is likely that he does suffer from a schizophrenic illness, and that it would be appropriate that his current treatment and access to ongoing assessment be available."

At [13] the Court of Appeal commented laconically:

"This case demonstrates, once again, the harm that can be produced by the consumption of marijuana upon those with a tendency to schizophrenia."

Counsel for the appellant, relying on the well-known dicta of Batt JA in *R v Mills*, submitted that the sentence imposed showed that rather than preferring rehabilitation to general deterrence, the judge had simply somewhat moderated general deterrence because of the manifestation of mental illness. Although the judge had accepted that the appellant's mental illness was relevant to sentencing, thus bringing into operation the principles enunciated in cases such as *R v Tsiaras* [1996] 1 VR 398, counsel submitted that the sentence should have reflected the appellant's reduced moral culpability and less weight should have been placed on general and specific deterrence. The Court of Appeal disagreed, stating at [10]:

"Her Honour noted Dr Vine's assessment that the appellant required treatment for his illness and recognized the importance of youth and therefore of his rehabilitation. Her Honour expressly noted the need sensibly to moderate general deterrence because of the possibility that he may have been suffering from mental illness in October 2002."

In *R v Gemmill* [2004] VSC 30 two psychiatrists had accepted that the accused was suffering from depression amounting to a mental illness at the time he killed his wife. One psychiatrist had classified the depression as moderate, the other as major. At [43]-[47] Osborn J performed a detailed analysis of the decisions of the Court of Appeal in *Yaldiz* [1998] 2 VR 376, *R v. Vodopic* [2003] VSCA 172 and *Ronald James Kelly* (2000) 112 A Crim R 307, in the latter of which Charles JA (with whom Winneke P agreed) said at [17]:

"In stating that it was not appropriate to place emphasis upon general deterrence, it is possible that the judge was being unduly generous to the applicant. In *Champion* (1992) 64 A Crim R 244 at 245-255 Kirby P., with whom the other members of the New South Wales Court of Criminal Appeal agreed, said that general deterrence is not eliminated, but still operates, sensibly moderated, in the case of an offender suffering from a mental disorder or severe intellectual handicap, a proposition which has been cited with approval on numerous occasions in this Court. See, for example, *Richards* *and* *Gregory* [1998] 2 VR 1 at 10; *Yaldiz* [1998] 2 VR 376 at 381. The judge in this case may have intended no departure from this approach in stating that he would not place emphasis upon general deterrence."

In the course of sentencing the accused for murder, Osborn J said at [38] & [48]:

[38] "The depression from which you have suffered and continue to suffer cannot, in my view, be regarded as being equivalent in seriousness to the delusional schizophrenia referred to in the case of *R v. Tsiaras*. Nevertheless, consideration of the sentencing principles set out in that case is appropriate in the present case…

[48] [I]t is not sufficient to label your depression as serious in order to invoke the principles stated in *Tsiaras* with respect to general deterrence. There must be coherent and persuasive evidence of the link between this condition and your responsibility for your actions."

His Honour, being satisfied of the requisite link, ultimately concluded that this should lead to some **sensible moderation** of the accused's sentence:

[52] "…I do accept that as a result of your depressive condition it is likely that you will be held in stricter security and more restrictive conditions than would otherwise be the case during a custodial sentence. I also accept that your ongoing depressive condition may well aggravate the burden of loss of liberty which a custodial sentence will entail.

[53] …[T]he fact of your depressive condition at the time of your offence and the fact of its continuation to date and likely continuation into the future lead to the conclusion that there should be some sensible moderation of your sentence but do not materially reduce your moral culpability or render the issue of general deterrence substantially irrelevant."

In *R v DTR* [2005] VSCA 279 at [17] Buchanan JA – with whom Callaway & Vincent JJA agreed – held that the offender’s severe depression and suicidal tendencies should have moderated, at least to some extent, the need for the sentence to act as a general deterrence notwithstanding that his mental conditions was not as severe as that of *Tsiaras*.

In *R v Izzard* (2004) 7 VR 480; [2003] VSCA 152 the applicant was "a chronic schizophrenic and intellectually challenged". Though a psychiatrist opined that there was little, if any, direct relationship between the applicant's illness and his offending, he acknowledged that the applicant was "a significantly damaged man". At [15] Callaway JA, with whom Winneke P & Vincent JA agreed, pointed out that mental illness was a double-edged sword so far as sentencing was concerned:

"Serious psychiatric illness impacts, in a variety of ways, on the severity of sentence and the relevance of general deterrence. In a case such as this the latter is not excluded but is to be sensibly moderated: see among other authorities *R v Tsiaras* [1996] 1 VR 398 at 400; *R v Yaldiz* [1998] 2 VR 376 at 381 and 383; *R v Tramontano* (2002) 131 A Crim R 1 at [56] and *R v Bux* (2002) 132 A Crim R 395 at [33]-[40]. Mental illness is not, however, solely a mitigatory factor. It may mean that the offender, whilst deserving of compassion, is also a greater danger to the community. This was pointed out by Gleeson CJ in *R v Engert* (1995) 84 A Crim R 67 at 68 and 70-1 and, more recently, by Batt JA in *R v Bux* at [1]. It is a factor to be borne in mind in the present case and no doubt one of the reasons why [counsel for the applicant] submitted that there should be eligibility for a longer than usual period of supervision on parole."

In *R v Yaldiz* [1998] 2 VR 376 Batt JA - with whom Winneke ACJ & Hampel AJA agreed - held at 380 that the trial judge had correctly held that the principle in *R v Anderson* [1981] VR 380 was inapplicable, there being no evidence that the defendant's mental illness (a post-traumatic stress disorder resulting from an attack on him in which he had been shot in the face) had contributed to his attempted murder of his wife or that the offence was committed under its influence. After referring to *R v Anderson* [1981] VR 155, *R v Tsiaras* [1996] 1 VR 398, *R v Yilmaz* (unreported, 21 November 1996), *R v Scott* (unreported, 19 February 1996) & *R v Donamski* (unreported, 3 March 1997), Winneke ACJ added at 383:

"It is true that the courts in these cases expressed the view that serious psychiatric illness falling short of legal insanity is relevant to sentencing because, inter alia, a person suffering from such an illness is not an appropriate vehicle for general deterrence: see *Tsiaras* at 400. But it must be remembered that in each of the cases to which I have referred the accused was suffering either from schizophrenia or a schizophrenic-type illness which obscured the mental intent to commit the crime with which he had been charged. It is not appropriate to simply fasten on the words 'recognized psychiatric disorder' and then, without reference to the symptoms and consequences of that disorder, to contend that purposes of general deterrence have no part to play in the sentencing process. Whether in the particular case a psychiatric condition should reduce or eliminate general deterrence as an appropriate purpose of punishment will depend upon the nature and severity of its symptoms and its effect upon the mental capacity of the accused.

In this case, the evidence suggested no more than that the respondent was suffering from a post-traumatic stress disorder, a condition by no means uncommon, and it was not said to interfere with the thought processes or to promote delusional behaviour. Indeed the learned judge found, and the finding is not contested, that the respondent was well aware of the nature and quality of the act charged, and well knew that what he was doing was wrong."

In *R v Connolly* [2004] VSCA 24 the sentencing judge had been provided with a number of medical reports. The earliest was that of Dr Lester Walton who expressed the opinion that the appellant was a significantly psychiatrically disturbed youth with psychological problems which could not be controlled short of in-patient care. Although Dr Walton was of the view that poly-substance abuse had produced 'recurring episodes of toxic psychosis', he did not link these to the offences for which the appellant was then before the Court. Over a year later the appellant was seen by Dr Kenny in relation to the current offences. Dr Kenny expressed the opinion that the appellant, even though only 19, had a well-established personality disorder which was not amenable to psychiatric treatment. Dr Kenny described the appellant as having no impulse control and no desire to control those impulses, especially when using drugs. The final report was from the forensic psychologist Mr Ian Joblin who agreed with the opinions of Drs Walton and Kenny, including the views of Dr Kenny that the appellant had a very disturbed personality structure and a development that was grossly impaired. At [36], Coldrey AJA - with whom Winneke P & Bongiorno AJA agreed - said:

"[T]he extent of the psychiatric material before the sentencing court was not such as to attract the operation of the principles enunciated in *R v Tsiaras* and *R v Yaldiz* so as to moderate the weight which might otherwise be given to general and indeed specific deterrence."

In *R v McConkey* [No 2] [2004] VSCA 26 the appellant had been diagnosed by a psychologist Mr Patrick Newton as meeting the criteria of major depressive disorder (moderate and chronic) and of a post-traumatic stress disorder (originating from his discovery of his brother's body after his brother had hung himself 6 years before). Mr Newton said that the appellant presented with a complex mix of psychological problems which would require ongoing attention, including anger management and personal counselling. At [20] Eames JA - with whom Buchanan JA & Smith AJA agreed - said:

"Furthermore, it was open to her Honour to conclude that the psychological state described by Mr Newton was not 'of a status that justifies mitigation of the principles of general deterrence'. The psychological state as described did not amount to a psychiatric illness, let alone an illness of such a degree as would be bound to reduce the moral culpability of the appellant: see the discussions in *R v Tsiaras* [1996[ 1 VR 398, *R v Anderson* [1981] VR 155, *R v Yaldiz* [1998] 2 VR 376."

In *R v Eliasen* (1991) 53 A Crim R 391 the applicant was sentenced to 8 years imprisonment for offences including armed robbery. Subsequently he was found to be HIV positive. The Court of Criminal Appeal reduced the sentence by 1 year. Crockett J - with whom McGarvie & Phillips JJ agreed - adopted with approval dicta of King CJ in *Smith* (1987) 44 SASR 587 at 589:

"Generally speaking ill health will be a factor tending to mitigate punishment only when it appears that imprisonment will be a greater burden on the offender by reason of his state of health or when there is a serious risk of imprisonment having a gravely adverse effect on the offender's health."

In *R v Ahmed* [2005] VSCA 279 at [17]-[18] the Court of Appeal applied *R v Eliasen* in reducing from 3½ years to 3 years the non-parole period of an offender who had been sentenced on 3 counts of armed robbery and sundry offences on the basis of the receipt of fresh evidence of the offender’s delusional disorder which was present but latent at the time of sentencing. In *R v Rongonui-Chase* [2004] VSCA 25 at [38] the Court of Appeal - referring to *R v Eliasen* - said, *obiter*, that had the appellant had schizophrenia or the prodromal phase thereof either at the time of sentencing or the time of appeal, that would have clearly been relevant to the disposition of a sentencing appeal.

In *R v Jones* [2006] VSCA 266 Redlich JA, with whom Vincent & Eames JJA agreed, said at [11]:

“[I]t was accepted that the sentencing court’s powers at common law enabled it to take into account the burden of imprisonment on a particular offender having regard to his or her personal circumstances and any relevant circumstances which prevailed within the correctional institution where the offender was detained. When considering the burden of imprisonment on an offender who requires psychiatric care, allowance may be made for the limited nature and quality of treatment available within our correctional institutions. See *R v Rollo* [2006] VSCA 154 at [16]-[18] per Warren CJ (with whom Buchanan & Vincent JJA agreed) and *R v SH* [2006] VSCA 83 at [22]-[23] per Warren CJ, Charles & Chernov JJA.”

In *R v McDonald* [2004] VSCA 186 at [24] the applicant was described by Winneke P as having "had a fuddled mind at the time of the offending that was brought on by substance abuse" and after incarceration "a psychological disturbance…the result of *delirium tremens*…complicated by drug withdrawal". His illness had substantially resolved by the date of sentencing. The Court of Appeal held that "there was no evidentiary basis for the learned sentencing judge to treat such impairment as moderating to any relevant degree the principles of general and specific deterrence."

In *R v Saw* [2004] VSC 117, in sentencing a 64 year old offender who had pleaded guilty to murder of a cousin, Redlich J applied the **sensible moderation** formulation, saying at [35]:

"It is not disputed that at the time of this offence you were suffering from a serious depressive illness, only a few days after you had attempted suicide and having been admitted as an involuntary in-patient to a psychiatric ward. It is an illness which reduced the moral culpability of your offence. I am satisfied that your depressive illness affected your judgment and insight into your conduct and it was a substantial cause for the commission of this offence. Fox and Freiberg, Sentencing: State and Federal Law in Victoria, 2nd ed. 1999, Oxford University Press South Melbourne; *R v Tsiaras* [1996] 1 VR 398 and *Anderson v R* [1981] VR 155. I am also satisfied that the prison sentence that I must impose will weigh more heavily upon you than a person in normal mental health. *R v Danaher* [2003] VSCA 119. I have in mind the concerns expressed by Mr Newton and the recommendations contained in his report to which I have referred. I must give appropriate weight to general deterrence as an important element of the sentence that I should impose but its effect should be sensibly moderated in view of the illness from which you suffered. *Champion v R* (1992) 64 A Crim R 244 at 254-255 per Kirby P; *R v Richards & Gregory* [1998] 2 VR 1 at 10; *R v Yaldiz* [1998] 2 VR 376 at 381; *R v Kelly* (2000) 112 A Crim R 307; [2000] VSCA 59 at [17] per Charles JA and *R v Vodopic*.[2003] VSCA 172 at [28]."

In *R v Bijay Shankar* [2004] VSC 132 the 27 year old accused had pleaded guilty to intentionally causing serious injury to his wife. Harper J was satisfied that he was suffering from a mental disability of uncertain extent sufficient to reduce his moral culpability. At [21] he said to the accused:

"I am satisfied that, at the time of the offence, your ability to reason was adversely affected. On the other hand, I am also satisfied that you understood what you were doing and knew that it was wrong. You were not suffering from what the cases sometimes describe as a serious psychiatric illness not amounting to insanity. Accordingly, in my opinion, it is proper, in considering the appropriate sentence to impose upon you, to conclude that your moral culpability is less than that of someone in full command of his mental faculties. At the same time, it would be equally inappropriate to equate your degree of culpability with that of a person suffering from a serious psychiatric illness."

In *R v Smith* [2004] VSC 134 at [25] His Honour adopted a similar formulation in holding that the accused's bipolar disorder, which adversely affected his capacity for judgment, reduced somewhat his moral culpability.

In *R v Bendix* [2004] VSC 133 at [38] Nettle J held, applying dicta from *R v Tsiaras,* that the offender was not an appropriate vehicle for general deterrence or denunciation:

"I regard your offence [multiple stabbing] as a serious offence of intentionally causing serious injury. It is made worse by your long history of offending. Ordinarily such an offence would call for a sentence sufficient to deter others from committing offences of the same or similar character and to deter you from offending again. The fact that you were suffering from a serious psychiatric illness, albeit falling short of insanity, means that this is not an appropriate case for the promotion of general deterrence and reduces the moral culpability of your offence and the need for denunciation of your conduct. But I consider that there still a need for specific deterrence."

In *R v Skura* [2004] VSCA 53 a psychologist had given evidence that the appellant, found guilty of incitement to murder her husband, was suffering from a severe mixed personality disorder and an adjustment disorder with disturbance of conduct and emotions. Eames JA said of this at [7]-[8]:

[7] "I agree with Smith AJA that the identified personality disorder of the applicant was not of such character as to render this an inappropriate case for the application of principles of special and general deterrence. Complaint was made that the language of the judge suggested that in his opinion only a serious psychiatric illness would be capable of having that moderating effect. I do not consider that his Honour did so conclude; indeed, it seems likely that his Honour was merely applying the principles and distinctions discussed in *R. v. Tsiaris* [1996] 1 VR 398 and *R. v. Yaldiz* [1998] 2 VR 376 and had concluded that he was not persuaded that any condition of the applicant reduced her moral culpability or caused him to eschew considerations of specific or general deterrence when sentencing her.

[8] A disorder falling short of serious psychiatric illness might well be capable of moderating the need for general or specific deterrence but the onus was on the applicant to demonstrate that it did so in this case, by establishing that its effect reduced the seriousness of the offences and the moral culpability of the applicant: *R. v. Vodopic* [2003] VSCA 172 at [28]-[29] per Eames JA, with whom Winneke P and Phillips JA agreed; see too *R. v. Danaher* [2003] VSCA 119 at [16]-[18] per Ashley AJA*; R. v. Goodwin & McGregor* [2003] VSCA 120 at [35]. His Honour did not, in fact, disregard the applicant’s mental condition when having regard to the application of general and specific deterrence. He accepted that some moderation of the effect of those considerations was justified, but only to a small extent. I agree with Smith AJA that that assessment of the relevance of the disorder in this case to the offending conduct, insofar as it bore on the application of general and specific deterrence, was open to the judge: see *R. v. Cardona* [1998] 2 VR 126 at 136-137 per Batt JA."

In *R v Chambers* [2005] VSCA 34 at [32]-[33] the Court of Appeal held, applying *Champion* (1992) 64 A Crim R 244 at 255, that the appellant's borderline personality disorder should have led to general deterrence, as a sentencing consideration, being "sensibly moderated" in the sentence imposed on him for 2 counts of arson causing death.

In *R v Sebalj* [2006] VSCA 106 the Court of Appeal reduced to 12 years with a 9 year non-parole period a sentence of 15 years imprisonment with a 12 year non-parole period imposed on the applicant who had been found guilty of the murder of his partner ([2004] VSC 212). The applicant had been in an acute psychotic state at the time of the offence although it was unclear whether that was attributable to the effect of drugs upon a vulnerable individual or whether it was a manifestation of his subsequently diagnosed schizophrenia. There was no rational motive for his conduct, it being accepted that there was a loving relationship between the applicant and the victim. The applicant demonstrated genuine remorse. He had no predisposition to violent behaviour and good prospects of rehabilitation. At [14] Vincent JA, with whom Maxwell P agreed, said:

“As this Court has made clear, in *Tsiaras* and in a number of other cases, concepts of denunciation and general and specific deterrence can only assume limited significance in the determination of an appropriate sentence in cases of this kind. Nevertheless, as [the prosecutor] submitted, it is important to bear in mind that where the psychotic state of an applicant was the consequence of his ingestion of drugs or other conduct deliberately chosen by him, the extent to which it can be asserted that his level of moral culpability is reduced may become very much problematic. Whatever be the situation in other cases, what is clear is that the applicant did all that he could do to address the situation with which he was confronted, and over a number of days prior to the commission of the offence.”

At [18]-[21] Maxwell P said:

[18] “Considerable attention was paid on the plea to the question whether it should be concluded that a diagnosis of schizophrenia was applicable to the applicant at the time of the offence. As indicated in the course of argument, I consider that in view of the uncontested psychiatric evidence before the court on the plea, it was not necessary to decide whether the explanation for the applicant’s psychotic state lay in the process of withdrawal from drug taking or in the existence, or the onset, of a condition later diagnosed as schizophrenia.

[19] The decision of this Court in *Tsiaras* and the propositions there laid down were expressed by reference to ‘serious psychiatric illness not amounting to insanity’. As Vincent JA has said, there can be no doubt that someone in a psychotic state is, at that time, properly described as suffering from serious psychiatric illness. As I understand the state of psychiatric knowledge, it has been established for many years that psychosis is an archetypal instance of mental illness for the purposes at least of the *Mental Health Act* in Victoria: see in this regard the decision of the Mental Health Review Board in the appeal of Garry Ian Patrick Webb (also known as Garry Ian Patrick David), Decisions of the Mental Health Review Board Victoria (1987-1991) Volume 1 at 177-178.

[20] It is to be recalled that the evidence of the psychiatrist, which was accepted on all sides at the plea, was as follows:

‘It is in my view reasonable to conclude that at the time he killed Ms McKenna it is more likely than not that [the applicant] was experiencing psychotic symptoms of an order of severity sufficient to deprive him of the knowledge of the wrongfulness of his actions in that he could not reason regarding the wrongfulness of his actions, as perceived by reasonable people, with a moderate degree of sense and composure.’

That finding makes it clear why the *Tsiaras* principles would be applicable whether or not the diagnostic category of schizophrenia applied to the applicant at the time of the murder. A person in the condition so described is severely disturbed and, in an important respect, out of touch with reality.

[21] It would, in my opinion, detract from the utility and flexibility of the propositions set out in *Tsiaras* if there were to be undue focus on the classification of the particular condition, that is, on whether or not it was a recognised psychiatric illness of one kind or another. What *Tsiaras* does, if I might say so with respect, is to set out clearly and succinctly a set of propositions which provide guidance to sentencing judges. What matters in any given case is not the label to be applied to the psychiatric condition but whether and to what extent the condition can be shown to have affected the offender’s mental capacity at the time of the offence (see *R v Yaldiz* [1998] 2 VR 376 at 383; *R v Toni Vodopic* [2003] VSCA 172 at [28]) and/or at the time of sentence.”

In *R v Flower* [2005] VSC 462 at [42]-[43], the Crown did not dispute that the accused was suffering from a serious psychiatric illness, namely psychosis. However the prosecutor argued that the relevant principles do not apply in cases in which the illness had been brought about by the accused’s own conduct – in this case drug-taking – as opposed to “organic causes”. Hollingworth J rejected the distinction and proceeded “on the basis that, theoretically, the relevant principles may apply to somebody suffering from a serious psychiatric illness which is substantially self-induced”.

For further discussion on the effect of mental illness or mental disorder on sentencing in cases prior to the watershed judgment of the Court of Appeal in *R v Verdins*, see *R v Hill* [2004] VSCA 116 at [18]-[22] per Eames JA with whom Charles JA agreed; *R v Rendle* [2004] VSC 201 at [41]-[43] per Kellam J; *R v Hasan Huseyin Alipek & Jason Maxwell Saltmarsh* [2004] VSC 206 at [44] per Nettle J; *R v Wilson* [2004] VSC 468 at [38] per Redlich J; *R v Maccia* [2005] VSCA 20 at [28]-[32] per Winneke P; *R v Dent* [2005] VSCA 42 at [12]-[13] & [16]-[17] per Nettle JA; *R v King* [2005] VSCA 39 at [22]-[24]; *R v Rendle* [2005] VSCA 52 at [8]; *R v Verdins* [2005] VSC 479 at [25]-[26]; *R v Stenhouse* [2006] VSC 147 at [21] per Nettle JA; *R v D’Aloisio* [2006] VSC 216 at [49]-[50] per Eames JA; *R v Lewis* [2007] VSCA 24 at [13]-[16]; *R v Kasulaitis* [1998] 4 VR 224; *R v Roberts (Sentence)* [2006] VSC 122 at [32]-[35]; *R v Mukhtar Mohammed Ahmed* [2006] VSCA 200 at [13] & [16]-[29]; *R v Rollo* [2006] VSCA 154 at [17]; *DPP v Kabo* [2006] VSC 340 at [12]-[13]; *R v Micetic* [2006] VSCA 176 at [41]; *R v Duy Duc Nguyen* [2006] VSCA 184 at [24]; *R v Sita* [2006] VSC 323 at [26]; *R v Williams* [2007] VSCA 208 at [58]-[68]; *R v Vardouniotis* [2007] VSCA 62 at [20]-[33]; *R v Davey* [2010] VSCA 346.

### **11.2.11.2 Effect of mental illness/mental disorder – *R v Verdins* (2007) 16 VR 269 & later cases**

In *R v Verdins* – *R v Buckley* – *R v Nat Viet Vo* (2007) 16 VR 269; [2007] VSCA 102 [hereafter referred to as *R v Verdins*] Maxwell P, Buchanan & Vincent JJA commenced their judgment by stating:

“The proper exercise of the sentencing discretion frequently calls for a consideration of the offender’s mental state at the time of the offending or at the time of sentence or both.”

The Court then reviewed *R v Tsiaras* and a large number of the cases based on it and said at [5]:

“The sentencing considerations identified in *R v Tsiaras* are not – and were not intended to be – applicable only to cases of ‘serious psychiatric illness’. One or more of those considerations may be applicable in any case where the offender is shown to have been suffering at the time of the offence (and/or to be suffering at the time of sentencing) from a mental disorder or abnormality or an impairment of mental function, whether or not the condition in question would properly be described as a (serious) mental illness.”

At [8] the Court said:

“**The sentencing court should not have to concern itself with how a particular condition is to be classified.** Difficulties of definition and classification in this field are notorious. See A Frieberg, “’*Out of Mind, Out of Sight*’: *The Disposition of Mentally Disordered Persons Involved in Criminal Proceedings*”*,* (1976-77) 3 Monash U L Rev 134 at 135-6; R G Fox, “*Sentencing the mentally disordered offender”*, (1986) 60 Law Institute Journal 416 at 417; I Potas, *Just Deserts for the Mad* (Australian Institute of Criminology, 1982) Ch 2. There may be differences of expert opinion and diagnosis in relation to the offender. It may be that no specific condition can be identified. **What matters is what the evidence shows about the nature, extent and effect of the mental impairment experienced by the offender at the relevant time.**” [emphasis mine]

And at [32] the Court restated in a somewhat revised form the guiding principles which *R v Tsiaras* had laid down:

"Impaired mental functioning, whether temporary or permanent (‘the condition’), is relevant to sentencing in at least the following six ways:

(1) The condition may reduce the moral culpability of the offending conduct, as distinct from the offender’s legal responsibility. Where that is so, the condition affects the punishment that is just in all the circumstances; and denunciation is less likely to be a relevant sentencing objective.

(2) The condition may have a bearing on the kind of sentence that is imposed and the conditions in which it should be served.

(3) Whether general deterrence should be moderated or eliminated as a sentencing consideration depends upon the nature and severity of the symptoms exhibited by the offender, and the effect of the condition on the mental capacity of the offender, whether at the time of the offending or at the date of sentence or both.

(4) Whether specific deterrence should be moderated or eliminated as a sentencing consideration likewise depends upon the nature and severity of the symptoms of the condition as exhibited by the offender, and the effect of the condition on the mental capacity of the offender, whether at the time of the offending or at the date of the sentence or both. See, for example, *Payne* (2002) 131 A Crim R 432 at [43].

(5) The existence of the condition at the date of sentencing (or its foreseeable recurrence) may mean that a given sentence will weigh more heavily on the offender than it would on a person in normal health.

(6) Where there is a serious risk of imprisonment having a significant adverse effect on the offender’s mental health, this will be a factor tending to mitigate punishment.”

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In *The Queen v Guode* [2020] HCA 8 at [6] the High Court approved and adopted the above summary from *R v Verdins* of “the ways in which a mental disorder or abnormality or an impairment of mental function, whether temporary or permanent, may be relevant to sentencing”. In so doing the High Court noted, with a number of examples, that the *Verdins* “summary has consistently been adopted by intermediate appellate courts elsewhere in Australia” and included a reference to *Muldrock v The Queen* (2011) 244 CLR 120 at 137-139 [50]-[55] per French CJ, Gummow, Hayne, Heydon, Crennan, Kiefel and Bell JJ.

In *R v Rattya* [2008] VSCA 149, in the course of agreeing with the primary judgment of Buchanan JA, Nettle & Redlich JJA added at [24]:

“Although *Verdins* purported to restate the law (see paragraph [31]) – not extend it – it did attribute a greater degree of significance to a prisoner’s mental condition at the time of sentencing, and likely mental condition throughout the period of sentence, than until then had generally been appreciated (see paragraphs [27]-[30]).”

In *R v Azzopardi, R v Baltatzis, R v Gabriel* [2011] VSCA 372 Redlich JA (with whom Coghlan & Macaulay AJJA agreed) said at [19]:

“There is, generally speaking, no duty on a sentencing judge, in the absence of explicit submissions by counsel, to embark upon an inquiry as to whether any principles in *Verdins* might be enlivened by the evidence tendered on the plea: *R v Zander* [2009] VSCA 10, [36] (Nettle JA); *Wassef v R* [2011] VSCA 30, [18] (Redlich JA). Where a prisoner is represented by counsel, a sentencing judge will not ordinarily be required to consider any possible effects of psychological or psychiatric disability which may go in mitigation of penalty, other than those expressly relied on by counsel: *R v Zander* [2009] VSCA 10, [36] (Nettle JA).

In *R v Martin* [2011] VSC 217 it was not disputed that the principles of *Verdins’* case would have been applicable. However the Crown submitted that the reduction in the accused’s legal and moral culpability had already been reflected in the Crown’s acceptable of a plea of guilty to defensive homicide as opposed to murder with which he had originally been charged and that to take further account of a reduction in the accused’s moral responsibility would amount to “double counting”. Curtain J rejected this submission. At [27] her Honour said:

“The sentencing function resides in the Court, and the sentencing judge is, in the words of Winneke P in *R v Newman and Turnbull* (1997) 1 VR 146 at 150, “entitled and indeed bound to take into account all the circumstances which are relevant to the commission of the offence with which the prisoner has been charged”. In those circumstances, the decision of the Director to file an indictment alleging one count of defensive homicide and to accept a plea to that charge in resolution of the matter does not eliminate or obviate the necessity to give due weight to your moral and legal responsibility as enunciated in *Verdins’* case in the sentencing process.”

Applying the *Verdins’* principles in *R v Brooks* [2008] VSC 70, Coghlan J concluded at [40]-[41] that although there was little about the defendant’s dysthemia – considered in conjunction with his borderline intellectual functioning - which would make him an inappropriate vehicle for general deterrence or operate to reduce his moral culpability, it would nonetheless make the serving of a long term of imprisonment harder for him. And In *R v Johnstone* [2008] VSC 584 at [37]-[38] Coghlan Jalso considered that *Verdins* applied only to the limited extent that a prisoner’s adjustment disorder may make prison more onerous for him at least in the short term.

In *R v Foster* [2009] VSC 124 in sentencing the accused to 14y/10y imprisonment for murder, Osborn J said at [33]:

“In my view the combination of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, serious depression and alcoholism is such as to bring your case within the first category contemplated in *R v Verdins.* The cumulative effect of these conditions was to impair your mental functioning in a manner which reduced the moral culpability of the offending conduct as distinct from your legal responsibility for that conduct. In turn your cumulative condition affects the punishment which is just in all the circumstances.”

Just as certain pre-*Verdins’* cases - examples of which are *R v Yaldiz* [1998] 2 VR 376 and *R v Connolly* [2004] VSCA 24 – discussed the need for a nexus to be shown between the offending and the offender’s mental condition, so too there are several post-*Verdins’* cases in which the *Verdins’* sentence moderation has not been applied because of lack of evidence of the requisite nexus.

In *R v Charles* [2011] VSCA 399 at [162] Robson AJA (with whom Redlich & Harper JJA agreed) summarized the following principles which may be discerned from the authorities when dealing with the establishment of a link between a mental condition and the offending conduct:

“1. The *Verdins’* principles are and should be should be regarded as exceptional: *R v Vaudreu* [2009] VSCA 262, [37] (Ashley JA).

2. The onus lies on the offender to establish the facts to enliven the *Verdins’* principles on the balance of probabilities as a mitigating factor: *R v Romero* [2011] VSCA 45, [18].

3. Cogent evidence, normally in the form of an expert opinion, is ordinarily necessary if the principles in *Verdins* are to be enlivened: *R v Romero* [2011] VSCA 45, [18] (Redlich JA).

4. It is always necessary to consider how the particular condition affected the mental functioning of the offender at the time of the offence and how it is likely to affect him or her in the future: *R v Romero* [2011] VSCA 45, [13] (Redlich JA).

5. The offender must establish that the offender’s disability had the effect of impairing the offender’s ability to exercise appropriate judgment, or impairing the offender’s ability to make calm and rational choices or to think clearly at the time of the offence: *R v Romero* [2011] VSCA 45, [13] (Redlich JA).

6. V*erdins* has no application in respect of a mental condition postulated to have existed at the time of the offending unless the condition relied upon can be seen to have some ‘realistic connection’ {*R v Vaudreu* [2009] VSCA 262, [37] (Ashley JA)} with the offending; or ‘caused or contributed’ {*DPP v Patterson* [2009] VSCA 222, [46] (Maxwell P, Redlich JA, and Vickery AJA); *Bennett v The Queen* [2011] VSCA 253, [61] (Ashley, Redlich and Hansen JJA)} to the offending; or is ‘causally linked’ {*Bennett v The Queen* [2011] VSCA 253, [60] (Ashley, Redlich and Hansen JJA)} to the offending.”

In *R v Carroll* [2011] VSCA 150 at [9]-[27] Maxwell P (with whom Buchanan JA agreed) discussed the appellant’s mental condition and its relevance to his offending – multiple counts of stalking, burglary, theft, aggravated burglary and using telephone to menace committed with a sexual motivation against twelve different victims over eight months. At [19] his Honour spoke of “the rigour with which arguments of [the *Verdins’*] kind must be assessed”. He continued:

“As is now well-recognised *(R v Robazzini* [2010] VSCA 8, [42]), diagnostic labels are, by themselves, of no assistance to a sentencing judge. What matters is what the expert evidence shows about the nature, extent and effect of the mental impairment experienced by the offender at the relevant time: *Verdins* (2007) 16 VR 269, [8]; *R v Zander* [2009] VSCA 10, [29].

Where reliance is placed on [*Verdins*] proposition 1, concerning moral culpability, the question for the Court is whether the evidence establishes – on the balance of probabilities – that the impairment of mental functioning did contribute to the offending in such a way as to render the offender less blameworthy for the offending than he/she would otherwise have been. Very often, this question is approached as one of causation. Did the evidence establish a causal connection between the impairment of mental functioning and the offending for which sentence is to be imposed? (*Ashe v The Queen* [2010] VSCA 119, [14], [19]; *Davey v The Queen* [2010] VSCA 346, [25]; *MC v The Queen* [2011] VSCA 2, [20]–[21]; *Bowen v The Queen* [2011] VSCA 67, [28], [29], [33]; *DPP v HPW* [2011] VSCA 88, [28], [63]; *Pettiford v The Queen* [2011] VSCA 96, [32]–[34].)

There was no evidence of that kind in the present case.”

In *R v Martin* [2007] VSCA 291 the Court of Appeal agreed with the sentencing judge that the offender’s moral culpability was not reduced by reason of his psychotic state in the particular circumstances of that case but rejected the proposition that self-induced psychosis could never be a mitigating factor. At [19]-[21] Maxwell P and Nettle & Redlich JJA said:

“We would not…endorse the general proposition…that psychosis (or other mental illness) which is drug induced can never be a mitigating factor because it is the result of the offender’s own (illegal) act.

Cases can be imagined where the offender’s psychotic state is drug-induced but is nevertheless treated as lessening the offender’s culpability. For example, the offender might have had no awareness – because of a lack of prior knowledge or experience – that the ingestion of a particular drug might trigger a psychotic reaction. In such a case, the resultant impairment of mental capacity might be regarded as involuntary, notwithstanding that the taking of the drug was a voluntary act. Again – as in the case of *Sebalj* [2006] VSCA 106. – the psychosis might occur in the course of the offender’s attempts to withdraw from the use of the drug which was, nevertheless, the cause of the psychosis. In *Sebalj*, the drug-induced psychosis was seen as substantially reducing the offender’s level of culpability for what he did while under the influence of paranoid delusions.

As these examples illustrate, the critical factor in determining the significance of drug-induced psychosis for sentencing purposes is the degree of foreknowledge on the part of the offender. There is an obvious parallel in this respect with sentencing for offences committed while under the influence of alcohol, where the concept of ‘reckless intoxication’ has been developed.”

In *DPP v Arvanitidis* [2008] VSCA 189 the respondent at the time of a police siege was delusional, paranoid, fearful of attacks by terrorists and had considered himself licensed by the Government to possess a gun and shoot police as a consequence of self-induced ‘ice’ intoxication. Commenting with approval on *R v Martin,* Redlich JA (with whom Buchanan & Nettle JJA agreed) said at [27]-[29]:

“To lose the benefit of *Tsiaras* and *Verdins*, it was not necessary that the respondent have foreknowledge that the psychotic symptoms would cause him to behave in the precise manner in which he offended or make him generally dangerous or violent. If the respondent was aware that by taking the drug, his judgment would be so affected that he would behave irrationally or that it would affect his ability to exercise control, his self-induced mental state would not constitute a mitigating circumstance: *R v Martin* [2007] VSCA 291 at [18]–[30]; *R v Gagalowicz* [2005] NSWCCA 452 at [36] It was for the respondent to establish on the balance of probabilities that he did not know that the drug would have such effects. This he failed to do. The respondent’s foreknowledge regarding the potential for paranoia, persecutory delusions, and other forms of disorganised thought was sufficient to preclude the operation of the principle stated in *Tsiaras and Verdins*. The sentencing judge correctly found that the respondent’s drug induced psychosis at the time of offending was not a mitigating circumstance which reduced his moral culpability.”

In *R v Shafik-Eid* [2009] VSCA 217 it was clear from both the circumstances of the offences, the appellant’s later disclosed history and a report of a clinical forensic psychologist that the appellant was suffering from quite severe psychological – or even psychiatric – difficulties at relevant times. However, the sentencing judge considered that the appellant’s pre-existing psychological state would not on its own have contributed to the commission of the offences of reckless conduct endangering life and making threats to kill for which he was sentenced to 5 years imprisonment with a non-parole period of 3 years. The judge concluded that these offences were committed because the ‘additional ingredient’ of significant drug abuse had occurred and that the reduction in moral culpability and the significance of that on general deterrence was only “very minor”. In holding that nexus had not been established between the appellant’s mental condition and the commission of the offences, Lasry AJA (with whom Nettle & Redlich JJA agreed) said at [27]:

“In my opinion it was appropriate to limit the effect of the principles identified in *Verdins* as the sentencing judge did. It could not be said that the appellant’s psychological condition was directly responsible for the offending. For *Verdins* principles to apply, the appellant had to show that the mental condition had directly contributed to the commission of the offences. The fact that the appellant’s drug taking was a consequence of his mental condition did not establish that nexus.”

At [28]-[29] Lasry AJA referred with approval to the aforementioned decisions of the Court of Appeal in *R v Martin* [2007] VSCA 291 and *R v Arvanitidis* [2008] VSCA 189 and at [30] stated:

“[T]o bring the appellant within the contemplation of the analyses in *Martin* and *Arvanitidis* it would have required him to establish on the balance of probabilities, that there was a lack of foresight by him as to the consequences of consuming the drugs he did on both occasions.”

In *R v White* [2009] VSCA 177 a similar issue arose. At [17] Lasry AJA (with whom Buchanan & Dodds-Streeton JJA agreed) said: “No submission was made on behalf of the appellant seeking to specifically link the appellant's diagnosed condition to the offending, therefore, the evidence regarding his condition is simply part of the background.”

In *R v Miller* [2010] VSC 326 at [43] Coghlan J said:

“I was urged, because of the matters set out by Mr Ball, I should have regard to the principles in *R v Verdins* when sentencing you. That case makes it clear that psychiatric conditions which lead to impaired mental functioning may lead to a reduction in sentence. Although I am prepared to accept and take into account your psychological condition, I do not accept that the *Verdins* principles can be applied in your case. I say that because at the very root of your offending is your addiction to alcohol. You know where excessive drinking leads you. It may be that in certain circumstances such a position would be a matter of aggravation. I have not been urged to do so and I do not do so.”

In *R v Grossi* [2008] VSCA 51 at [49]-[56] the Court of Appeal rejected an argument that the line of authority that little or no weight will usually be given to an offender’s gambling addiction must now give way in light of the principles espoused in *Verdins* and held that properly analysed there is no tension between those principles and the authorities which have dealt with gambling addiction.

In *R v Johnstone* [2007] VSCA 193 at [32] Maxwell P, with whom Kellam JA & Whelan AJA agreed, said:

“Given the potential significance of questions of impaired mental functioning, as explained in *Verdins*, judges should feel no hesitation in ordering an independent report of that kind if, having regard to the principles in *Verdins*, they apprehend that such a report may shed light on the applicability of one or other of those principles to the case at hand.”

In *DPP v O’Neill* (2015) 47 VR 395; [2015] VSCA 325 the Court of Appeal (Warren CJ, Redlich & Kaye JJA) discussed and analysed the history of the *Tsiaras/Yaldiz/Verdins’* principle before summarising “the scope and limitations of those principles” at [70]-[83] as follows:

* 1. The principles are enlivened only where the offender suffers from an impairment of mental functioning. Whether there should be any moderation of general deterrence, and if so its degree, will depend upon the nature and severity of the impairment of mental functioning. It is important to keep in mind that, in *Verdins*, and in this Court’s subsequent application of *Ver*[*dins*](https://jade.io/article/72073), the Court has consistently stated that the principles in *Verdins* relate to offenders who suffered from ‘mental impairment’ or ‘impaired mental functioning’, whether at the time of the offending or at the time of sentence. While the Court in *Verdins* regarded the particular diagnostic label as not being determinative, the principles expressed have always been confined to cases in which the offender suffered an impairment of his or her mental functioning. They do not apply to personality disorders such as those from which the respondent suffered. **[Note: This exclusion of personality disorders from the Verdins’ principles is no longer good law: see subsection 11.2.11.4 below.]**
  2. Second, in order for the first, second, third and fourth principles enunciated in *Verdins* to have application to the sentencing task, there must be a connection between the impairment to mental functioning and the appellant’s moral culpability or the need for general and specific deterrence. If the mental impairment existed at the time of the offending, it must have some ‘realistic connection’ with the offending; or have ‘caused or contributed’ to the offending; or be ‘causally linked’ to the offending.
  3. Third, to show the necessary connection to the offending and to so enliven limbs one to four of *Verdins*, the offender must establish that the mental impairment affected the offender’s ability to appreciate the wrongfulness of the conduct, or obscured the offender’s intent to commit the offence, or impaired the offender’s ability to make calm and rational choices or to think clearly at the time of the offence.
  4. Fourth, the fifth and sixth limbs of *Verdins* may operate where the existing impairment will make prison more onerous, or where prison may exacerbate the mental condition, if the expert evidence establishes the significance of the impairment to the imposition of a prison sentence.
  5. Fifth, cogent evidence, normally in the form of an expert opinion, is necessary to establish the existence of the mental impairment, either at the time of the offence, or at sentence, or both, and the nature, extent and effect of the mental impairment experienced by the offender at the relevant time.
  6. Sixth, the assessment by the sentencing judge must be undertaken with rigour, as was made clear in *Verdins* itself and has since been repeatedly emphasised by this Court on appeal.
  7. Seventh, an existing mental impairment at the time of sentence may require appropriate moderation of general deterrence, if it is determined that by virtue of that mental impairment the offender is not an appropriate vehicle for general deterrence. Whether that is so ’depends upon the nature and severity of its symptoms and its effect upon the mental capacity of the accused’.
  8. Eighth, a moderation of general deterrence will not ordinarily be required where the condition arises after the offence as a reaction to the discovery of the offender’s crime or the prospect of a lengthy term of imprisonment.

In *R v Chol* [2022] VSC 341 the 15 year old offender stabbed a 17 year old acquaintance once in the abdomen in circumstances where “a play fight turned serious”. He pleaded guilty to manslaughter by unlawful and dangerous act. In moderating the sentence “to a modest extent” on the basis of *Verdins* principles 1, 3 & 4 and imposing a sentence of YJC 4y, Beale J said at [34]:

“The prosecution conceded that by reason of your mental impairment due to the combination of ADHD and ODD your moral culpability was somewhat reduced (Verdins 1) and that specific deterrence (Verdins 3) and general deterrence (Verdins 4) should be moderated as sentencing considerations but only to a modest extent. Your counsel submitted that principles 1, 3 and 4 of *Verdins* applied to a moderate (as opposed to a modest) extent. Neither the prosecution nor your counsel were aware of a case where Verdins was enlivened by a diagnosis of ADHD, or ADHD and ODD. Whilst *Brown v R* [2020] VSCA 212; 62 VR 491 makes it clear that mental impairment in the form of a personality disorder can enliven the principles in *Verdins*, I have reservations about ‘moderating’ moral culpability, specific deterrence and general deterrence for what seems to me to be not much more than having a ‘short fuse’ but, in view of *Brown* and the prosecution’s concession, I will moderate your sentence somewhat because of your ADHD and ODD.”

In *Davies v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 66 the Court of Appeal at [689] & [699] applied *Verdins* and the third of the above propositions from *O’Neill* and held:

“[T]he judge did not err in concluding that the applicant’s autism spectrum disorder or post-traumatic stress disorder did not justify any diminution in the weight to be accorded to the concepts of general deterrence, specific deterrence and denunciation…

Certainly, the applicant well understood the nature of the acts that he was performing, and he well understood that what he was doing was wrong, in that it was illegal. As noted, the applicant is of high intellectual capacity. His conduct during the trial, and during the plea, provided an adequate foundation for the conclusion that the applicant had a proper understanding as to the legal wrongfulness of his actions. For those reasons, the appropriate diminution of the applicant’s moral culpability, by reason of his condition, would not be substantial. However, in our view, it was not immaterial, and the judge erred in concluding that the applicant’s subjective culpability remained very high and was not diminished, at all, by reason of his condition.”

In sentencing an offender for whom one or more of the *Verdins’* principles applies, a potential conflict sometimes arises between a *Verdins*-based moderation of sentence and the need to protect society from the criminal activities of the offender. In *Reiri v The King* [2024] VSCA 272, in dismissing an appeal against a TES IMP4y6m/3y on charges of aggravated burglary and recklessly causing injury, Priest & T Forrest JJA said at [33]-[36]:

[33] “This was a very difficult sentencing exercise. The transcript demonstrates with clarity that the judge agonised over very powerful considerations pulling in opposite directions. It may be accepted (as it was in argument) that, absent the applicant’s mental illness, this was a serious example of a serious offence [aggravated burglary under s.77(2) *Crimes Act 1958*], carrying as it does a maximum sentence of 25 years. The sentence imposed, when compared to objectively similar cases, is unremarkable — perhaps somewhat lenient. In our view, the analysis of this ground comes down to our evaluation of *Verdins* limbs 1, 3 and 4 which operate to moderate moral culpability and the need for general and specific deterrence on the one hand; on the other, the need to protect society from the criminal activities of the applicant.

[34] This classical dichotomy was famously addressed by the High Court in the seminal case of *Veen v The Queen [No 2]* (1988) 164 CLR 465. A sentence should not be increased beyond what is proportionate to a crime in order to extend the period of protection of the community from the risk of recidivism. The court said at p.473:

‘It is one thing to say that the principle of proportionality precludes the imposition of a sentence extended beyond what is appropriate to the crime merely to protect society; it is another thing to say that the protection of society is not a material factor in fixing an appropriate sentence. The distinction in principle is clear between an extension merely by way of preventive detention, which is impermissible, and an exercise of the sentencing discretion having regard to the protection of society among other factors, which is permissible.’

[35] The court went on to say at pp.474 & 476-7 that the resolution of this dichotomy called for a judgement of experience and discernment. A mental abnormality which makes an offender a danger to society when he is at large, but which diminishes his moral culpability for a particular crime, is a factor which has two countervailing effects: one which tends towards a longer sentence, the other towards a shorter sentence. These effects may balance out, but consideration of the danger to society cannot lead to a more severe penalty than would have been imposed if the offender had not been suffering from a mental abnormality.

[36] In our view the sentences imposed on each count, the orders for cumulation and the consequent total effective sentence were well within the range of reasonable sentencing discretion. Absent mental illness, the sentences are, if anything, lenient for a serious confrontational aggravated burglary with subsequent violent further offending committed against a background of similar offending. The sentences are not disproportionate to the objective seriousness of the overall offending and there is no evidence of preventative detention. It appears to us, as contemplated by the High Court in *Veen [No 2]* that the countervailing considerations of mental illness and community protection may well have ‘balanced each other out’: see *Veen v The Queen [No 2]* at pp.476-7; *Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) v Patterson* [2009] VSCA 222 [50]–[51]; *Boulton v The Queen* (2014) 46 VR 308, 326 [67]–[72]. We consider that his Honour’s conscientious sentencing remarks were indeed a product of ‘experience and discernment’, and we agree with them.”

In *DPP v Whyte* [2023] VSC 645 – in the course of sentencing the offender to IMP23y/16y4m for a stabbing murder committed spontaneously and while the offender was highly intoxicated, Fox J rejected a submission that *Verdins* principle 5 had application, saying at [28]: “I do not accept that alcohol use disorder or alcohol intoxication are capable of giving rise to the application of Verdins.” Her Honour set out her reasons for so holding in an appendix to her judgment.

In *Kowski v The King* [2024] VSCA 3 the Court of Appeal (Niall & Boyce JJA) said at [83]:

“At least in a case where the accused is represented by counsel it is not the role of the judge to sift through material and identify whether or not any of the *Verdins* factors are engaged. As this Court said in *Sharbell v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 324 at [4]:

‘As this Court has emphasised, where expert evidence is to be relied on in support of a submission that one or more of the sentencing principles identified in Verdins is engaged, it is the responsibility of defence counsel on the plea to be specific about the evidence relied on and to identify the way(s) in which it is said to make those sentencing principles relevant. This Court will not entertain on appeal arguments which could have been, but were not, put on the plea.’”

For further discussion on the effect of mental illness or mental disorder on sentencing in cases subsequent to *R v Verdins*, see *R v Howell* [2007] VSCA 119 at [12]-[25]; *R v Elias* [2007] VSCA 125; *DPP v BW* [2007] VSCA 171 at [11]; *DPP (Cth) v Rowson* [2007] VSCA 176 at [27]-[32]; *R v Johnstone* [2007] VSCA 193 at [24]-[32]; *R v Strezovski* [2007] VSCA 260 at [25]; *R v Wise* [2007] VSCA 266 at [16] & [34]; *R v Parton* [2007] VSCA 268 at [11]-[16]; *R v Christopher* [2007] VSCA 290 at [34]-[35]; *DPP v Ralph* [2007] VSCA 305 at [24]-[26]; *R v Do* [2007] VSCA 308 at [7]-[8]; *R v Atik* [2007] VSC 299 at [37]-[40]; *R v JED* [2007] VSC 348 at [43]; *R v Tresize* [2008] VSCA 8 at [17]; *R v Dupuy* [2008] VSCA 63 at [34]-[35]; *R v Laracy (Sentence)* [2008] VSC 67 at [34]-[36] & [54]; *R v Charles Imadonmwonyi* [2008] VSCA 135 at [18]-[27]; *R v Puc* [2008] VSCA 159 at [23]-[33]; *DPP v Weidlich* [2008] VSCA 203 at [17]-[25]; *R v Fitchett* [2008] VSC 258 at [25]-[38]; *R v Piper* [2008] VSC 569 at [66]; *R v Zander* [2009] VSCA 10 at [26]-[33] & [36]; *DPP v Vincent* [2009] VSCA 87 at [27]; *R v Kinnear* [2009] VSCA 104 at [19]; *R v Cheney* [2009] VSC 154 at [57]*; R v Baxter* [2009] VSC 180 at [35] & [52]; *DPP v Fox (Sentence)* [2009] VSC 189 at [19]& [22]; *DPP v Lewis* [2009] VSC 334 at [24]; *R v Hosking* [2009] VSC 549 at [47]-[54]; *R v Alexopoulos* [2010] VSCA 52 at [55]; *R v Secombe and Butkovic* [2010] VSCA 58 at [106]-[111]; *R v Londrigan* [2010] VSCA 81 at [24-[27]; *DPP (Cth) v Parfrey* [2010] VSCA 212 at [28]; *R v Dutton* [2010] VSC 107 at [40]; *R v Traycevska* [2010] VSC 270 at [34]-[37]; *R v Davis* [2010] VSC 274 at [26]-[31]; *R v Fitchett* [2010] VSC 393 at [23]; *R v Gray* [2010] VSCA 312; *R v Ashton* [2010] VSCA 329; *R v Davey* [2010] VSCA 346; *R v Koelman* [2010] VSC 561; *R v Plail* [2010] VSC 600 at [34]-[40]; *R v Dimitrakis* [2010] VSC 614 at [45]-[57]; *R v Fletcher & Or* [2011] VSCA 4; *R v Glascott* [2011] VSCA 109 at [142]-[146] & [160]-[161]; *R v Patrick James Keane* [2011] VSCA 156 at [26]-[32]*; DPP v Caruana* [2011] VSCA 180 at [8]-[13]: *R v Gerrard* [2011] VSCA 200 at [38]-[40]; *R v Pato* [2011] VSCA 223 at [18]-[33]; *R v Mune* [2011] VSCA 231 at [14]-[32]; *R v Kavanagh* [2011] VSCA 234 at [7]-[12]; *R v Bennett* [2011] VSCA 253 at [59]-[66]*; R v Pyrczak* [2011] VSC 219 at [45]-[46]; *R v Acar* [2011] VSC 310 at [59]; *R v Coombes* [2011] VSC 407 at [59]-[74]; *R v Grimmett* [2011] VSC 506 at [17]-[22]; *DPP v Green* [2011] VSCA 311 at [19]-[30]; *R v Downey* [2011] VSC 672; *R v Filippi, Kosterman and Vergados* [2011] VSCA 438 at [51]-[55]; *R v Shaw* [2012] VSCA 78 at [44]-[50]**;** *R v Sikaloski* [2012] VSCA 130 at [26]-[43]; *R v DM* [2012] VSCA 227 at [20]-[32]; *DPP v Lucas* [2012] VSCA 245 at [21]-[22]; *R v NJ* [2012] VSCA 256 at [3] & [58]; *DPP v Rancie* [2012] VSCA 258 at [27] & [32]; *R v Hill* [2012] VSC 353 at [38]-[39]; *R v Oakley* [2012] VSC 392 at [36]; *R v Kosian* [2012] VSC 426 at [31]-[39]; *R v Potter* [2012] VSC 511 at [37]-[48]; *R v Scott* [2012] VSC 514 at [28]; *R v Van Zoelen* [2012] VSC 605 at [21]; *O’Toole v The Queen* [2013] VSCA 62 at [34]-[52]; *R v Benjamin* [2013] VSC 668 at [26]; *R v Wallis* [2013] VSC 721 at [32]-[34]; *R v West* [2013] VSC 737 at [31]; *Barton v The Queen* [2013] VSCA 360; *Johnston v The Queen* [2013] VSCA 362 at [8]-[16]; *Aggelidis v The Queen* [2014] VSCA 6 at [35]-[37]; *TS v The Queen* [2014] VSCA 24 at [22]-[43]; *Monaghan v The Queen* [2014] VSCA 82 at [44]-[53]; *R v Kemp* [2014] VSC 631 at [24]-[40]; *R v Umar* [2014] VSC 645 at [51]-[58]; *Jason William Caldwell v The Queen* [2014] VSCA 274 at [49]-[60]; *Lee James Matthews v The Queen*; *Tuyet Thi Vu v The Queen* [2014] VSCA 291 at [60]-[64] & [89]; *Jamieson v The Queen* [2014] VSCA 294 at [27]-[32]; *Christopher Dean Binse v The Queen* [2016] VSCA 145 at [51]-[53] & [68]-[70]; *R v Naddaf* [2018] VSC 429 at [86]-[92]; *R v Pavlis* [2018] VSC 440 at [27]-[29]; *Bret Wilson v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 219 at [53] & [59]-[60]; *Alexander Holland (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 241 at [21]-[22] & [29]-[31]; *Wheeldon v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 344; *Price v R* [2019] VSCA 8 at [19]+[35]-[68]; *R v Natale* [2019] VSC 30 at [35]-[44]; *R v Missen* [2019] VSC 32 at [58]-[73]; *R v Giannioudis* [2019] VSC 75 at [43]-[45]; *R v Astbury* [2019] VSC 97 at [28]-[32] & [36]-[38]; *R v Phan* [2019] VSC 153 at [43]-[55]; *DPP v Tuite* [2019] VSC 159 at [38]-[39]; *Teryaki v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 124 at [60] applying *R v Eliasen* (1991) 53 A Crim R 391; *R v Willis* [2019] VSC 398 at [34]-[40] & [53]; *Campbell v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 158 at [42] & [57]; *Sanyasi v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 227 at [37] & [44]; *Bausch v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 235 at [39]; *R v Solmaz* [2019] VSC 530 at [84]-[100]; *DPP v Gilmour* [2019] VSC 766 at [43]-[45]; *R v Eckersley* [2020] VSC 22 at [91]; *Akon Guode v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 257; *Haberman v DPP* [2020] VSCA 286 at [33]-[45]; *McPherson v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 53 at [28]-[29]; *Daniel Thomas v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 97 at [30]-[37]; *Bava v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 34 at [38]-[43] & [83]-[93]; *R v Dellamarta* [2021] VSC 220 at [36]-[39] & [45]; *Alexander v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 140 at [35]-[37]; *DPP v JF* [2021] VSC 328 at [68]; *Newton v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 207 at [35]-[45]; *DPP (Cth) v Kannan & Anor* [2021] VSC 439; *Hutchinson v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 235 at [105]-[116]; *Nachar v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 242 at [35]-[39]; *R v Tiba* [2021] VSC 515 at [71]-[84]; *DPP v Moore* [2021] VSC 532 at [60]-[70]; *Peers v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 264 at [43] & [50]; *DPP v Vaisey* [2021] VSC 584 at [63]-[76]; *Eser v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 287 at [73]; *R v EC* [2021] VSC 843 at [29]-[30]; *Boucher v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 3 at [131]-[139]; *Dieni v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 16 at [142]; *R v Fiscalini* [2022] VSC 51 at [45]; *R v Shaptafaj* [2022] VSC 71 at [34]-[66]; *R v Wilio* [2022] VSC 86 at [23]-[72]; *R v Angela Surtees* [2022] VSC 124 at [47]-[6 9]; *R v Bonney* [2022] VSC 264 at [23]-[38]; *Mazzonetto v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 153 at [24]-[32]; *DPP v Taylor* [2022] VSC 598 at [34]-[46]; *Evan Chey (a pseudonym) v The King* [2022] VSCA 262 at [30], [37] & [48]; *DPP v Deng* [2022] VSC 790 at [19]-[29]; *Tewaka v The King* [2022] VSCA 275 at [37]-[41]; *DPP v Ledlin* [2022] VSC 826 at [71]-[76]; *Sweeney v The King* [2023] VSCA 9 at [36]-[46]; *Van Kempten v The King* [2023] VSCA 26 at [53]-[59]; *Roberts v The King* [2023] VSCA 92; *Kruger v The King* [2023] VSCA 149 at [44]-[46]; *DPP v Newell* [2023] VSC 237 at [59]-[67]; *R v Deng* [2023] VSC 257 at [167]-[174]; *DPP v JN* [2023] VSC 500 at [36]-[47]; *Kerney v The King* [2023] VSCA 202 at [38]‑[69]; *Kazami v The King* [2023] VSCA 267 at [34]-[55]; at [35]-[85]; *DPP v Charisiou* [2024] VSC 303 at [35]-[85]; *DPP v Stiler* [2024] VSC 314 at [53]-[78]; *Bednar v The King* [2024] VSCA 180 at [156]-[187]; *R v Cohrs* [2024] VSC 617 at [80]-[92]; *Snowball v The King* [2025] VSCA 23 at [105]‑[111]; *DPP v Clifford* [2025] VSC 199 at [51].

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### **11.2.11.3 Effect of intellectual disability**

The *Tsiaras* principles, discussed above, specifically relate to the sentencing of persons suffering from serious psychiatric illness not amounting to insanity. In *R v Williams* [2000] VSCA 174 Buchanan JA - with whom Ormiston & Chernov JJA agreed - concluded at [11] that the first, third and fourth of the *Tsiaras* principles also applied to the sentencing of an offender who, although not psychiatrically ill, had an IQ of 63, a grossly inadequate personality, was socially inept and functioned only in an extremely child-like way. The Court of Appeal concluded that both general and specific deterrence had limited relevance in that case. In *R v Roadley* (1990) 51 A Crim R 336 the offender had minimal appreciation of the consequences of his behaviour and limited (possibly non-existent) impulse control. He had the mental age of a five or six year old child. At 343 the Court of Appeal, citing *R v Anderson* [1981] VR 155, held that mental illness was to be equated with intellectual disablement for sentencing purposes and concluded that "little weight" should be given to general deterrence in such cases. See also *R v Van Do Bui* [2005] VSCA 121 at [5]-[7].

In *R v Verdins* (2007) 16 VR 269 at [26] the Court of Appeal (Maxwell P, Buchanan & Vincent JJA) specifically included impaired mental functioning within its guiding principles in certain instances:

“Impaired mental functioning at the time of the offending may reduce the offender’s moral culpability if it had the effect of-

(a) impairing the offender’s ability to exercise appropriate judgment (*R v Hamid* [2002] VSCA 9 at [11] per Buchanan JA {with whom Winneke P and Vincent JA agreed}; *R v Cunliffe* [2000] VSCA 146 at [30] per Phillips JA {with whom Charles & Buchanan JJA agreed}; *R v Ibrahim* [2001] VSC 210 at [19] per Coldrey J cf *R v* *Walsh* [2006] VSCA 87 at [24]; *Ayoubi v R* [2006] NSWCCA 364 at [27]);

(b) impairing the offender’s ability to make calm and rational choices (*R v Chambers* (2005) 152 A Crim R 164 at 173) or to think clearly (*R v Tran* [2003] VSC 165 at [14]);

(c) making the offender disinhibited (*Ayoubi v R* [2006] NSWCCA 364 at [27]);

(d) impairing the offender’s ability to appreciate the wrongfulness of the conduct (*R v Sebalj* [2006] VSCA 106 at [21]; *Hurd v R* [1988] Tas R 126 at 132 per Cox J);

(e) obscuring the intent to commit the offence (*R v Yaldiz* [1998] 2 VR 376 at 383*; R v Swingler* [2001] VSCA 26 at [13]); or

(f) contributing (causally) to the commission of the offence (*R v Walsh* [2006] VSCA 87 at [22]*; Payne* (2002) 131 A Crim R 432 at 442 [36], [40] per Steytler P; *Thompson v The Queen* (2005) 157 A Crim R 385 at 396 [53] per Steytler P).

As we have said, this is not to be taken as an exhaustive list.”

In *R v Wise* [2007] VSCA 266 Ashley JA, with whom Redlich JA & Curtain AJA agreed, said at [16]:

“It can be accepted that intellectual disablement may be equated with mental illness (*R v Williams* [2000] VSCA 174), this enlivening in a particular case considerations mentioned in *R v Tsiaras* [1996] 1 VR 398 and in *R v Verdins* [2007] VSCA 102. But the question will always be whether, in the particular case, it has been shown that the accused person's moral culpability, or the significance of general or specific deterrence, is reduced because of intellectual disablement.”

At [34] Redlich JA sounded a note of caution:

“I would not want to be taken as accepting that an intellectual disability will necessarily give rise to the conclusion, in all cases, that there was impaired mental functioning which should reduce the offender's moral culpability. Whether it does so or not will depend upon whether the conditions expressed in paragraph [26] of the joint judgment in *Verdins* have been satisfied.”

In *R v Ulla* [2004] VSCA 130 the appellant Ulla was 22 years old and had a very lengthy criminal history. He had been admitted to a psychiatric hospital in 1997 as an involuntary patient after violent behaviour and threatened suicide. On assessment he was found to have an IQ of 61 and was diagnosed as having borderline antisocial personality disorder and being opiate dependent. In 2003 he was assessed by a psychologist as functioning at a mild or moderate level of intellectual disability and he was granted a Disability Support Pension. He has moderately severe verbal specific amnesia, a result of solvent abuse. He has limited numeracy and literacy skills, was educated only to year 8 standard and has never been employed. Although allowing an appeal against sentence for other reasons, Eames JA - with whom Batt & Vincent JJA agreed - said at [27]:

"In *R. v. Bux* [2002] VSCA 126 I discussed the principles in some detail and held at [33]:

'Where an offender suffers a significant intellectual disability the principle of general deterrence is not eliminated altogether, but must be sensibly moderated: *R. v. Champion* (1992) 64 A Crim R 244 at 254-255 per Kirby P. Principles of general and specific deterrence cannot be given the emphasis that they might otherwise have in sentencing an offender. The extent of the amelioration of the factors of general and specific deterrence may depend upon a range of matters, most importantly the extent of the intellectual disability. In *R. v. Champion* at 254-255 Kirby P, with whom the other members of the Court agreed, considered the decision of the Court of Criminal Appeal in *R. v. Letteri* [Unreported, Court of Criminal Appeal, New South Wales, 18 March 1992]. In that case Badgery-Parker J, with whom Gleeson CJ and Sheller JA agreed, had held that less weight should be given to general deterrence in such a case, and that in an extreme case a severe intellectual handicap might, indeed, mean that general deterrence was totally outweighed by other considerations.'"

In *R v BTP* [2006] VSC 374 at [23], Kellam J applied dicta of the Court of Appeal in *R v Ulla* in stating that “although an intellectual disability does not mean that general deterrence has no application, that sentencing principle does require to be moderated sensibly in such circumstances”.

In *R v Rajinder Kumar* [2004] VSC 527 the defendant did not suffer from a mental illness but had a low intellectual capacity. At [25] Harper J had regard to the defendant's low intellectual capacity in two ways:

"First, it will make prison weigh more heavily on you than it might on a more intellectually gifted person (who, for example, might acquire a good knowledge of the English language more easily than you). Secondly, I should sentence you on the basis that in your case general deterrence is not to be discarded altogether, but neither is it to be given its usual significance."

In *DPP v Byrnes* [2005] VSCA 63 the 19 year old respondent had pleaded guilty to detention and sexual penetration of a child aged five years. At age 11 the respondent had been deemed eligible to receive a disability support pension as a result of intellectual impairment. At age 13 he was diagnosed by a child psychiatrist as suffering from Attention deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder and Oppositional Defiant Disorder. At age 19 he was reassessed by a forensic psychiatrist who said: " ... the respondent's thinking was normal and there was no evidence of disorders of perception. He impressed me as a man of probable borderline low intelligence, but not significantly intellectually impaired. He had a good vocabulary, was able to think abstractly and has a good knowledge of matters relevant to his way of life and court procedures." Chernov JA, with whom Winneke P & Charles JA agreed, held at [19] that the *Tsiaras* principles did not apply, in part because of lack of any nexus between the symptoms of the defendant’s mild intellectual disability and his moral culpability:

“[T]he principles enunciated in *R v Tsiaras* and *R v Yaldiz* do not operate here to moderate the weight that should be given to the sentencing principles to which I have referred, given that the respondent did not suffer a recognisable psychiatric illness and that, in any event, there is nothing in the material that shows that the symptoms of his mild intellectual disability bore on his moral culpability in committing the offences: see for example *R v Vodopic* [2003] VSCA 172 at [28] per Eames JA. In *Tsiaras* this Court was concerned with the effect of a serious psychiatric illness not amounting to insanity on the sentencing disposition. In that case, the applicant suffered from schizophrenia and this Court rejected the conclusion of the sentencing judge that the applicant "knew and appreciated what he was up to". The principles in *Tsiaras* were, in a sense, a development of what this Court said in *R v Anderson* [1981] VR 155, where the offender was suffering from paranoid psychosis or paranoid schizophrenia at the time he committed the offences and, in the circumstances, the Court held that he was not a suitable vehicle for general deterrence: see also *R v Meyers* [2001] VSCA 237 and *R v Gorman* [Court of Appeal, unreported, 10 August 1995 per Hayne & Charles JJA and Crockett AJA. In the present case, however, the applicant did not suffer a serious psychiatric illness and, plainly enough, knew that what he did was wrong. Importantly, as I have said, the evidence did not relate such mental impairment as the applicant may have had to the offending conduct. For completeness, I note, in this regard, Dr Senadipathy's conclusion to which I have referred, namely, that the respondent's intellectual disability did not contribute to his antisocial behaviour.”

In *DPP v Lovett* [2008[ VSCA 262 the accused had an I.Q. of 70 and was described as being “severely intellectually disabled”. At [37] the Court of Appeal spoke about the significance of intellectual disability for the moderation of general deterrence as follows:

“Intellectual impairment has long been recognised as having a moderating effect on general deterrence. In *R v Yaldiz* [1998] 2 VR 376, Batt JA discussed the effect on general deterrence of mental impairment and intellectual disability in these terms:

‘... [G]eneral deterrence is not eliminated but still operates, sensibly moderated, in the case of an offender suffering from a mental disorder or severe intellectual handicap.’

In *Champion* (1992) 64 A Crim R 244, 254, Kirby P said [emphasis added]:

‘It is imputed to the general community that it will understand that *a person with the intellectual capacities of a child* will need to be deterred but may need special attention in order that the deterrence will be effective. Moreover, the full understanding of the authority and requirements of the law, which may be attributed to the ordinary individual of adult intellectual capacities, cannot be expected of a person who, although adult in bodily form, [retains] the intellectual capacities of a child. *Because the constraints which may be demanded of a person with ordinary adult intellectual capacities may not operate, or operate as effectively, in the case of a person with significant mental handicaps,* the community (reflected by the judges) applies to such people the principles of general deterrence in a way that is sensibly moderated to the particular circumstances of their case. General deterrence still operates ... It is in place for the protection of the community and the victims of offences which the community rightly takes most seriously. But as that principle falls upon a person such as this applicant, it is necessarily a consideration to which less weight can, and therefore should, be given.

This dicta from *Lovett* was approved by the Court of Appeal in *R v Derrick Jon Leeder* [2010] VSCA 98. In that case the appellant had an I.Q. of 67. At [33] & [39] of his judgment Maxwell P (who agreed with Buchanan JA in the disposition of the appeal) made a strong statement that intellectual disability ought be treated in the same way for sentencing purposes as mental illness:

[33] “Moral culpability and general deterrence apart, the appellant’s disability attracted the operation of Principle 5 in R v Verdins (2007) 16 VR 269. That is, imprisonment imposes a greater burden on someone who is functioning with the brain power of an eight year old. That aspect does not appear to have been taken into account on sentence, although it was adverted to on the plea…

[39] Finally on the issue of intellectual disability, it seems to me important to ensure that this species of mental impairment is addressed with the same rigour and specificity as necessary in relation to the more familiar area of mental illness. The use of labels such as ‘mild’ or ‘moderate’ or ‘severe’ intellectual disability does not assist the sentencing court in deciding whether, and if so to what extent, sentencing considerations are affected by the condition of the particular person. What the Court needs to know is how the disability (is likely to have) affected the mental functioning of the particular offender at the time of the offending (or in the lead-up to it) and/or how it is likely to affect him/her in the future. As with mental illness, so with intellectual disability, there is scope for considerable refinement of expert opinion, and therefore of argument before sentencing courts, about how these matters are to be taken into account.

In *Muldrock v The Queen* [2011] HCA 39; (2011) 244 CLR 120 the High Court discussed the relevance of mental retardation in the sentencing of a 30 year old mentally retarded man who had pleaded guilty to one count of sexual intercourse with a child aged under 10 years. At [53]-[54] the Court said:

“In *R v Mooney* [unreported, Victorian Court of Criminal Appeal, 21 June 1978 at 5], cited in *R v Anderson* [1981] VR 155 at 160, Young CJ, in a passage that has been frequently cited, said this:

‘General deterrence should often be given very little weight in the case of an offender suffering from a mental disorder or abnormality because such an offender is not an appropriate medium for making an example to others.’

In the same case at 8, Lush J explained the reason for the principle in this way:

‘The significance [of general deterrence] in a particular case will, however, at least usually be related to the kindred concept of retribution or punishment in which is involved an element of instinctive appreciation of the appropriateness of the sentence to the case. A sentence imposed with deterrence in view will not be acceptable if its retributive effect on the offender is felt to be inappropriate to his situation and to the needs of the community.’

The principle is well recognised: *Veen v The Queen [No 2]* (1988) 164 CLR 465 at 476-477. See also *R v Anderson* [1981] VR 155; *Scognamiglio* (1991) 56 A Crim R 81; *R v Letteri* unreported, New South Wales Court of Criminal Appeal, 18 March 1992; *Engert* (1995) 84 A Crim R 67; *Wright* (1997) 93 A Crim R 48. It applies in sentencing offenders suffering from mental illness, and those with an intellectual handicap. A question will often arise as to the causal relation, if any, between an offender's mental illness and the commission of the offence. See *Engert* (1995) 84 A Crim R 67 at 71. Such a question is less likely to arise in sentencing a mentally retarded offender because the lack of capacity to reason, as an ordinary person might, as to the wrongfulness of the conduct will, in most cases, substantially lessen the offender's moral culpability for the offence. The retributive effect and denunciatory aspect of a sentence that is appropriate to a person of ordinary capacity will often be inappropriate to the situation of a mentally retarded offender and to the needs of the community.”

In *R v Tran* [2012] VSCA 110 at [15]-[24] the Court of Appeal discussed the above extract from *Muldrock* and held at [16]: “[W]e do not consider what was said in *Muldrock* to have altered any of the principles summarised in *Verdins*. *Muldrock* contemplates expressly that the question of a causal relation between mental illness and the commission of an offence will often arise. It is then said that such a question is less likely to arise in sentencing a mentally retarded offender because the lack of capacity to reason will, in most cases, substantially lessen moral culpability.” At [23]-[24] the Court said:

[23] “*Muldrock* makes a general statement – the application of which will be worked out through the cases – that the causal question is less likely to arise with a mentally retarded offender. As was emphasised in *Verdins*, however, the task for the sentencing judge in every case is to examine what the evidence shows about the particular condition and how it affected the mental functioning of the offender, either at the time of the offending, or at the time of sentencing, or both…

[24] The case-by-case approach to mental impairment issues was eloquently described by Gleeson CJ in *Engert v The Queen* (1995) 84 A Crim R 67, 68:

“…It is…erroneous in principle to approach the law of sentencing as though automatic consequences follow from the presence or absence of particular factual circumstances. In every case, what is called for is the making of a discretionary decision in the light of the circumstances of the individual case, and in the light of the purposes to be served by the sentencing exercise.”

For further discussion on the effect of intellectual disability on sentencing see *R v Evans* [2007] VSCA 76 at [5]; *R v Foster* [2007] VSCA 85 at [15]; *R v Norris* [2007] VSCA 241 at [15]-[26]; *R v McIntosh* [2008] VSCA 242 at [84]-[110]; *R v Kulla Kulla* [2010] VSC 60 at [64]-[65]; *R v Filippi, Kosterman and Vergados* [2011] VSCA 438 at [29]-[39]; *R v Sokaluk* [2012] VSC 167 at [51]-[64]; *DPP v Miller* [2012] VSCA 265 at [15]-[24]; *DPP v Hamdache* [2014] VSC 158 at [56]; *Luchian v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 145 at [45]-[48]; *Ng v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 147 at [67]-[73]; *Piacentino v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 153 at [18]-[34]; *Bertram Morin v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 301 at [37]-[45]; *Carr (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 130 at [18]-[26]; *Stevens v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 218 at [31]-[33]; *Giri v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 64 at [41]-[42]; *Rule v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 162 at [24]-[37]; *DPP v Stiler* [2024] VSC 314 at [53]-[78].

### **11.2.11.4 Effect of personality disorder**

In *Daylia Brown v The Queen* (2020) 62 VR 491; [2020] VSCA 212 the applicant (‘DB’) pleaded guilty to four charges of arson. The first three charges concerned the lighting of fires in a department store and two supermarkets in Melbourne, over the course of several hours on 18 December 2018. The fourth charge involved much more serious offending. DB set fire to a house in which she had previously lived, as a result of which the property was destroyed. Expert evidence presented to the sentencing judge established that DB was suffering — at the time of the offending and at the time of sentence — from a severe personality disorder. In the opinion of the defence expert, Dr Andrew Carroll, a consultant forensic psychiatrist, DB’s personality disorder constituted an impairment of her mental functioning and had ‘strong causal links to the offending’. The judge accepted that evidence, which was not challenged. However, his Honour considered himself bound by the Court’s decision in *DPP v O’Neill* (2015) 47 VR 395; [2015] VSCA 325 to hold that the *Verdins* principles were not engaged. But for that constraint, his Honour said, he would have given ‘very considerable weight’ to the *Verdins* considerations.

At [6] a full bench of the Court of Appeal (Maxwell P, Niall, T Forrest, Emerton & Osborn JJA) held that an offender diagnosed with a personality disorder should be treated as in no different position from any other offender who seeks to rely on an impairment of mental functioning as mitigating sentence in one or other of the ways identified in *Verdins*. At [4]-[6] the Court said [emphasis added]:

[4] “DB sought leave to appeal to this Court. Her principal contention was that, if the judge was right to regard the decision in *O’Neill* as standing for ‘the broad proposition that personality disorders do not enliven *Verdins* principles’, this Court should hold that *O’Neill* was wrongly decided.

[5] In the event, the Director of Public Prosecutions conceded in her written case that, in view of the expert evidence led before the judge, a blanket exclusion of personality disorders from the *Verdins* framework could not be sustained. The Director agreed with the submission for DB, that the approach laid down in *Verdins* should apply to personality disorders as to other conditions. That is, whether an offender’s personality disorder engaged any of the *Verdins* principles should depend not on the particular diagnostic label attached to it but on what the expert evidence before the sentencing court showed about how the condition affected the offender’s mental functioning at the time of the offending and/or about how it would affect the offender in the future.

[6] After hearing argument, we concluded that both the applicant’s submission and the Director’s concession should be accepted. **An offender diagnosed with a personality disorder should be treated as in no different position from any other offender who seeks to rely on an impairment of mental functioning as mitigating sentence in one or other of the ways identified in *Verdins*. Statements to the contrary in *O’Neill* should no longer be followed.** Whether and to what extent the offender’s mental functioning is (or was) relevantly impaired should be determined on the basis of expert evidence rigorously scrutinised by the sentencing court.”

In *Wyatt Tobin (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 180 the 21 year old applicant had a diagnosed personality disorder (categorised as a dependent personality disorder with prominent features of narcissistic personality disorder). At [43]-[52] the Court of Appeal (Kaye & T Forrest JJA) held that assuming, without deciding, that the applicant’s personality disorder did constitute an impairment of his mental functioning in accordance with the principles discussed in *Brown*, nevertheless the sentencing judge did not err in holding that the principles stated in *Verdins* did not apply in the light of evidence that:

* although his impaired mental functioning might have predisposed the applicant to act in an aberrant manner, there was no ‘direct causal nexus’ between his personality disorder and his commission of the sexual offences against his three year old step-niece to which he had pleaded guilty; and
* taking into account the applicant’s age and impaired mental functioning, a term of imprisonment would not weigh more heavily on him than on a person in normal mental health.

See also *Steven Cooper v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 300 at [16]-[26]; *DPP v Herrmann* [2021] VSCA 160 at [49]-[88]; *Shaun Page (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 364 at [63]-[66]; *DPP v Taylor* [2022] VSC 598 at [34]-[46]; *DPP v Hay*es [2022] VSC 679 at [70-]-[83]; *DPP v Andrew Robert Paterson* [2022] VSC 746 at [72]; *Giudice v The King* [2023] VSCA 105 at [22]-[36]; *Clifton v The King* [2024] VSCA 82 at [39]-[51].

### **11.2.12 Effect of deprived/disadvantaged background (*Bugmy*)**

In *Bugmy v The Queen* [2013] HCA 37; (2013) 249 CLR 571 at [37] & [42]-[45], French CJ, Hayne, Crennan, Kiefel, Bell & Keane JJ said:

[37] “An Aboriginal offender's deprived background may mitigate the sentence that would otherwise be appropriate for the offence in the same way that the deprived background of a non-Aboriginal offender may mitigate that offender's sentence. In this respect in *Kennedy v The Queen* [2010] NSWCCA 260 at [53], Simpson J has correctly explained the significance of the statements in *Fernando*:

‘Properly understood, *Fernando* is a decision, not about sentencing Aboriginals, but about the recognition, in sentencing decisions, of social disadvantage that frequently (no matter what the ethnicity of the offender) precedes the commission of crime.’

…

[42] It will be recalled that in the Court of Criminal Appeal the prosecution submitted that the evidence of the appellant's deprived background lost much of its force when viewed against the background of his previous offences. On the hearing of the appeal in this Court the Director did not maintain that submission. The Director acknowledges that the effects of profound deprivation fdo not diminish over time and he submits that they are to be given full weight in the determination of the appropriate sentence in every case.

[43] The Director's submission should be accepted. The experience of growing up in an environment surrounded by alcohol abuse and violence may leave its mark on a person throughout life. Among other things, a background of that kind may compromise the person's capacity to mature and to learn from experience. It is a feature of the person's make-up and remains relevant to the determination of the appropriate sentence, notwithstanding that the person has a long history of offending.

[44] Because the effects of profound childhood deprivation do not diminish with the passage of time and repeated offending, it is right to speak of giving ‘full weight’ to an offender's deprived background in every sentencing decision. However, this is not to suggest, as the appellant's submissions were apt to do, that an offender's deprived background has the same (mitigatory) relevance for all of the purposes of punishment. Giving weight to the conflicting purposes of punishment is what makes the exercise of the discretion so difficult: *Veen v The Queen [No 2]* (1988) 164 CLR 465 at 476 per Mason CJ, Brennan, Dawson and Toohey JJ; [1988] HCA 14. An offender's childhood exposure to extreme violence and alcohol abuse may explain the offender's recourse to violence when frustrated such that the offender's moral culpability for the inability to control that impulse may be substantially reduced. However, the inability to control the violent response to frustration may increase the importance of protecting the community from the offender.

[45] The point was made by Gleeson CJ in *Engert* in the context of explaining the significance of an offender's mental condition in sentencing (1995) 84 A Crim R 67 at 68:

‘A moment's consideration will show that the interplay of the considerations relevant to sentencing may be complex and on occasion even intricate. In a given case, facts which point in one direction in relation to one of the considerations to be taken into account may point in a different direction in relation to some other consideration. For example, in the case of a particular offender, an aspect of the case which might mean that deterrence of others is of lesser importance, might, at the same time, mean that the protection of society is of greater importance. That was the particular problem being examined by the court in the case of *Veen (No 2)*. Again, in a particular case, a feature which lessens what might otherwise be the importance of general deterrence, might, at the same time increase the importance of deterrence of the offender.’”

In *Marrah v The Queen* [2014] VSCA 119 at [16] Redlich & Tate JJA said:

“Circumstances of deprivation, abuse and other social disadvantage occurring during an offender's formative years are more than matters of historical significance to the administration of justice. The effects of such social disadvantage do not generally diminish with the passage of time, and are likely to have profound and lasting consequences. The common experience of the law is that very frequently such disadvantage precedes the commission of crime, and often explains and contributes to an offender’s criminal behaviour. The frequency with which criminal conduct can be explained by such disadvantage does not relieve each sentencing judge of the obligation to take such matters into account. Though they do not provide an excuse for offending behaviour, they must be given due weight in the sentencing calculus. That is not to say that an offender's social disadvantage has the same mitigatory relevance for all of the purposes of punishment. It may so explain the offender's conduct that the offender’s moral culpability may be substantially reduced, yet it will increase the importance of protecting the community from the offender. It will not diminish the need for the sentence to vindicate the dignity of a victim and reflect the community's disapproval of the offending.”

In *R v Wills* [2020] VSC 155 at [80] Coghlan JA referred with approval to the above dicta and added at [81] that he did not regard *Wills’ Case* as one where it might be said that the offender’s disadvantaged background increased the importance of protecting the community from the offender. Rather he regarded the offender’s background as operating to reduce his moral culpability.

In *DPP v Lyons & Lyons* [2018] VSC 488 the 47YO female offender was found guilty after a jury trial of attempting to murder by drugging with sedatives and subsequently of murdering an intellectually impaired mother of four young children with the motive of enabling the offender to be the mother of the children. The victim had been violently bashed to death by a co-offender with the agreement of the female offender. The female offender had had an impoverished upbringing. In categorizing her as having high moral culpability and in sentencing her to TES IMP30y/23y, Kaye JA said at [73]:

“The principles of sentencing, that have been recently considered by the High Court, in its decisions in *R v Bugmy*(2013) 249 CLR 571and *Munda v Western Australia* (2013) 249 CLR 600 provide that an individual’s deprived and disadvantaged background may, in an appropriate case, mitigate an offender’s sentence. In the present case, the offending by you was committed very much in a quasi-family setting. Your history reveals that you suffered significant disadvantage and deprivation during your formative years. The effects of the dysfunctional family, in which you grew up, were complicated by your low intelligence and your lack of normal socialisation. It is clear that those effects have endured. In that way, your culpability, for the two offences for which you have been convicted, while particularly high, is less substantial than if you were a person who had had the advantage of a normal upbringing, and who was of average intellectual capacity.”

In *R v Giannioudis* [2019] VSC 75 Taylor J said at [41]-[42]:

“[A]s conceded by the Crown, the *Bugmy* principles are relevant to the sentencing exercise. Your childhood and early adulthood can only be described as horrendous. Not only did you suffer physical and sexual abuse, you carried an intolerable burden of silence about that abuse as well as the drug addiction of your parents and the lifestyle accompanying it. That addiction was visited upon you with your first breath. When at last you had access to appropriate medical assistance and, aged only 15 years of age, gathered the enormous courage to tell your mother of the sexual abuse you had suffered, she called you a liar and excised you from the family, preferring to live with one of your abusers and render you homeless.

You have suffered, to use the phrase of the High Court, ‘profound childhood deprivation’ and tragically, that will leave its mark on you throughout your life.”

In *DPP v Green* [2020] VSCA 23 the Court of Appeal dismissed a DPP appeal against the adequacy of a sentence of IMP11y/8y6m on a 41-year-old man (37 at the time of the offending) who had pleaded guilty to 21 charges, comprising armed robbery, attempted armed robbery, attempted kidnapping, being a prohibited person in possession of a firearm, theft and obtaining property by deception. The respondent had a lengthy criminal history and had used a firearm in the course of some of the armed robberies. Holding that the sentence was “particularly lenient” but “not manifestly inadequate”, the Court noted the respondent’s dysfunctional family environment and that he had developed moderately severe post-traumatic stress disorder with panic attacks and dissociative symptoms consequent upon the abuse and neglect that he had experienced in youth custody. He also had a diagnosis of multiple substance abuse. The severe abuse he had suffered had a material causative role in his offending. Speaking of the principles outlined by the High Court in *Bugmy v The Queen* (2013) 249 CLR 571; [2013] HCA 37, Maxwell P and Priest & Kaye JJA said at [83]-[84]:

“Those principles apply with equal force to a case such as this, in which the respondent was subjected to significant abuse and degradation during the important formative years of his life. While, on the plea, and on this appeal, the respondent did not rely on his condition of PTSD as directly mitigating his culpability in the offending in the sense discussed in cases such as *Verdins*, nevertheless the principles outlined in *Bugmy* are relevant. In essence, in the present case, the respondent’s subjective culpability for his offending could not be realistically equated with that of person who committed the same offences, but who had had the advantage of a normal, stable and regular home environment, and who had not been subjected to sexual and physical abuse of the kind experienced by the respondent while in custody. In that way, the respondent’s background constituted an important mitigating circumstance in the determination of the sentences: *DPP v Drake* [2019] VSCA 293, [32] (Maxwell P, Priest, Kaye, T Forrest & Emerton JJA); *DPP v Heyfron* [2019] VSCA 130, [57]–[58] (Priest, Kaye & T Forrest JJA).

In addition, and importantly, the abuse perpetrated on the respondent, and the conclusions by Dr Brann, were also relevant to an evaluation of the weight to be given to the respondent’s lengthy criminal history. In particular they explain, at least in part, the respondent’s pattern of repeat offending over a period of more than two decades.”

In *Pasquale Barbaro v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 277 the Court of Appeal allowed an appeal against a sentence of IMP7y10m/5y and resentenced the appellant to IMP5y/2y9m on charges – to which he had pleaded guilty – of trafficking in a commercial quantity of a drug of dependence (MDMA), trafficking in a drug of dependence (cannabis), trafficking in a drug of dependence (methylamphetamine), possessing a registered general category handgun without a licence and related summary charges. The Court held that the sentencing judge had erred in not taking into account the appellant’s dysfunctional upbringing and limited intellect as relevant mitigating circumstances. At [60]-[64] Priest & T Forrest JJA discussed and applied *Bugmy v The Queen* (2013) 249 CLR 571 at [42]-[44] and *Drake v DPP* [2019] VSCA 293 at [31]-[32], their Honours holding at [60]:

“It is well established that where it is demonstrated that an offender’s criminal behaviour is causally connected with the effects of trauma and dysfunction experienced during the offender’s developmental years, that circumstance is relevant to an assessment of the offender’s subjective culpability: *R v Fernando* (1992) 76 A Crim R 58, 62–3; *R v Fuller-Cust* (2002) 6 VR 496, 520 [78]– [79]; [2002] VSCA 168. The rationale for that principle is that, in such a case, the subjective (moral) responsibility of the offender, who has suffered such trauma or dysfunction, should not be equated with the culpability of an offender who has had the benefit of a stable and constructive upbringing: *DPP v Heyfron* [2019] VSCA 130, [57]; *Bergman (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 148, [86]–[90].”

In *Hayley Black v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 125 the Court of Appeal (T Forrest & Emerton JJA), in allowing an appeal against a sentence of IMP27m/9m on a charge of dishonestly obtaining a financial advantage by deception from a Commonwealth entity, contrary to s 134.2(1) *Criminal Code (Cth)* and replacing it with a sentence of IMP12m/130d, said at [27]-[30]:

[27] “As we have stated it is settled law that in cases of significant early life deprivation an offender’s moral culpability is likely to be less than for an offender from a less deprived background: *Bugmy* (2013) 249 CLR 571, 594 [40] (French CJ, Hayne, Crennan, Kiefel, Bell and Keane JJ); [2013] HCA 37..In *Bugmy*, the Court also stated at [43]-[44]:

‘The experience of growing up in an environment surrounded by alcohol abuse and violence may leave its mark on a person throughout life. Among other things, a background of that kind may compromise the person’s capacity to mature and to learn from experience. It is a feature of the person’s make-up and remains relevant to the determination of the appropriate sentence, notwithstanding that the person has a long history of offending.

Because the effects of profound childhood deprivation do not diminish with the passage of time and repeated offending, it is right to speak of giving ‘full weight’ to an offender’s deprived background in every sentencing decision. However, this is not to suggest, as the appellant’s submissions were apt to do, that an offender’s deprived background has the same (mitigatory) relevance for all of the purposes of punishment. Giving weight to the conflicting purposes of punishment is what makes the exercise of the discretion so difficult: *Veen v The Queen* [No 2] (1988) 164 CLR 465, 476 (Mason CJ, Brennan, Dawson and Toohey JJ). An offender’s childhood exposure to extreme violence and alcohol abuse may explain the offender’s recourse to violence when frustrated such that the offender’s moral culpability for the inability to control that impulse may be substantially reduced. However, the inability to control the violent response to frustration may increase the importance of protecting the community from the offender.’

[28] In *Director of Public Prosecutions v Herrmann* [2021] VSCA 160, [44]–[45], this Court explained that it is unnecessary to establish a nexus between significant childhood deprivation and the offending under consideration:

‘The decisions of this Court also reaffirm the need for an appropriate evidentiary foundation before an offender’s disadvantaged background can be taken into account: *DPP v Terrick* (2009) 24 VR 457, 469 [46.7] (Maxwell P, Redlich JA and Robson AJA); [2009] VSCA 220. Depending on the extent and quality of the evidence, it may or may not be possible to establish a ‘nexus’ or ‘realistic connection’ between the offending and the relevant background circumstances.

The significance of the ‘general’ approach enunciated in *Bugmy* is that the relevance of deprivation to sentencing does not depend on proof of such a nexus. As Victoria Legal Aid pointed out in its helpful submission as *amicus curiae*, ‘the impact of disadvantage is complex, multilayered, non-linear and not easily “diagnosed” or measured’. The High Court’s recognition that serious childhood deprivation is likely to make an offender less morally culpable than ‘an offender whose formative years were not marred in that way’ reflects the principle of equal justice. As Dawson and Gaudron JJ said in *Postiglione v The Queen* (1997) 189 CLR 295, 301; [1997] HCA 26: ‘Equal justice requires that like should be treated alike but that, if there are relevant differences, due allowance should be made for them.’

It is the mark of a humane society that the moral judgment expressed through sentencing should take account of the lifelong damage that may result from exposure to violence or abuse or parental neglect in an offender’s formative years. As the present case graphically illustrates, childhood trauma can permanently damage — and seriously distort — a person’s view of the world around them and their understanding of social norms. Thus, in *Freeburn v The Queen [No 2]* [2020] VSCA 176, [51] (Kyrou, Kaye and Emerton JJA), it was accepted that the offender’s ‘background, of deprivation and abuse, played a material role in shaping his responses, and thus in his offending’. In *DPP v Snow* [2020] VSCA 67, [79] (Maxwell P, Beach JA and Croucher JJA), the Court drew attention to ‘the impact on the decision-making of individuals of growing up, and living, in circumstances of prolonged and widespread social disadvantage’.

[29] We consider that the appellant’s childhood and adolescent experiences amply justified a reduction in the evaluation of her moral culpability. As we have said it is unclear to us whether this in fact occurred, given the non-existent ventilation of *Bugmy* considerations on the plea and this solitary passage concerning moral culpability from the judge’s sentencing reasons: ‘I consider that your moral culpability for your offending on Charge 1 is not particularly reduced by your mental health issues’.

[30] Notwithstanding that the principle of deterrence remains an important sentencing factor, the presence of the mitigating factors that we have set out, including importantly the principles explained in *Bugmy* and *Herrmann*, led us to conclude that the sentence imposed on charge 1 was manifestly excessive.”

In *Makieng v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 52 Priest & Kyrou JA noted that the *Bugmy* principle did not necessarily have the same mitigatory relevance for all purposes of sentencing. At [50] their Honours said:

“Importantly, the High Court made it clear in *Bugmy* *v The Queen* (2013) 249 CLR 57 at [44] that a deprived background does not have the same relevance to all purposes of punishment, and observed that an inability to control violent responses to frustration, borne of an exposure to violence and substance abuse, may increase the importance of community protection as a feature in sentencing….See also *DPP v Herrmann* [2021] VSCA 160 (Maxwell P, Kaye, Niall, T Forrest and Emerton JJA).”

In *Ross v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 149 at [36]-[38] Priest & Macaulay JJA made the same points in holding that it “was open to the judge to find that the applicant’s background was ‘not such as to have any meaningful reduction in [his] moral culpability for the offending which is before this court’.” Their Honours continued at [39]:

“Assuming, as we do, that the applicant suffered some childhood deprivation, we are unable to see how it might be said to ‘explain’ the present offending, which essentially involved drug trafficking and an attempt to avoid arrest through reckless driving. The offending in the present case did not consist of a ‘recourse to violence when frustrated’, borne of an ‘inability to control that impulse’, such that the applicant’s moral culpability ‘may be substantially reduced’. That said, we accept (as did the judge) that the applicant’s background is not without relevance to the exercise of the sentencing discretion. But it is difficult to conceive how it might lead to any ‘meaningful reduction in [his] moral culpability’.”

In *Dhal v The King* [2023] VSCA 289 at [56] Osborn & JJA made the same point in the course of finding that no error had been demonstrated in the manner in which the sentencing judge had applied the principles in *Bugmy* to this case:

“Most importantly in this case, whilst deprivation may result in a reduction in moral culpability, it may at the same time bear upon the weight of other sentencing principles, such as by increasing the importance of protecting the community from the offender: *Bugmy* (2013) 249 CLR 571, 595 [44]; [2013] HCA 37; see also *Munda v Western Australia* (2013) 249 CLR 600, 621 [58] (French CJ, Hayne, Crennan, Kiefel, Gageler and Keane JJ); [2013] HCA 38, quoting *R v Engert* (1995) 84 A Crim R 67, 68 (Gleeson CJ, Allen J agreeing at 72, Sully J agreeing at 72).”

In *Russo v The King* [2024] VSCA 291 the nexus that sometimes occurs between childhood deprivation and protection of the community was also commented on by the Court of Appeal in refusing leave to appeal against a TES IMP20y4m/17y on multiple charges including 2 counts of rape imposed on a 30 year old offender who had previously been sentenced to IMP5y/3y for a similar rape. At [31]-[34] Priest & T Forrest JJA said:

[31] “...[C]ounsel for the applicant on the plea in the present case relied on the applicant’s childhood deprivation as a mitigating factor. And we do not doubt that the applicant endured an extremely deprived childhood, blighted by emotional, physical and sexual abuse. Quite clearly, however, notwithstanding his deprived background, the applicant’s criminal record remains highly relevant. Albeit he is not to be punished again for his prior offending, his very poor criminal antecedents are relevant as an indicator of his moral culpability; his prospects of rehabilitation; his dangerous propensities (and, relatedly, the community’s need for protection); and the increased importance of specific deterrence as a factor in sentencing: *R v O’Brien and Gloster* [1997] 2 VR 714,718. As the High Court made clear in *Veen v The Queen [No 2]* (1988) 164 CLR 465, 477-8 {see also *O’Brien* at 718; *Bugmy v The Queen* (2013) 249 CLR 571, 595 [45]}, although the applicant’s antecedent criminal history ‘cannot be given such weight as to lead to the imposition of a penalty which is disproportionate to the gravity of the instant offence’, it is relevant

to show whether the instant offence is an uncharacteristic aberration or whether the offender has manifested in his commission of the instant offence a continuing attitude of disobedience of the law. In the latter case, retribution, deterrence and protection of society may all indicate that a more severe penalty is warranted. It is legitimate to take account of the antecedent criminal history when it illuminates the moral culpability of the offender in the instant case, or shows his dangerous propensity or shows a need to impose condign punishment to deter the offender and other offenders from committing further offences of a like kind. Counsel for the applicant submitted that antecedent criminal history was relevant only to a prisoner’s claim for leniency. That is not and has never been the approach of the courts in this country and it would be at odds with the community’s understanding of what is relevant to the assessment of criminal penalties.

[32] The facts relating to *Veen [No 2]* are instructive. Veen had an appalling history. In 1971, when not quite 16, Veen stabbed himself in the chest with a knife (puncturing a lung), after he had been taken to a police station (albeit he was not charged over this incident). Later that year, Veen stabbed his landlady three times in the chest and once in the back, after she had tried to get him to go to bed. He was convicted of malicious wounding in the Children’s Court and committed to an institution. Several years later, in 1975, when he was aged 20 and working as a prostitute, Veen stabbed a man to death after the man refused him payment. A jury convicted him of manslaughter. Eventually, the High Court set aside his original sentence of life imprisonment and substituted a sentence of 12 years’ imprisonment. *Veen [No 2]* was concerned with an incident in 1983 in which Veen stabbed a man repeatedly with a bread knife. He pleaded guilty to manslaughter on the basis of diminished responsibility and was sentenced to life imprisonment. Ultimately, in his appeal to the High Court, the Court took into account not only the bare fact of his previous convictions, but also the factual circumstances underpinning his previous acts of violence.

[33] Veen’s life — much like the applicant’s — was a ‘sorry story’. He was Aboriginal and had been given to non-Aboriginal foster parents at the age of two and a half years. His childhood was ‘disturbed’, and he was removed from his foster parents’ care. A male teacher sexually molested him and he had poor academic performance. He had abused alcohol, leading to brain damage. Importantly, however, notwithstanding Veen’s deprived background, the High Court did not disturb the sentence imposed at first instance. Upholding the life sentence imposed upon him, the majority observed that, the ‘tragedy of Veen’s life, which … must excite sympathy for him, has to be balanced against the exigencies of the criminal law especially the protection of society’.

[34] More recently, in *Bugmy*, the High Court observed at [44] that an inability to control violent responses to frustration, borne of exposure to violence and substance abuse, may increase the importance of community protection as a feature in sentencing

Because the effects of profound childhood deprivation do not diminish with the passage of time and repeated offending, it is right to speak of giving ‘full weight’ to an offender’s deprived background in every sentencing decision. However, this is not to suggest, as the appellant’s submissions were apt to do, that an offender’s deprived background has the same (mitigatory) relevance for all of the purposes of punishment. Giving weight to the conflicting purposes of punishment is what makes the exercise of the discretion so difficult: Veen v The Queen [No 2] (1988) 164 CLR 465 at 476. An offender’s childhood exposure to extreme violence and alcohol abuse may explain the offender’s recourse to violence when frustrated such that the offender’s moral culpability for the inability to control that impulse may be substantially reduced. However, the inability to control the violent response to frustration may increase the importance of protecting the community from the offender.

See also *DPP v Herrmann* [2021] VSCA 160 at [36]-[41] & [96].

In *Leslie v The King* [2025] VSCA 13 the 27 year old Aboriginal applicant had pleaded guilty in the County Court Koori Court Division to charges of aggravated burglary, common assault, theft, intentionally damage property and two charges of threat to kill and was sentenced to TES IMP676d (already served) + IMP12m & CCO 2y. He had an intellectual disability, an acquired brain injury, complex mental health issues and a severely disadvantaged upbringing. At the time of offending, he had ongoing substance abuse issues. He also had a significant history of like offending. In granting leave to appeal but dismissing the appeal, the Court of Appeal (Emerton P & J Forrest JA) spoke at [86]-[87] of the complex balance between the *Bugmy* principles and community protection:

[86] “Having regard to the discussions of *Bugmy* in *Herrmann* and *Drake* [2019] VSCA 203 at [49], we are satisfied that the judge’s statement that he took *Bugmy* considerations into account ‘generally’, means that his Honour also considered the effects of the applicant’s deprived childhood when making a judgement about the extent of his blameworthiness. The judge did not specify the extent to which childhood deprivation reduced the applicant’s blameworthiness over and above the reduction attributable to his cognitive deficits and mental health factors, but he did not need to. He was required to take into account the evidence of the applicant’s deprived background and mental impairments to arrive at a single assessment of moral culpability, which he did.

[87] In this context, however, the judge also made it clear that the applicant’s criminal history, his pattern of reoffending, and his guarded prospects of rehabilitation, raised other sentencing considerations. His Honour ‘exposed’ the *Bugmy* principles by reference to passages in *L’Eveille* [2018] VSCA 60 at [26] & [29]-[30] which, on examination, emphasise the point made by the High Court in *Bugmy* that while childhood exposure to extreme violence and alcohol abuse may explain an offender’s recourse to violence when frustrated, such that their moral culpability for the inability to control that impulse may be substantially reduced, this might also increase the importance of community protection as a sentencing consideration.”

In relation to application of the *Bugmy* principle see also *DPP v Hodgson [*2019] VSCA 49, esp. at [46] & [73]-[77]; *DPP v Michaela Snow (a pseudonym)* [2020] VSCA 67 at [67]-[79]; *Haberman v DPP* [2020] VSCA 286 at [71]-[74]; *Julian Lockyer (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 321 at [62]-[65]; *Re Stacey Edwards* [2019] VSC 234 at [84]; [2020] VSCA 339 at [24]-[27]; *Bava v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 34 at [38]-[43] & [83]-[93]; *Sinclair v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 144 at [28]; *Bergman (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 148 at [85]-[90]; *Gencev v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 188 at [43]-[52]; *Stevens v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 218 at [31]-[33]; *Ellis v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 229 at [55]-[65]; *Kehayias v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 261; *DPP v Vaisey* [2021] VSC 584 at [73]-[76]; *DPP v Harrison* [2021] VSC 601 at [75]-[84]; *Eser v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 287 at [73]; *Clark v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 350 at [19]; *Shaun Page (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 364 at [57]-[62]; *Makieng v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 52 at [50]; *R v Fiscalini* [2022] VSC 51 at [44]; *Webb v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 85 at [26]‑[37]; *R v Bonney* [2022] VSC 264 at [21]; *DPP v DJ (a pseudonym)* [2022] VSC 358; *Tyson Ralph v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 185 at [46]-[49]; *R v Johnson* [2022] VSC 681 at [37]; *DPP v Ledlin* [2022] VSC 826 at [66]-[70]; *McKay v The King [No 2]* [2023] VSCA 8; *Newton (a pseudonym) v The King* [2023] VSCA 22 at [36]-[47]; *Magee v The King* [2023] VSCA 80 at [37]-[43]; *James Clarke (a pseudonym) v The King* [2023] VSCA 103 at [49]-[53]; *DPP v Newell* [2023] VSC 237 at [59]-[63]; *Kellway (a pseudonym) v The King*; *Donald (a pseudonym) v The King* [2023] VSCA 109 at [80]-[98]; *Kruger v The King* [2023] VSCA 149 at [38]-[43]; *DPP v Payne* [2023] VSC 286 at [68]-[72]; *DPP v Rider & Ong* [2023] VSC 466 at [67]-[71]; *Wilson (a pseudonym) v The King* [2023] VSCA 276 at [80]-[83]; *Hurst v The King* [2023] VSCA 286 at [65]-[79]; *DPP v Atkinson* [2024] VSC 286 at [63]-[66]; *DPP v Bell* [2024] VSC 576 at [44]-[48]; *Fisher (a pseudonym) v The King* [2025] VSCA 131 at [30]-[36]; *Rozynski v The King* [2025] VSCA 199 at [30], [37] & [42]-[52].

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### **11.2.13 Effect of ill health and/or age**

In *Smith* (1987) 44 SASR 587 at 589 King CJ said-

"The state of health of an offender is always relevant to the consideration of the appropriate sentence for the offender. The courts, however, must be cautious as to the influence which they allow this factor to have upon the sentencing process. Ill health cannot be allowed to become a licence to commit crime, nor can offenders generally expect to escape punishment because of the condition of their health. It is the responsibility of the Correctional Services authorities to provide appropriate care and treatment for sick prisoners. Generally speaking ill health will be a factor tending to mitigate punishment only when it appears that imprisonment will be a greater burden on the offender by reason of his state of health or when there is a serious risk of imprisonment having a gravely adverse effect on the offender's health."

The above dictum from *Smith* was referred to with approval by the High Court in *Bailey v Director of Public Prosecutions* (1998) 78 ALR 116 and was applied by the Court of Appeal in *R v Emanuel* [2005] VSCA 60 at [18]:

“His ill health was also a factor tending to mitigate punishment since it could reasonably be inferred from the evidence that imprisonment would be a greater burden on the offender by reason of the state of his health.”

In *R v Van Boxtel* [2005] VSCA 175; (2005) 11 VR 258 at [29]-[33] Callaway JA (Ormiston & Charles JJA agreeing) and in *R v Sharp* [2005] VSCA 226 at [25] Nettle JA Chernov JA & Harper AJA agreeing) approved and applied the above dicta from *Smith*. In *R v Sharp* the Court of Appeal agreed with counsel for the appellant that the test is not one of avoiding cruel and inhumane punishment.

The dictum from *Smith*’s case was also applied by Coldrey AJA in relation to a partial paraplegic in *R v Boyes* (2004) 8 VR 230 at 239-240; [2004] VSCA 97 at [43]-[46] where His Honour broadened the dictum to areas other than ill health and said of the test:

[46] “What must be determined is whether the impact of the prison regime will be more burdensome upon a specific prisoner because of his or her particular disability. I interpolate that this may manifest itself in areas other than ill health. For example, the hardship of isolation for prisoners such as informers or paedophiles who must serve their sentences in protection or the additional psychological stress of the cultural singleton.”

In *R v George Williams* [2008] VSCA 95 at [45] the Court of Appeal sounded a warning about a potential conflict between general deterrence and mitigation of punishment on the grounds of ill-health:

“[A]s her Honour held, the appellant’s physical infirmity could not outweigh the need for a sentence imposing punishment reflective of the seriousness of the offence and the need for general deterrence. Indeed it raised an issue of particular sensitivity with respect to general deterrence. The Court could not be seen to send a message that drug trafficking by the physically infirm would be excused.”

In *R v Belbruno* (2000) 117 A Crim R 150, 153 [9] – cited with approval by Orr JA in *Long (a pseudonym) v The King* [2025] VSCA 15 at [52] – the Court of Appeal said:

“Age, whether young or old, will, of course, always be a factor relevant to the sentencing discretion, but those of advancing years who commit crimes as serious as these were [namely trafficking of commercial quantities of heroin and cannabis], cannot expect to escape appropriate punishment by reason of that factor alone.”

In *R v AMP* [2010] VSCA 48 the appellant had pleaded guilty to 20 sexual offences against children over a period of 50 years and to one charge of possessing child pornography. There were 13 victims of the offences including his daughters, grandchildren, nephews and nieces, the child of family friends and Sudanese children whom he met through his involvement with the Church of Nazarene. At the time of sentencing the appellant was aged 71. Having been diagnosed with bladder and prostate cancer, his bladder was removed and he had to pass urine through a bag in his abdominal wall. Although his cancer was in remission, he was confined to a wheelchair. In upholding a sentence of 14 years imprisonment with a non-parole period of 9 years, Redlich & Neave JJ said at [53]-[55]:

[53] “As this court said in the recent decision of *RLP* [2009] VSCA 271 at [39], the conjunction of the appellant’s advanced years and ill health are to be approached with these propositions in mind:

1. The age and health of an offender are relevant to the exercise of the sentencing discretion.

2. Old age or ill health are not determinative of the quantum of sentence.

3. Depending upon the circumstances, it may be appropriate to impose a minimum term which will have the effect that the offender may well spend the whole of his remaining life in custody.

4. It is a weighty consideration that the offender is likely to spend the whole or a very substantial portion of the remainder of their life in custody.

5. Other sentencing considerations may be required to surrender some ground to the need to exercise compassion to take account of the real prospect that the offender may not live to be released and that the offender’s ill health will make his or her period of incarceration particularly onerous.

6. Just punishment, proportionality and general and specific deterrence remain primary sentencing considerations in the sentencing disposition notwithstanding the age and ill health of the offender.

7. Old age and ill health do not justify the imposition of an unacceptably inappropriate sentence.

[54] It was necessary for her Honour to give weight to the fact that the applicant’s ill-health [*R v Van Boxtel* (2005) 11 VR 258] would make prison more burdensome to him than to a healthy person without his disabilities. Her Honour was also required to have regard to the fact that the offender was aged 71 at the time of the sentencing and might not survive a lengthy prison sentence [*R v Bazley* (1993) 65 A Crim R 154, 158]. However, as has been said on many occasions, age alone ‘cannot be permitted to justify the imposition of an unacceptably inappropriate sentence’ [*R v Gregory* [2000] VSCA 212, [21] (Winneke P); *R v Whyte* (2004) 7 VR 397, 405 (Winneke P)].

[55] Her Honour was required to impose a substantial total effective sentence to take account of the gravity of the offending, its effects on the victims and the weight to be given to general and specific deterrence. In our opinion the total effective term of 14 years’ imprisonment does not indicate that her Honour gave insufficient weight to the applicant’s age and ill-health.”

In *Bufton v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 228 the 70 year old applicant – who was diagnosed with advanced endometrial cancer – had been found guilty of murdering her paramour by deliberately running over him with a car. She had no criminal history. She had been sentenced to IMP24y/18y. In allowing her appeal and reducing the sentence to IMP20y/14y, the Court of Appeal (Priest, Kyrou & McLeish JJA) said at [85]:

“Synthesising for ourselves all relevant considerations bearing on the imposition of sentence — in particular, the appellant’s age and the state of her health — we consider that the sentence imposed upon the appellant is wholly outside the range of those open in the sound exercise of discretion: *Lowndes v The Queen* (1999) 195 CLR 665, 671–672 [15] (Gleeson CJ, Gaudron, McHugh, Gummow, Kirby, Hayne and Callinan JJ); *Leimonitis v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 198, [32] (Priest JA). It is, we consider, manifestly too long [*Dinsdale v The Queen* (2000) 202 CLR 321, 325–6 [6] (Gleeson CJ and Hayne J); and, given that it destroys the reasonable expectation of useful life after release — should that ever occur — we consider it to be crushing: *R v Yates* [1985] VR 41, 48 (Young CJ, Starke, Crockett and Hampel JJ). Compare *R v Crowley* (1991) 55 A Crim R 201, 206 (Crockett J, Southwell and Ashley JJ agreeing).”

In *R v Bollen* [2014] VSC 651 Lasry J sentenced a 71 year old truck driver to IMP 5y/2y6m for culpable driving and 4 x negligently causing serious injury arising from “a tragic 19 seconds of inattention after a lifetime of responsible professional driving”. At [59]-[60], after referring to *Okutgen v R* (1982) 8 A Crim R 262 at 265-6, his Honour cited with approval the following dicta from *R v Bazley* (1993) 65 A Crim R 154 at 158-9: “The age of an offender is no doubt a relevant sentencing consideration. It may, in some cases, be of considerable significance. But it cannot be allowed to be a justification for the imposition of an unacceptably inappropriate sentence.”

In *R v Barci and Asling* (1994) 76 A Crim R 103 the Court of Criminal Appeal (Southwell, Hampel & Hansen JJ) held that even where an offender brought his injuries upon himself, if they were directly resultant from the commission of the crime itself, “they must fairly be regarded as constituting some punishment for the criminality”. In *R v Natale* [2019] VSC 30 the 87 year old offender had shot himself in the stomach in the aftermath of the offending. As a result he had various surgeries and complications had arisen. At [45]-[49] Taylor J discussed the relevance of this injury and held:

“[Y]our injury was not sustained during the course of your offending nor was it directly resultant of it. Rather, it was a self-inflicted wound made, by choice, in response to your own actions.

Nonetheless, I take into account the ongoing pain and discomfort you experience as a result of that injury, as well as your other, age-related health issues.”

See also *R v PFG* [2006] VSCA 130 at [56]-[61];*R v DW* [2006] VSCA 196 at [32]; *DPP v Downing* [2007] VSCA 154 at [13]; *R v Strezovski* [2007] VSCA 260 at [28]-[30]; *R v RGG* [2008] VSCA 94 at [29]-[41]; *R v Kuoth* [2010] VSCA 103 at [20]; *R v Charles Hargrave* [2011] VSCA 404 at [250]-[257]; *R* *v AWP* [2012] VSCA 41; *R v RSJ* [2012] VSCA 148; *R v CCR* [2012] VSCA 163 at [71]-[74]; *R v Brennan* [2012] VSCA 151 at [88]-[92]; *Director of Public Prosecutions (Cth) v Barbaro & Zirilli* [2012] VSCA 288 at [53]-[58]; *Tony Smith v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 208 at [28]-[35]; *DPP v Drake* [2019] VSCA 293 at [10]-[13] & [30]-[34]; *DPP v Gonzalez* [2022] VSC 331 at [45]-[50]; *Wilson (a pseudonym) v The King* [2023] VSC 276 at [88]-[103].

### **11.2.14 Effect of delay**

In *R v Tiburcy & Ors* [2006] VSCA 244 Maxwell P, with whom Warren CJ & Buchanan JA agreed, said at [3]:

“In my opinion the sentencing of each applicant called for the application of the principles eloquently stated by Chernov JA in *R v Cockerell* (2001) 126 A Crim R 444 at 447 where His Honour said:

‘The Courts have…recognised that that such delay which, as here, cannot be attributed to the offender, constitutes a powerful mitigating factor at a number of levels – see, for example, *Miceli* [1998] 4 VR 588 at 591; (1997) 94 A Crim R 327 at 329-330, *Todd* [1982] 2 NSWLR 517, *Schwabegger* [1998] 4 VR 649 at 659 per Vincent AJA, *MWH* [2001] VSCA 196, *Blanco* (1999) 106 A Crim R 303 at 306 per Wood CJ at CL, with whom Bell J and Smart AJ agreed. First, and perhaps foremost, where there has been a relatively lengthy process of rehabilitation since the offending, being a process in which the community has a vested interest, the sentence should not jeopardise the continued development of this process but should be tailored to ensure as much as possible that the offender has the opportunity to complete the process of rehabilitation. Secondly, from the point of view of fairness to the offender, the sentence should reflect the fact that the matter has been hanging over his or her head for some time, thereby keeping the offender in a state of suspense as to what will happen to him or her. As Wood CJ at CL said in *Blanco*:

‘... it remains the fact that it is highly desirable that the prosecuting authorities act promptly where they have evidence of serious criminality. If they fail to do so, then they must expect that circumstance to be taken into account in sentencing. It is in the public interest that those who are suspected of serious criminality be brought to justice and be brought to justice quickly, particularly where there is a strong case available against them.’ “

In *R v Nikodjevic* [2004] VSCA 222 Ormiston JA, with whom Callaway & Vincent JJA agreed, said at [21]-[22]:

“[21] …there are many circumstances which need to be taken into account to determine what is ‘undue’ delay, and further factors must be considered in seeing whether such delay in fact ‘should work in favour’ of a particular prisoner. As Callaway JA said in *R v MWH* [2001] VSCA 196 at [18]: ‘It is the effects of delay that are important for sentencing’. Thus the principle, assuming it should be described as such, is often expressed in terms of the delay between ‘offending’ and sentencing: see, for example, the passage from the judgment of Street CJ in *R v Todd* [1982] 2 NSWLR 517 at 519-520 cited with approval in the High Court in *Mill v R* (1988) 166 CLR 59 at 64. However, with great respect, one should be cautious about recognising the time between *offending* (as such) and sentencing except for certain specific purposes which were analysed with some care by Callaway JA in *MWH*. Thus it may show reformation of character over a significant period of a kind which would make rehabilitation largely irrelevant and greatly reduce, if not extinguish, the need for specific deterrence to be recognised in the sentence…

[22] Delay in sentencing, nevertheless, may be otherwise significant if the delay has occurred between the detection and charging of an offender and the time of sentencing, where the offender can fairly say that the sentence has been hanging over him or her for an unreasonable time, or where that person had chosen to reorganise his or her life upon an acceptance of guilt for the matters charged. Thus it is put forward not infrequently as a factor to be considered in the case of first offenders who have committed serious offences, for which they may feel uncertain whether they will be required to serve any term of imprisonment at all. The truth of the matter, however, is that every case is different and the factors seen properly to affect the exercise of the sentencing discretion will vary according to circumstance. One should therefore be cautious about asserting that there is a right to some automatic discount in every case of asserted delay. The most that can be said is that where the prosecuting authorities have in fact unduly delayed bringing the matter to court, there is much more likely to be such a discount, without the need to have regard to its particular consequences."

Their Honours held at [27] that in the circumstances of that case there was no undue delay, no delay of a kind which the judge was obliged to take into account and that the various reasons for rejecting such a claim were so strong as to be obvious. In *DPP v Taylor* [2005] VSCA 222 at [19] Nettle JA, with whom Eames JA & Hollingworth AJA agreed, approved and applied the above dictum from *R v Nikodjevic*.

In *R v MWH* [2001] VSCA 196 at [18] Callaway JA said: "It is the effects of delay that are important for sentencing." In *R v Truong* [2005] VSCA 147 at [15], referring to *R v MWH*, the Court of Appeal spoke of “the existence of a substantial interval between the commission of an offence and the date of imposition of sentence [which] can be seen to operate, in one sense at least, in the offender's favour, as it has permitted the individual to demonstrate significant rehabilitation and to reconstruct his life in a more satisfactory fashion.”

In *R v Merrett, Piggott & Ferrari* (2007) 14 VR 392; [2007] VSCA 1 Maxwell P (with whom Chernov JA & Habersberger AJA agreed) said at [35]:

“The relevance of delay lies rather in the effect which the lapse of time – however caused – has on the accused. Delay constitutes ‘a powerful mitigatory factor’: *R v Liang and Li* (1995) 82 A Crim R 39 at 45, cited by Vincent AJA in *R v Schwabegger loc cit; R v Cockerell* (2001) 126 A Crim R 444 at 447 [10] per Chernov JA. In particular, it focuses attention on issues of rehabilitation and fairness. As the Court of Criminal Appeal of Western Australia said in 1983 in *Duncan v R* (1983) 9 A Crim R 354 at 356-7:

‘... where, prior to sentence, there has been a lengthy process of rehabilitation and the evidence does not indicate a need to protect society from the applicant, the punitive and deterrent aspects of the sentencing process should not be allowed to prevail so as to possibly destroy the results of that rehabilitation.

... The very fact of the long delay in bringing the matter to court which led the applicant to have this matter hanging over his head for nearly four years is rightly prayed in aid on his behalf. See also *R v Blanco* (supra) at 306 [16]; *The Queen v MWH* [2001] VSCA 196 at [18] per Callaway JA.’”

In *R v Ferguson* [2008] VSCA 257 at [28] the Court of Appeal said:

“In *R v Merrett, Piggott & Ferrari* (2007) 14 VR 392 Maxwell P reviewed the authorities concerning the relevance of delay as a mitigating factor in sentencing, especially in circumstances where the offender has been on bail during the period of delay and, in that time, has engaged in an effective process of rehabilitation by participating in the community without further offending. The unfairness of serious criminal charges hanging over the head of the offender for a long period is also a relevant consideration. With reference to *R v Liang and Li* (1995) 124 FLR 350, 356 cited by Vincent AJA in *R v Schwabegger* [1998] 4 VR 649,659 {see also *R v Cockerell* (2001) 126 A Crim R 444 at [10] per Chernov JA}, Maxwell P stated that delay constitutes ‘a powerful mitigating factor’ {(2007) 14 VR 392 at [35]}.

In *Stalio v R* (2012) 46 VR 426, 441 [54] the Court of Appeal said: “It would be wrong for a prisoner to be sentenced to a substantially higher sentence than an offender who committed like offences at or about the time of the offences in issue, simply because of the lapse of time.” See also *R v Hague* [2018] VSC 323 at [44]-[45].

For further discussion on the effect of delay in sentencing see *R v Cain* [1974] VR 759 at 767; *Mill v The Queen* (1988) 166 CLR 59 at 64; *R v Tuan Quoc Truong* [2005] VSCA 147 at [15]; *R v Carmody* [2006] VSCA 139 at [14]-[18]; *R v Lanteri* [2006] VSC 225 at [77]; *R v Rowley* [2007] VSCA 94 at [32]-[38]; *R v Tezer – R v Davis* [2007] VSCA 123 at [36]-[48]; *R v Rackley* [2007] VSCA 169 at [34]-[36]; *R v Cavkic, Athanasi & Clarke* [2007] VSC 289 at [68]-[70]; *R v Slattery (Sentence)* [2008] VSC 81 at [32]-[34]; *R v Zancan* [2009] VSCA 11 at [32]-[34]; *R v Thompson* [2009] VSCA 13 at [24]-33]; *R v Wright* [2009] VSCA 27; *R v RL* [2009] VSCA 95 at [54]-[58]; *DPP v McInnes* [2009] VSCA 144 at [10]-[12]; *R v ONA* [2009] VSCA 146 at [34]-[47]; *DPP v WRJ* [2009] VSCA 174 at [14]-[24]; *Talia v The Queen* [2009] VSCA 260 at [22]; *R v NJD* [2010] VSCA 84 at [71]-[74]; *R v Malikovski* [2010] VSCA 130 at [43] & [52]-[53]; *R v Barrett* [2010] VSCA 133 at [32]-[38]; *R v Hennessy* [2010] VSCA 297; *R v Chandler & Paksoy* [2010] VSCA 338 at [16]-[19]; *R v Patrick James Keane* [2011] VSCA 156 at [7]-[18]; *R v Bourne* [2011] VSCA 159 at [24]-[33]; *R v Andrews* [2011] VSCA 191 at [8]-[9]; *CNK v The Queen* (2011) 32 VR 641; [2011] VSCA 228 at [65]; *DPP v Murray* [2011] VSCA 232 at [7]-[8]; *R v Day* [2011] VSCA 243 at [11]-[22]; *R v Tansey* [2012] VSC 221 at [54]-[56]; *DPP v TP* [2012] VSCA 166 at [67]-[77]; *DPP v Miller* [2012] VSCA 265 at [25]-[30]; *Arthars v The Queen* (2013) 39 VR 613, 628 [28]; *Russell O’Brien (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2014] VSCA 94 at [69]-[73]; *Hicks v The Queen* [2016] VSCA 154 at [23]; *Sayer v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 177 at [42]-[57]; *Arthur v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 58 at [33]; *Davies v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 66 at [700]-[713] & [769]; *DPP v Tuite* [2019] VSC 159 at [33]-[34]; *Nicos Kiril (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 133 at [40]-[45]; *Mush v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 307 at [96]-[98]; *DPP v Keller (a pseudonym)* [2021] VSCA 334 at [91]-[92]; *Mackie v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 28 at [29]-[36]; *Barnard (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 42 at [15]-[17]; *Stafford v The King* [2022] VSCA 229 at [27]-[28] & [38]-[39]; *DPP v Mathiei & Ors* [2023] VSC 123 at [142]-[143]; *DPP v Harvey* [2023] VSCA 234 at [53]-[55]; *DPP v Merryful; DPP v Bloomfield* [2023] VSC 244 at [44]-[49]; *Weatherburn v The King* [2023] VSCA 283 at [37]-[50]; *Barbaro v The King* [2024] VSCA 54 at [23]-[48]; *Tori v The King* [2024] VSCA 162, [32]‑[37].

### **11.2.15 Relevance of gambling addiction**

In *R v Huynh & Others* [2004] VSCA 128 - the Court of Appeal was dismissive of the gambling addiction of one of the defendants, a 30 year old female Kim Ngoc Ta. At [58] Eames JA, with whom Batt & Vincent AJA agreed, said: "The fact that an offender had a gambling addiction and that played a part in the commission of the offences is a matter upon which little if any weight might be given by a sentencing judge: *DPP v. Raddino* (2002) 128 A Crim R 43, at [26]-[27]*; R. v. Atalla* (2002) 132 A Crim R 531, at [13]-[14]."

In *R v Luong & Ors* [2005] VSCA 94 at [26] Winneke P (Charles & Chernov JJA concurring) said:

“Whether or not an addiction to gambling can mitigate a sentence by reflecting upon the offender’s ‘moral culpability’ and the aspect of general deterrence will, as it seems to me, very much depend upon the nature of the crime and the circumstances of the offending. For my own part, the concept that an appropriate sentence for widespread heroin trafficking should be moderated by the prisoner’s gambling addiction is not one which should loom large in the exercise of the Judge’s discretion. It may be that crimes of dishonesty precipitated by gambling addiction will attract a different view (see *Novak* (1993) 69 A Crim R 145 per Vincent J); although the Court of Criminal Appeal in this State rejected the idea that *Novak* should become authority for the proposition that a gambling addiction reduced the relative importance of the element of general deterrence even in crimes of dishonesty. In *R v Martin* (1994) 74 A Crim R 252, Southwell J said (at page 257):

‘As it seems to me there is no logical distinction to be drawn, so far as evidence of addiction is concerned, between the commission of an armed robbery to obtain funds to feed on the one hand an addiction to heroin and on the other an addiction to gambling. The same can be said where the offence is not that of armed robbery but a theft in breach of trust. In the latter type of case at least it would, in my opinion, be an unusual case where evidence of addiction to gambling will significantly reduce the importance of the element of general deterrence.’

Similar views have been adopted by this Court in the cases of *R. v. Chamberlain* [unreported, Court of Criminal Appeal, 23/05/1996]; *Limb* [unreported, Court of Criminal Appeal, 13/03/1997]; *Dawsan* [unreported, Court of Criminal Appeal, 27/05/1997] and *Pascoe* [unreported, Court of Criminal Appeal, 29/04/1998]. In the case of *R v Dawsan*, I said, with the concurrence of Brooking JA and Ashley AJA:

‘In my view, it will be a rare case where a court will find that a person’s gambling habit will be available to that person for the purposes of mitigating the sentence which would otherwise be appropriate.’”

In *R v Grossi* [2008] VSCA 51 the Court of Appeal rejected an argument that the line of authority that little or no weight will usually be given to an offender’s gambling addiction must now give way in light of the principles espoused in *Verdins.* After discussing a large number of cases including *R v Do* [2007] VSCA 308, Redlich JA, with whom Vincent & Neave JJA agreed, held at [56]:

“Properly analysed, there is in my view no tension between the principle explained in *Verdins* and those authorities which have dealt with gambling addiction. Evidence may establish that an offender suffers from an impulse control disorder in the form of pathological gambling listed in DSM-IV-TR, the essential feature of which is ‘persistent and recurrent maladaptive gambling behaviour that disrupts personal family or vocational pursuits’. The relevance of the disorder to the sentence to be imposed, is then to be assessed in accordance with the principles restated in *Verdins*. That assessment will generally lead to the conclusion that the presence of a gambling addiction should not, on that ground alone, result in any appreciable moderation of the sentence. There are a number of reasons why that will be so. Firstly in most cases, the nature and severity of the symptoms of the disorder, considered in conjunction with the type and circumstances of the offending, will not warrant a reduction in moral culpability or any moderation of general deterrence. Secondly, it will frequently be the case that crimes associated with gambling addiction will have been repeated and extended over a protracted period. The long term chase to recoup losses is characteristic of those with such a disorder. Thirdly, in cases involving dishonesty, the crimes will commonly be sophisticated, devious, and the result of careful planning: *DPP v Bulfin* [1998] 4 VR 114, 131; *R v Atalla* (2002) 132 A Crim R 531 (Vincent JA with whom Winneke P and Charles JA agreed). Fourthly, the gravity of such offences, if there is a breach of trust or confidence, will commonly attract an increased penalty making such offences more appropriate vehicles for general deterrence. Fifthly, when offences of this nature are committed over extended periods, the prominent hypothesis will be that the offender has had a degree of choice which they have continued to exercise as to how they finance their addiction: *R v Telford [*2005] SASC 349, [30]; *R v De Stefano* [2003] VSC 68, [56] (Kellam J). This has often provided a reason for a general reluctance to temper the weight given to general deterrence or to reduce moral culpability because an offender has found it difficult to control their gambling obsession. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the nexus of the addiction to the crime will often be unsubstantiated. The disorder will not generally be directly connected to the commission of the crime, the addiction providing only a motive and explanation for its commission. Hence, by contrast to a mental condition that impairs an offender’s judgment at the time of the offence, such addiction will generally be viewed as only indirectly responsible for the offending conduct.”

See *R v Yi Yi Wang* [2009] VSCA 67 at [17]-[18]; *Kovacevic v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 49 at [47].

### **11.2.16 Relevance of drug addiction**

In *R v Bisset* [2005] VSCA 10 the Court of Appeal dismissed an application for special leave by a 25 year old man who had pleaded guilty to one count of armed robbery, one count of kidnapping and one count of theft and had been sentenced to 6 years imprisonment with a non-parole period of 4 years. Shortly after midnight the applicant had entered a service station shop wearing a beanie pulled down over his face and carrying a steak knife. He demanded money from the young female attendant and ordered her into his car. After travelling a short distance he stopped the car and the attendant escaped without opposition. He had a total of 37 prior convictions from 9 previous court appearances. These were largely related to offences of dishonesty and drug-related matters, although many were of a relatively minor nature. He was a heroin addict and had been for 7 years. He had attended at Odyssey House on several occasions in an attempt to rid himself of drug addiction but had failed on each occasion. At [25] Nettle JA (with whom Vincent JA & Cummins AJA agreed) said: “[E]ven if there had been no kidnapping at all, a sentence of 4 years imprisonment is…well within range for armed robbery of a young female attendant of a service station in the middle of the night in circumstances which are likely to have filled her with terror.” At [26]-[27] His Honour rejected the submission that the sentencing judge had erred in failing to treat the applicant’s period of residence in Odyssey House following his release on bail as so akin to pre-sentence detention as to warrant a sentencing discount. Distinguishing *R v Cartwright* (1989) 17 NSWLR 243 at 258-9 in which the NSW Court of Criminal Appeal had equated a period of time in which a prisoner under the control of Federal police and assisting them with their inquiries as akin to pre-sentence detention, His Honour said: “I reject the analogy…[T]he applicant’s residence at Odyssey House was voluntary: *R v. Eastway* NSWCCA, 19/05/1992; BC 9202732 at 7. He had the choice to remain in custody or to go fee on bail on the condition that he reside at Odyssey House. He chose the latter.” And at [28]-[29] His Honour said:

“In the result, I see no error of principle in the sentencing judge’s sentencing remarks and I do not consider that the sentences imposed were manifestly excessive. Despite the mitigating factors of which counsel for the applicant has sought to make so much, and despite such sympathy as one might have for the applicant because of his drug addiction, it remains that the applicant’s offences were callous, calculated crimes committed against a defenceless young woman in frightening circumstances, and the community expects such offences to be met with stern and just punishment in which specific and general deterrence play considerable parts. As Winneke P pointed out in *R v Reddrop* [2000] VSCA 101 at [15]-[17]:

‘No matter how sympathetic one might be towards those who have allowed themselves to become hooked on heroin, the courts have said time and time again that crimes of violence of this sort must attract condign punishment whether or not committed for the purposes of feeding a heroin addiction.

[Such a] crime, I think, can be properly described as a callous crime committed against a defenceless young girl in frightening circumstances…[and t]he community expects such a crime to be met with stern but just punishment in which both general and specific deterrence must play their part. The maximum penalty for armed robbery has recently been increased to 25 years and thus reflects the seriousness in which it is viewed by the community.’

So therefore while the learned sentencing judge was required to take into account the several factors urged in mitigation, and his Honour did, he was required also to bear in mind that drug addiction can be no excuse for the commission of the crime. Otherwise, crimes which would violate the community’s fundamental values will be allowed to go improperly punished.”

In *R v Taslik* [2005] VSCA 35 the applicant had pleaded guilty to attempted armed robbery and recklessly causing injury (minor) to 2 persons in a city street in daytime using a Stanley knife. The sentencing judge accepted that the applicant’s continuing heroin problem explained why the attack took place but noted that there was “a difference between committing offences of dishonesty and escalating them to thefts with such force. The addiction did not materially affect the applicant’s moral culpability.” The Court of Appeal said at [22]: “His Honour's approach to the applicant's heroin addiction was justified by *R v. Bouchard* (1996) 84 A Crim R 499 at 501‑502.

On the other hand, in *R v Van Tu Nguyen* [2008] VSCA 141 it was conceded that the appellant, who had pleaded guilty to trafficking in a large commercial quantity of heroin at the first reasonable opportunity, was at all relevant times a heavy user of heroin to which he was addicted to the extent of 1-2g per day. The only benefit he had received from the offending was a supply of drugs for his own use. In allowing an appeal and reducing a sentence Mandie AJA (with whom Vincent & Nettle JJA agreed) noted at [21]: “The Crown acknowledged the various factors indicating that the appellant had a degree of moral culpability less than that which was or would be attributable to an offender *profiteering* from large commercial quantities of a drug.”

In *R v Ibrahim* [2010] VSC 333 at [19]-[21] Coghlan J discussed the relevance of addiction to sentencing as follows:

[18] “The courts have recognised that addiction may be relevant to sentencing. (See *R v Nagy* [1992] 1 VR 637, *R v Bouchard* (1996) 84 Crim App R 499 and *R v Lacey* [2007] VSCA 196.) The situation though, is perhaps best summarised by Buchanan JA in *R v McKee, R v Books* [2003] VSCA 16. His Honour said in that case:

‘ The motive for the commission of the crimes was the appellants’ need for money with which to buy heroin to feed their addiction. According to the Court of Criminal Appeal in New South Wales it has been “said on countless occasions that addiction to heroin is not to be considered as effective reduction of what would otherwise be an appropriate sentence”.

[19] While the existence of an overwhelming physical craving may explain the commission of a crime, for instance to obtain money to purchase heroin to still the craving, the courts’ refusal to take that into account may be due to the view that the decision to begin to use drugs is said to be voluntary and the commission of crimes to feed an addiction is a likely consequence of that choice. In *R. v. Henry* (1999) 46 NSWLR 346, Spigelman CJ said:

‘Self-induced addiction at an age of rational choice establishes moral culpability for the predictable consequences of that choice.’

[20] The extent to which a decision to experiment with drugs is freely made, in my view, bears upon the moral culpability of the offender who commits a crime as a consequence of addiction to drugs. Age is relevant to the question, as Spigelman CJ acknowledged. I would add that in the case of adults, despair and low self-regard may also play a significant part in the decision to use drugs, and that condition may be the result of social or economic disadvantage, poor education, or emotional or physical abuse. An addiction to heroin may also bear upon the question of rehabilitation, where the prospects of success will often depend upon the likelihood of the addiction being successfully treated. In my view, a sentencing judge may have regard to the circumstances which led to an addiction that caused the commission of the offence and to whether the addiction has continued or is being treated when deciding upon a sentence appropriately tailored to the personal circumstances of the offender.”

In *Jamel Mohtadi v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 238, in refusing leave to appeal against a sentence of IMP3y3m imposed on a charge of cultivating a commercial crop of cannabis in a hydroponic setup in a suburban house at Epping, Kyrou & Kaye JJA said at [39]-[41]:

[39] “In *R v Koumis* (2008) 18 VR 434, the Court analysed the relevance of an offender’s drug addiction to the issue of moral culpability, stating at [53], [56]:

‘A number of general propositions may be stated about the relevance of addiction to the question of moral culpability and whether it should be viewed as a mitigating circumstance for the purpose of sentence. Drug addiction provides no justification for the purposes of sentencing. Drug addiction is not of itself a factor that necessarily calls for a lesser sentence than would otherwise be appropriate. The sentence to be fixed has to reflect the seriousness of the crime of trafficking in substantial quantities of a drug of dependence. Denunciation and general deterrence assume particular importance as the purposes to be effectuated by the sentence. Generally speaking, addiction, and any consequential impairment of judgment, will not have any significant mitigatory effect upon those sentencing considerations…

The general reluctance of courts to take drug addiction into account rests in part, at least, upon the view that the decision to begin to use drugs was voluntary and the commission of crimes to feed an addiction was a likely consequence of that choice.’

See also *R v Katelis* [2008] VSCA 239, [12].

[40] The Court then proceeded to adopt the following passage from the judgment of Buchanan JA in *R v McKee* (2003) 138 A Crim R 88, 92-93:

‘The extent to which a decision to experiment with drugs is freely made, in my view, bears upon the moral culpability of the offender who commits a crime as a consequence of addiction to drugs. Age is relevant to the question, as Spigelman CJ acknowledged. I would add that in the case of adults, despair and low self-regard may also play a significant part in the decision to use drugs and that condition may be the result of social or economic disadvantage, poor education or emotional or physical abuse. An addiction to heroin may also bear upon the question of rehabilitation, where the prospects of success will often depend upon the likelihood of the addiction being successfully treated. In my view, a sentencing judge may have regard to the circumstances which led to an addiction that caused the commission of the offence and to whether the addiction has continued or is being treated in deciding upon a sentence appropriately tailored to the personal circumstances of the offender.’

[41] As noted, the applicant’s offending was well above that of a street level driven by desperation to traffick in a drug in order to be able to feed an uncontrollable addiction. Rather, the applicant had chosen to become involved in a sophisticated business of cultivating cannabis at a commercial level, in order to repay a drug debt, and to secure a continuing supply of drugs to himself. In doing so, he performed an important role in the drug trafficking enterprise of his supplier in the manner described by the sentencing judge in the passage to which we have earlier referred.”

In *R v Giannioudis* [2019] VSC 75, in sentencing the accused on her plea of guilty to manslaughter, Taylor J said at [40]: “Your offending, whilst occurring on the street at the time you were trafficking drugs, was not committed to satisfy your own drug addiction. Accordingly, your situation is different from that examined in *McKee*…Your drug addiction per se is not mitigatory of your conduct.”

In *DPP v Clifford* [2025] the 18 year old offender (now aged 20) had entered an early guilty plea to manslaughter by stabbing the 40 year old victim seven times when confronted by the victim while searching inside the victim’s parked car. The offender has a severe traumatic brain injury as a result of a car accident enlivening *Verdins* principle 5 and reasonable prospects of rehabilitation. In imposing a sentence of IMP8y6m/5y], Incerti J discussed at [52]-[53] the impact of the offender’s drug addiction on his moral culpability:

[52] “It was submitted on your behalf that I should have regard to the *McKee* principle. The Court of Appeal in *R v McKee and Brooks* (2003) 138 A Crim R 88 explained at 92‑93 that the existence of an addiction as a causal factor in offending may warrant a reduction in moral culpability if the decision to experiment with drugs is not a decision made freely; for example, if the decision is affected by youth, or by ‘despair and low self-regard’ resulting from disadvantage or abuse. A sentence may be tailored by the judge that considers those factors, in addition to whether the addiction is ongoing or is being treated. Drug addiction or drug use is not usually a mitigating factor, and in some circumstances can be an aggravating factor.

[53] I accept that you began experimenting with hard drugs at a very young age. It appears that this continued and escalated after the car accident in 2021. I also accept that your drug and alcohol addiction from such a young age, along with your TBI, have had ‘serious corrosive effects ‘ that influenced your conduct at the time of the offending: *DPP v Jabbour* [2023] VSCA 204, [43]. There was no challenge that at the time of your offending, the addiction was chronically affecting your life. Having said that, you must be fully responsible and accountable for the conduct you have voluntarily engaged in, that is drug taking, which led to you committing this offence. It cannot be seen as an excuse for your conduct; rather it can be considered for a variety of sentencing purposes, including a reduction in your moral culpability.”

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**11.2.17 Relevance of intoxication/drug ingestion**

In *R v Groom* [1999] 2 VR 159; [1998] VSCA 146 counsel for the applicant had cited the cases of *R v Coleman* (1990) 47 A Crim R 306 & *R v Walker* [unreported, Court of Appeal, 31/05/1996] in support of his submission that intoxication may be a mitigatory factor. At [1999] 2 VR at 164 Batt JA – with whom Buchanan JA agreed – rejected this submission:

“In my view the applicant’s moral culpability was not reduced by his intoxication…It is to be noted that the cases cited make it clear that there is no proposition that intoxication is a matter which will generally, let alone always, go in mitigation. I refer particularly to the judgment of Hayne JA (with whom Southwell AJA substantially agreed) in *Walker* at 5-9.

Those cases indeed go further and show, as also does *R v Sewell* (1981) 29 SASR 12 at 14-15, that intoxication may aggravate the offence by, for instance, making the events all the more frightening for the victim, preventing the victim from effectively reasoning with the assailant to desist.”

In *R v Leng Khem* [2008] VSCA 136 at [36]-[40], Pagone AJA (with whom Neave JA agreed) approved and applied the above dicta from *R v Groom*. There is dicta of Nettle JA to similar effect in *R v Howell* (2006) 16 VR 346 at 355-356; [2007] VSCA 119 at [19]-[20], citing with approval dicta in *R v Redenbach* (1991) 52 A Crim R 95, 99 and *DPP v Tucker & Lewis* (unreported, Court of Criminal Appeal, 22/09/1989). See also *R v McRae* [2008] VSCA 74 at [15]-[16] per Vincent JA with whom Ashley & Dodds-Street JJA agreed.

In *R v Angelopoulos* [2005] VSCA 258 at [35] Eames JA - with whom Callaway & Buchanan JJA agreed – said:

“Counsel accepted that there is no rule that intoxication was necessarily a mitigating factor but submitted that it nonetheless could be, in certain circumstances, in particular where a youthful first offender was involved: see *R. v. Walker* [unreported, Court of Appeal, 31/05/1996] and *R v Groom* [1999] 2 V.R. 159 at 164 [22]-[24] per Batt J. As Hayne JA noted in *Walker* the fact that an offence occurred whilst the offender was drunk may offer an explanation, in that the offence might not have occurred had he been sober. The fact that an offender was under the influence of liquor at the time of the offence might also have relevance in explaining why a person of otherwise blameless character did something out of character, thereby constituting both an explanation for the offending and a factor relevant to mitigation: see *R v Sewell* (1981) 29 SASR 12.”

In *Hasan v The Queen* (2010) 31 VR 28; [2010] VSCA 352 at [20]–[35] the Court of Appeal (Maxwell P, Redlich & Harper JJA) reviewed the state of the law in Victoria regarding intoxication as a sentencing consideration. The Court commenced by stating at [20]-[21]:

“It is notorious that intoxication of the offender is a common feature of violent offending in general, and of sexual violence in particular. Not infrequently, sentencing judges are faced with a submission that the offender’s intoxication made him/her behave in a manner that was ‘out of character’ and that his/her moral culpability for the offending should be seen as lessened accordingly…

As will appear, courts around Australia have consistently rejected the proposition that intoxication can mitigate the seriousness of an offence or reduce the offender’s culpability. An ‘out of character’ exception is acknowledged to exist, but it has almost never been applied. On the other hand, it is recognised that intoxication can be an aggravating factor where the offender is shown to have had foreknowledge of how he/she is likely to behave when affected by alcohol. See, for example, *R v Hay* [2007] VSCA 147, [18] (Buchanan JA), [33] (Maxwell P); *R v Martin* (2007) 20 VR 14, 20 and the cases there cited.”

The Court went on to discuss or refer to the cases of *Bradley* (1980) 2 Cr App R (S) 12, *R v Lane* (1990) 48 A Crim R 161, 165, *R v Redenbach* (1991) 52 A Crim R 95, 99, *R v Howell* (2007) 16 VR 349, 355 (Nettle JA), *R v McRae* [2008] VSCA 74, [15] (Vincent JA), *R v Rosenberger; ex parte Attorney-General (Qld)* [1995] 1 Qd R 677, 678, *De Jesus* (1986) 20 A Crim R 402, 405 (Smith J), *R v Sewell and Walsh* (1981) 29 SASR 12 (1981) 5 A Crim R 204, *R v Coleman* (1990) 47 A Crim R 306, *R v Fletcher-Jones* (1994) 75 A Crim R 381, 387, *R v Gordon* (1994) 71 A Crim R 459, 467, *Attorney-General v Davis* [unreported, Victorian Court of Criminal Appeal, 09/05/1980], *R v Argus* [unreported, Victorian Court of Appeal, 01/02/1996], *R v Phillips* [2000] VSCA 225, *Stanford v The Queen* [2007] NSWCCA 73. The Court also noted that in *DPP v G* [2002] VSCA 6, a case which concerned an offender’s sexual abuse of his 14-year old step-daughter while affected by liquor, Winneke P had said at [10]:

“Nor, in my view, is the [offender’s] conduct to be explained, excused or ameliorated by the fact that his lust had been provoked by the liquor which had disinhibited him.”

The Court of Appeal noted that in *R v Walker* [unreported, Court of Appeal, 31/05/1996], *R v Laffey* [1998] 1 VR 155, 162 & *R v Groom* [1999] 2 VR 159, 164 the Victorian Court of Appeal had acknowledged the existence of the “out of character” exception but had held that it did not apply to the case at hand. At [33]-[35] Maxwell P, Redlich & Harper JJA concluded:

[33] “Because the out of character exception has been so rarely applied, there has been almost no judicial exploration of the circumstances in which the exception might be applicable. It seems clear enough, however, that the circumstances must be quite exceptional before intoxication at the time of offending can mitigate the offender’s moral culpability.

[34] On ordinary principles, the offender would bear the onus of showing that he/she did not know what effect alcohol would have on him/her. See *DPP v Arvanitidis* [2008] VSCA 189, [34] (Redlich JA, with whom Buchanan and Nettle JJA agreed); *R v Shafik-Eid* [2009] VSCA 217, [30].Given the widespread use of alcohol, and the fact that even a non-drinker would be well aware of its effects on a person who becomes intoxicated, this is doubtless a difficult burden to discharge. Moreover, an attempt to invoke the exception also carries with it the forensic risk that an investigation of the offender’s drinking habits might lead to the conclusion that the state of intoxication was an aggravating rather than a mitigating circumstance.

[35] In our opinion, the evidence led on the plea fell far short of discharging the burden of proof which rested on the appellant to show that this conduct was out of character. As pointed out earlier, the evidence given by his sister was essentially of historical relevance only. The most obvious, and persuasive, way for the point to have been made was for the appellant himself to give evidence as to his lack of experience with alcohol and as to its unexpected effect on him on the night in question. As noted earlier, however, he chose not to give evidence. In the circumstances, the judge was fully entitled to reach the conclusion which she did.”

In *Clark v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 350 at [14] Priest & McLeish JJA cited with approval the following dicta of Priest JA in *Lisle v The Queen* [2017] VSCA 4 at [34]:

“One cannot sit daily in criminal courts without being acutely aware that many crimes are committed by individuals who are under the influence of alcohol (or illicit drugs). Authority dictates, however, that — generally speaking — intoxication is not a circumstance going in mitigation of an offence: *Morrison v The Queen* [2012] VSCA 222, [17]–[20] (Buchanan JA); *Hasan v R* (2010) 31 VR 28, 33–7 [20]–[34]. But to deny intoxication as a mitigating circumstance is not to say that intoxication must therefore necessarily be considered to be an aggravating feature of an offence. Indeed, in a case such as the present, before alcohol ingestion or intoxication may be considered to be an aggravating feature of an offence, a sentencing judge will need to be satisfied beyond reasonable doubt that an offender was aware of the probability that alcohol use would predispose him or her to conduct similar to that constituting the relevant offending.”

On the other hand, in *R v Dong* [2012] VSC 525 Coghlan J treated the accused’s intoxication as a mitigating factor by reducing moral culpability. At [25] his Honour said to the accused when sentencing him for attempted murder:

“It has been accepted by the courts that intoxication may act in mitigation, but it will not always do so: *R v Davis*, Court of Criminal Appeal (unreported, 9 May 1980). The principal consideration is whether or not a person does something under the influence of alcohol which they might otherwise [not] have done. That proposition will often in turn depend upon the person’s previous good character. That is, the extent to which the behaviour being considered can be said to be outside ordinary behaviour. The general testimonials as to your good character are powerful. The evidence about your assistance to the Liu family was powerful. I am prepared to say in your case that intoxication does reduce your moral culpability, but that has to be seen in the light of the very clear resentment that you bore to [the victim].”

In *R v Martin* [2007] VSCA 291 the Court of Appeal (Maxwell P, Nettle & Redlich JJA) said at [19]-[21]:

“We respectfully agree with his Honour’s conclusion that, in the circumstances of this case, the applicant’s moral culpability is not reduced by reason of his psychotic state. We would not, however, endorse the general proposition which underpins this conclusion – that psychosis (or other mental illness) which is drug induced can never be a mitigating factor because it is the result of the offender’s own (illegal) act.

Cases can be imagined where the offender’s psychotic state is drug-induced but is nevertheless treated as lessening the offender’s culpability. For example, the offender might have had no awareness – because of a lack of prior knowledge or experience – that the ingestion of a particular drug might trigger a psychotic reaction. In such a case, the resultant impairment of mental capacity might be regarded as involuntary, notwithstanding that the taking of the drug was a voluntary act. Again – as in the case of *Sebalj* [2006] VSCA 106 – the psychosis might occur in the course of the offender’s attempts to withdraw from the use of the drug which was, nevertheless, the cause of the psychosis. In *Sebalj*, the drug-induced psychosis was seen as substantially reducing the offender’s level of culpability for what he did while under the influence of paranoid delusions.

As these examples illustrate, the critical factor in determining the significance of drug-induced psychosis for sentencing purposes is the degree of foreknowledge on the part of the offender. There is an obvious parallel in this respect with sentencing for offences committed while under the influence of alcohol, where the concept of “reckless intoxication” has been developed.”

in *DPP v Arvanitidis* [2008] VSCA 189 Redlich JA (with whom Buchanan & Nettle JJA agreed) said at [29] that dicta in *R v Martin* made it clear that when a psychiatric illness had been induced by the defendant’s ingestion of a particular drug, the Court must consider the probable consequences of the ingestion of that drug by that offender and whether the offender foresaw those consequences. See also the discussion by the Court of Appeal about reckless intoxication in *R v Hay* [2007] VSCA 147 at [33] and about self-induced intoxication in *R v Sebalj* [2006] VSCA 106 at [14].

In *DPP v PS* [2023] VSC 85 the accused – who had stabbed his wife and younger daughter to death while in a drug induced psychosis – pleaded guilty to 2 counts of murder. In the course of sentencing him to a TES IMP27y/19y, at [56]-[75] Hollingworth J discussed and elaborated on the ratio in *DPP v Arvanitidis*:

[56] “There is no dispute that you committed these terrible acts because you were in a drug-induced psychosis, after using ice. The expert evidence is that your actions were driven by underlying psychotic beliefs, which would have impaired your judgment to make reasonable decisions, and your understanding of the wrongfulness of your actions. Had your state of mind been caused by an organic or underlying psychiatric illness, rather than by drugs, a defence of mental impairment would have been open to you.

[57] That offending occurred whilst the offender was in a drug-induced psychosis may have an aggravating or mitigating effect on the offender’s sentence, depending on the particular circumstances of the case.

[58] If the offender knows that using the particular drug causes a propensity to violence, that can be an aggravating factor. The prosecution does not suggest that your drug use is an aggravating feature in this case.

[59] However, your counsel argued that the fact that this offending occurred whilst you were in a drug-induced psychosis should have a mitigatory effect.

[60] Ordinarily, an offender’s moral culpability is not reduced by reason of the fact that they committed the offence while under the influence of a drug-induced psychosis. The origin of that principle is that where a condition is self-induced, it is not regarded as mitigatory, as the offender is morally responsible for the condition they suffer at the time of the offending.

[61] In some circumstances, the offender’s drug-induced psychosis can attract the principles in *R v Verdins, Buckley & Vo* [2007] VSCA 102. However, that will not be the case if the offender had foreknowledge of the probable consequences to their mental health of voluntary drug use.

[62] In the case of *DPP v Arvanitidis* [2008] VSCA 189, the Court of Appeal said at [34] that in order to lose the benefit of *Verdins*, it was not necessary that the offender have foreknowledge that the psychotic symptoms would cause him to behave in the precise manner in which he offended, or make him generally dangerous and violent. If the offender was aware that, by taking the drug, his judgment would be so affected that he would behave irrationally, or that it would affect his ability to exercise control, his self-induced mental state would not constitute a mitigating circumstance. The court also noted that it is for the offender to establish, on the balance of probabilities, that he did not know that the drug would have such effects.

[63] In the *Arvanitidis* case, the offender did not know that ice would cause him to become dangerously psychotic and violent. However, his foreknowledge of the potential for ice to cause him to experience paranoia, persecutory delusions and other forms of disorganised thought, were sufficient to exclude the *Verdins* principles.

[64] I accept your counsel’s submission that some other cases seem to have adopted a more flexible approach than *Arvanitidis*. For example, in the cases of *Alexander v R* [2021] VSCA 217 at [43] and *R v Martin* [2007] VSCA 291 at [21], the Court of Appeal said that the critical factor in determining how to treat a druginduced psychosis for sentencing purposes is the degree of foreknowledge on the part of the offender. That is to say, it is not an all-or-nothing exercise.

[65] However, the facts of those two cases are not analogous to yours. In *Alexander*, there was no evidence that the offender had ever experienced psychotic symptoms before, notwithstanding a lengthy history of substance abuse; the offender’s moral culpability was therefore reduced slightly. In *Martin*, the offenders’ moral culpability was increased, not decreased, because he had foreknowledge that consuming drugs caused him to become dangerously psychotic.

[66] The Court of Appeal decision in *Marks v DPP (Cth)* [2019] VSCA 253 is a better illustration of the more flexible approach. In that case, at the time of offending, the offender was in the early stages of recovery from one of a number of earlier psychotic episodes, which would have made him particularly sensitive to the psychosis-inducing effect of ice. Although the offender had experienced paranoid delusions, and been hospitalised for drug-induced psychoses, on several previous occasions, the expert evidence was that he would not have known or anticipated the likely degree of the consequences of taking ice on this particular occasion. The court held that the offender’s moral culpability should be reduced to some extent.

[67] It is therefore necessary for me to have regard to your drug use and mental health history, to consider what foreknowledge you had.

[68] You started using ice in 2019. There is some suggestion that you may have started using it as a way to deal with stress. It seems that you used it fairly regularly from then until this offending.

[69] You first displayed psychotic symptoms caused by ice use around April 2021, some nine months before this offending. At the time, you thought you were in some sort of danger and should kill yourself. As a result of your increasingly paranoid and erratic behaviour, you were taken into custody under the *Mental Health Act 2014*, and admitted to hospital for assessment. You were detained in hospital for about one week. You were diagnosed with a drug-induced psychosis.

[70] Although you exhibited paranoia and anxiety whilst in the 2021 drug-induced psychosis, there is no evidence that you harboured thoughts of harming anybody other than yourself, or behaved violently towards anyone.

[71] You started using ice again only a few months after that first psychotic episode.

[72] In the weeks leading up to this offending, you had been experiencing persecutory delusions, perceptual disturbances and disorganised behaviour. But you had not been violent towards anyone. On the day of the offending, your wife was still telling people that you had never been violent to them, and believed you would never harm them.

[73] Even though they were told about the drug-induced paranoia and delusions that you were experiencing, the police and paramedics who visited your home earlier on the day of this offending did not assess you as presenting a risk to anyone.

[74] You told police in your record of interview that you had not slept for a couple of days before the offending because of your ice use; you said that had happened on two previous occasions. You also admitted that, when that happened, it made you feel paranoid and experience hallucinations.

[75] I am satisfied that you had no foreknowledge that you had any propensity for violence when drug-affected. I am satisfied that you had some foreknowledge, from your experience the previous year, that taking ice could make you feel paranoid and experience hallucinations. But, as in the *Marks* case, there is no evidence that you would have known or anticipated the likely degree of the consequences of taking ice on this particular occasion. In the circumstances, your moral culpability should be reduced slightly.”

In *DPP v Smeaton* [2007] VSCA 256 Nettle JA, with whom Dodds-Streeton JA & Maxwell P agreed, held at [14] that in this case the respondent’s drug-taking was an aggravating factor:

“It may be that the respondent was affected by Xanax tablets at the time of the offence, and it may be perhaps that he would not have behaved as he did if he had not taken the tablets. But that is not a mitigating circumstance in this case. Despite all the deficits by which he is afflicted, the respondent knew from previous experience that he would be prone to anger and aggression if he put himself under the influence of drugs, and yet he took the tablets. If anything, therefore, in the circumstances of this case, the respondent's consumption of the drug was an aggravating factor {*R v Coleman* (1990) 47 A Crim R 306, 327; *R v Walker* (Unreported, VSCA 31 May 1996 - Hayne JA with whom Southwell AJA agreed); *R v Groome* [1999] 2 VR 159, 164 [23]-[24] per Batt JA with whom Tadgell and Buchanan JJA agreed; *R v Hay* [2007] VSCA 147 at [53] per Maxwell P} and, more importantly, it emphasises the need for community protection.”

At [24]-[26] Maxwell P was particularly critical of the characterization by counsel for the respondent of his client as belonging to “the world of small-time drug addicts”:

“At the end of his submission, [counsel] made a contention to this effect: ‘The niceties of human behaviour need to be qualified or moderated by reference to the realities of the world of small-time drug addicts.’ [Counsel] had earlier, as I understood him, abandoned a submission that a mitigating aspect of this vicious assault was to be found in what he described as the manipulative, mutually destructive drug relationship between the perpetrator and the victim. But the later submission seemed to be an argument of the same kind, that what goes on in what [counsel] describes as ‘the world of small-time drug addicts’ is somehow qualitatively different, such that what he calls ‘the niceties of human behaviour’ are not to be regarded as the governing considerations when a court considers the gravity of the conduct when sentencing for it.

I regard that submission as wholly untenable. It seems to me that the phrase ‘the niceties of human behaviour’ is an altogether inappropriate description of the core issue in this case, which is the right of each person to be free of physical violence of any kind. That is not a matter of niceties. That is a matter of human rights. Every person, however troubled or afflicted, is entitled equally to the enjoyment of that human right. It seems to me fundamental to the rule of law that that universality be asserted and maintained.

Of course, the particular circumstances of an offender must be borne in mind…But the suggestion that this is somehow less serious, or is to be denounced less strongly, because it occurred in ‘the world of small time drug addicts’ is, in my opinion, a suggestion to be repudiated.”

In *R v Broad; R v Freeman* [2013] VSC 454 King J said at [57]-[59]:

“The behaviour demonstrated by you both in your intentional causing of serious injury to Mr Van Der Hoek was despicable, inhuman, degrading and sadistic. How you could both descend to such low levels of humanity and decency is only explicable by your consumption of the drug ice. It is truly a scourge on our society…

It is the recent experience of this court that methylamphetamine or ‘ice’ has played, and is playing, an increasingly significant role in the commission of offences of this nature, involving the use of gratuitous violence, in which it appears the perpetrators have been robbed of their ordinary humanity, decency and moral compass. The offences of homicide and infliction of serious injuries now often involve frenzied attacks of 30 to 40 stab wounds or multiple punches and countless kicks to vulnerable parts of people's bodies over prolonged periods of time, most of these usually occurring as a result of explosive rage and often after the consumption of ice together with other substances and usually without any provocation, real or imagined, and unbelievably, not even a clear memory or any memory the next day of what the person has done.

Our community needs to be very concerned about the ease of manufacture of this drug, which results in the relatively easy availability of it within the community. The prevalence of its use and the horrific consequences that sometimes flow from its consumption is something that needs to be addressed by our community in an holistic approach, to deal with it as the significant problem that it has become, rather than just leaving the courts to deal with the end consequences of its use.”

See also *R v Morrison* [2012] VSCA 222 at [15]-[21] & [24]-[25]; *R v Grant* [2013] VSC 53 at [32]-[41]; *R v Duca* [2019] VSC 371 at [45]-[54]; *Alexander v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 140 at [34]; *Hope v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 177 at [36] & [55].

### **11.2.18 Relevance of hardship on offender's family**

In *R v Michael Close* [2004] VSCA 188 at [18] Charles JA, with whom Winneke P substantially agreed, said:

"It is well-established…that the circumstances must be clearly exceptional [*Carmody* (1998) 100 A Crim R 41 at 46] before the impact on an offender's family will lead to the imposition of a lesser sentence. But this is not an absolute rule. Exceptional circumstances have been found to exist where, for example, imprisonment will result in children being left to fend for themselves as best they can without parental supervision or support [*Boyle* (1987) 34 A Crim R 202 at 205 applied in the Court of Appeal in *Yates* (1998) 99 A Crim R 483 at 486]."

In *R v Roberta Williams* [2004] VSC 429 Kellam J, in rejecting a submission that a wholly suspended sentence be imposed on a mother of 4 children who had pleaded guilty to trafficking in a commercial quantity of ecstasy, said:

"[16] I accept that in all the circumstances before me, the fact that your children will be deprived of their mother is a matter that affects you and causes you concern and hardship. That is a matter which should be taken into account in mitigation of sentence. I accept that by reason of your conduct and that of your husband, your children will suffer hardship and that in particular any term of incarceration to be served by you will cause them considerable disruption. However, I do not conclude that the circumstances of that hardship suffered by your children are so exceptional as to justify a wholly suspended sentence as submitted is appropriate by your counsel. As the Queensland Court of Criminal Appeal observed in *R v Tilley* (1991) 53 ACR 1 at 3-4:

'It is common that hardship or stress is shared by the family of an offender but that may be an inevitable consequence if the offender is to be adequately punished. An offender cannot shield himself under the hardship he or she creates for others, and courts must not shirk their duty by giving undue weight to personal or sentimental factors. The public, which includes many people who struggle to bring up their children with moral standards, would be poorly served if the courts gave in to this temptation.'

[17] In my view, and in all the circumstances of this case, cogent and exact evidence of hardship which goes well beyond the situation of other families where a parent or parents have been imprisoned, would need to be produced before I could set aside other relevant principles of sentencing and fully suspend a sentence of imprisonment on that basis alone. The evidence before me is that your youngest daughter will be cared for by a loving grandparent. Your other three children will be cared for by their father, with whom they have a ‘positive relationship' on the material before me.

[18] As Winneke P said in *Panuccio* [unreported, Court of Appeal Vic, 04/05/1998]:

'Although the court is not, both as a matter of compassion and commonsense, impervious to the consequences of a sentence upon other members of the family of a person in prison, such factors will need to be ‘exceptional’ or ‘extreme’ before the court will tailor its sentence in order to relieve the plight of those other family members. Such a principle is clearly an obvious one, because the court’s primary function is to impose a sentence which meets the gravity of the crime committed by the person who is being sentenced. There will rarely be a case where a sentence of imprisonment imposed does not have consequential effects upon the spouse, children or other close family members who are dependent in one form or another upon the person imprisoned.

Thus it has been often stated that it is a general principle of sentencing that the court should usually disregard the impact which the sentence will have upon the members of a prisoner’s family unless exceptional circumstances have been demonstrated. The principle has been so often stated that it does not need repeating …. It goes without saying I think, that the graver the crime for which the prisoner is being sentenced the more difficult it will be to find exceptional circumstances, because the relief usually sought and generally necessary to alleviate the plight of the relevant family members affected will require absolution from incarceration.'”

But in *R v Thao Thi Tran* [2005] VSC 220 Kaye J imposed a sentence of 3 years’ imprisonment, wholly suspended for 3 years, on a mother of 3 children aged 9, 7 & 6 who was found guilty of manslaughter of the children’s father whom she had stabbed 5 times. At [21] & [22] his Honour was satisfied that the defendant had acted out of a loss of self-control caused by the grave provocation to which she had been subjected and had been in fear of her own safety. At [42] his Honour said:

“Ordinarily, potential hardship to third parties as a result of a sentence is irrelevant to the question of what sentence is to be imposed on a person convicted of a crime. However, hardship to third parties, such as young children, may be taken into account as a mitigating circumstance where the hardship is ‘truly exceptional’, so that it would be an affront to common sense and human decency if the sentencing judge were to ignore it. In the present case, I consider that the plight of your three young children, and most particularly the precarious condition of your eldest son, is of such a truly exceptional character. It would be an affront to common sense and human decency for a sentencing judge to ignore such a factor. This is particularly so because, as a result of your crime, your children have been already deprived of their father.”

In *R v Thi Loang Thai* [2005] VSCA 283 the appellant had been found guilty of one count of attempting to import into Australia a traffickable quantity of heroin, a package containing 316.7g of heroin of approximately 70% purity having been posted to her from Cambodia by her husband. On appeal the sentence of 3 years and 1 day imprisonment with a non-parole period of 1 year was reduced to 2½ years imprisonment with release on recognizance after 271 days. After the accused and her husband were imprisoned, their two very young children were cared for by the accused’s sister. A clinical psychologist gave evidence that both children were showing signs of significant anxiety and distress and that from their long-term psychological point of view theie well-being would be compromised by the separation. At [35] Eames JA - with whom Charles & Buchanan JJA agreed – said:

“At common law the impact of the sentence upon family members, in particular children, could be regarded as a mitigating factor only in exceptional circumstances [see *R v Pearce*, unreported, Court of Appeal-Callaway JA, Southwell & Coldrey AJJA, 19/09/1996 and although s.16A(2)(p) of the *Crimes Act 1914* (Cth) requires the court in sentencing to take into account the probable effect that a sentence would have on the family or dependants of the offender, that provision has been held, nonetheless, to also require that exceptional circumstances be shown. See *R. v. Carmody* (1998) 100 A Crim R. 41 at 45 per Tadgell JA.”

At [41] Eames JA held that the circumstances were not exceptional but acknowledged the overriding right of the Court to exercise mercy towards innocent children:

“In my opinion, as significant as they are, these circumstances are not so out of the ordinary as to amount to exceptional circumstances. I acknowledge, however, that the Court nonetheless has an overriding right, by way of the exercise of mercy towards innocent children, to take account of such matters in appropriate cases. See *Carmody* at 45 per Tadgell JA, per Callaway JA at 47.”

In *DPP (Cth) v Gaw* [2006] VSCA 51 the Court of Appeal referred with approval to *R v Sinclair* (1990) 51 A Crim R 418; *R v Matthews* [unreported, Court of Appeal, 20/03/1996]; *R v Togias* (2001) 127 A Crim R 23; *R v Holland* (2002) 134 A Crim R 451 & *R v Mangione* [2006] VSCA 34 and said at [19] & [21]:

“Hardship to an offender’s family or dependants must be truly exceptional…Hardship, even exceptional hardship, to children or other dependants is not a passport to freedom. It is simply a factor to be taken into account. In some cases it is entitled to great weight, in others [e.g. murder and serious cases of armed robbery] to hardly any weight at all.”

In *R v Nagul* [2007] VSCA 8 at [44] the Court of Appeal held that even if hardship to the offender’s family could not be taken into account for sentencing purposes because of absence of exceptional circumstances, it may be taken into consideration in determining whether mercy should be extended to the offender (as was the case in *R v Carmody* (1998) 100 A Crim R 41.& *R v Thai* [2005] VSCA 283), the exercise of mercy being part of the exercise of the sentencing discretion (*R v. Miceli* [1998] 4 VR 588 at 592 per Tadgell JA and at 594 per Charles JA.; *DPP v. Carter* [1998] 1 VR 601). Chernov JA, with whom Maxwell P & Habersberger AJA agreed, referred with approval at [44] to dicta of King CJ in *R v Osenkowski* (1982) 30 SASR 212 at 212-213:

“There must always be a place for the exercise of mercy where a judge’s sympathies are reasonably excited by the circumstances of the case.”

Referring to *R v Nguyen* [2006] VSCA 184 and *R v Dooley* [2006] VSCA 269, the Court of Appeal noted that in an appropriate case mercy may be extended effectively to the family member who suffers significant hardship because of the offender’s incarceration or to both the family member and the offender. The Court also said at [45] that considerations of mercy may operate both at the level of fixing of the head sentence or of the non-parole period or both.

However, in *R v Markovic & Pantelic* (2010) 30 VR 589; [2010] VSCA 105 a bench of five judges of the Court of Appeal affirmed the common law position that there can be no residual discretion to exercise mercy on grounds of family hardship where the relevant circumstances are not shown to be exceptional. At [1]-[3] & [5] Maxwell P, Nettle, Neave, Redlich & Weinberg JJA said:

[1] “There must always be a place in sentencing for the exercise of mercy ‘where a judge’s sympathies are reasonably excited by the circumstances of the case’: *R v Osenkowski* (1982) 30 SASR 212, 212–3 (King CJ). This is a proposition of long standing and high authority, repeatedly affirmed in this Court: *Cobiac v Liddy* (1969) 119 CLR 257, 269; *R v Kane* [1974] VR 759, 766; *R v Clarke* [1996] 2 VR 520, 523 (Charles JA, with whom Winneke P and Hayne JA agreed); *Director of Public Prosecutions (Cth)* *v Carter* [1998] 1 VR 601, 607 (Winneke P); *R v Miceli* [1998] 4 VR 588, 592 (Tadgell JA), 594 (Charles JA). For a recent example, see *DPP v Najjar* [2009] VSCA 246, [11].

[2] The issue raised by these applications concerns the circumstances in which an offender can legitimately seek an exercise of mercy on the ground that his/her imprisonment is likely to cause hardship to members of his/her immediate family or other dependants.

[3] It has long been the position at common law that, unless the circumstances are shown to be exceptional, family hardship is to be disregarded as a sentencing consideration. The contention advanced by each of the present applicants, however, was that even if the circumstances of family hardship were not adjudged exceptional, a sentencing court could nevertheless be called on to exercise – on that ground – what is sought to be characterised as a ‘residual discretion of mercy’. Indeed, Mr Markovic argued that failure to extend sufficient ‘residual’ mercy on the ground of family hardship was an appealable error…

[5] We have concluded that the established common law position should be reaffirmed. Our reasons may be summarized as follows:

1. Reliance on family hardship – that is, hardship which imprisonment creates for persons other than the offender – is itself an appeal for mercy.

2. Properly understood, therefore, the purpose and effect of the ‘exceptional circumstances’ test is to limit the availability of the court’s discretion to exercise mercy on that ground.

3. Accordingly, there can be no ‘residual discretion’ to exercise mercy on grounds of family hardship where the relevant circumstances are not shown to be exceptional.

4. The effect *on the offender* of hardship caused to family members by his/her imprisonment raises different considerations, to which the ‘exceptional circumstances’ test has no application.”

At [20] Maxwell P, Nettle, Neave, Redlich & Weinberg JJA elaborated on point 4 in paragraph 5, distinguishing the hardship which imprisonment places upon the offender’s family from the effect on the offender of hardship caused to family members by imprisonment. The Court said:

“The effect *on the offender* of hardship caused to family members by his/her imprisonment is a quite separate matter. An offender’s anguish at being unable to care for a family member can properly be taken into account as a mitigating factor — for example, if the court is satisfied that this will make the experience of imprisonment more burdensome or that it materially affects the assessment of the need for specific deterrence or of the offender’s prospects of rehabilitation. These are conventional issues of mitigation, and they are not subject to the ‘exceptional circumstances’ limitation.”

In *Johnson v The Queen* [2014] VSCA 283 at [31]-[46] the Court of Appeal (Santamaria JA with whom Weinberg JA agreed), although referring to and approving the above dicta in *Markovic’s Case*, refused to grant the applicant leave on this ground since the psychological evidence did not provide support for the contention that the applicant’s “anguish at being unable to care for a family member...will make the experience of imprisonment more burdensome or that it materially affects the assessment of the need for specific deterremce or of the offender’s prospects of rehabilitation”.

In *R v El-Hage* [2012] VSCA 309 the Court of Appeal noted that the stringency of the test in *Markovic v The Queen* (2010) 30 VR 589 reflects not only the inevitability of adverse impact on family but also the fact that any discounting of sentence on the grounds of third party hardship creates difficulties of unequal treatment of offenders. However, the Court found that *El-Hage’s Case* was “one of those rare cases where the high hurdle of ‘exceptional circumstances’ was surmounted:

“Not only did Mrs El-Hage’s severe mental illness mean that the two boys were effectively without any parental care, but she herself had become suicidal and the younger boy had actually attempted suicide. On the uncontested expert evidence, these extremely grave consequences were the direct result of the applicant’s imprisonment.”

In *Sara Borg v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 191 the Court of Appeal (Priest, Beach & Niall JJA) allowed an appeal by a former Court registrar against a sentence of IMP2y1m/13m imposed on charges including misconduct in public office and making & using a false document and substituted a 2y CCO. The Court held at [52] that the original sentence was manifestly excessive. Further, at [48]-[50], citing dicta of Priest and Weinberg JJA from *Cross v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 310 at [50]–[52] and *R v Markovic & Pantelic* (2010) 30 VR 589; [2010] VSCA 105, the Court said:

“In our view, the fact that the appellant currently is breast-feeding her baby (albeit that her baby is now in prison with her), and the fact that her other child will be exposed to the influence of her abusive husband (albeit that there is no evidence that to this point he has harmed the children), together are sufficient to establish exceptional circumstances. The sentencing judge should have so found…

Once the existence of some relevantly significant risk was established (the existence, but not the extent, of that risk having to be established on the balance of probabilities) that risk, even if it was less than 50 per cent, had to be considered.”

In *DPP (Cth) v Kannan & Anor* [2021] VSC 439 a husband and wife were found guilty after a 49 day trial of 2 slavery offences – involving slavery by domestic servitude – laid under laid under s.270.3(1) of the *Commonwealth Criminal Code* and were sentenced to IMP6y/3y (husband) and IMP8y/4y (wife). The couple had 3 children with special needs. In relation to a submission of exceptional hardship in relation to the children, after referring to *Markovic* *v The Queen* [2010] VSCA 105 at [5], [7] & [20]*; The Queen v Esposito* [2009] VSCA 277 and *DPP (Cth) v Gaw* [2006] VSCA 51 at [21], Champion J said at [216]:

“In the circumstances of your cases, I am satisfied that exceptional circumstances have been made out, as conceded by the prosecution, and that your children will suffer particular hardship should you both be imprisoned. Further, I am also satisfied that, in each of your circumstances, you would find imprisonment more burdensome as a result of your anxiety and emotional hardship associated to the hardship occasioned to your children. I have taken these matters into account in assessing the appropriate sentences to be served and will exercise a degree of mercy and separate mitigation to each of you on the penalties to be imposed.”

In *Curtis v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 5 the appellant was the mother of two young children who were aged 8 and 6 at the time of the offending. She had pleaded guilty to (1) aggravated burglary on which she was sentenced to IMP9m and (2) intentionally causing injury and (3) possessing 20g cannabis on which she was placed on an 18m CCO. The offending occurred after the appellant’s 8 year old daughter had told the appellant that the victim had sexually interfered with her. A letter from DFFH made it plain that their mother’s imprisonment had led to the children being separated from each other and has had a “markedly deleterious influence” on the younger child’s behavior, he having to be placed in 4 different foster placements. In allowing the appeal and ordering the appellant’s immediate release on a combination sentence of IMP111 days (‘time served’) and an 18m CCO on charges (1) & (2) and convicted and discharged on charge (3), Priest & Niall JJA said at [21]:

“In our opinion, the hardship which the applicant’s imprisonment created for her children is exceptional. As her counsel submitted in this Court, she had reordered her life, and had worked extremely hard with Child Protection to ensure the safety of her children and to promote their welfare by having them returned to her full-time care. Indeed, the evidence demonstrated that she was uniquely placed to manage her son’s needs. Unhappily, however, the ‘achievement’ marked by the reunification of the applicant’s children into her care was largely undone by her incarceration so soon after that reunification had taken place. Undoubtedly the applicant’s imprisonment had a very significant detrimental impact upon her children, particularly [her son, now aged 8]. Unquestionably, the hardship flowing to the applicant’s family as a result of the judge returning her to prison was, as we have said, exceptional. In those circumstances, we regarded the plea for mercy in the applicant’s case as being irresistible.”

In *Carabott v The King* [2025] VSCA 118 the applicant had pleaded guilty to 11 drug-related offences and had been sentenced to TES IMP3y6m/1y9m. The applicant’s 4-year old son was suffering from non-verbal autism. His wife was suffering from mental and physical health conditions following the birth of their son, a letter setting out her difficulties being quoted in part at paragraph [51(b)]. On appeal the prosecutor did not dispute the judge’s finding of exceptional family hardship but submitted that the son’s difficulties were known at the time of the offending and thus the judge would have little regard to the hardship. At [50] the Court of Appeal said:

“This submission is misconceived. Once exceptional hardship to the family has been established, the sentencing benefit is to alleviate the family’s hardship, not the offender’s hardship.”

Holding that the individual sentences and TES had failed to give proper consideration to the family hardship and were therefore beyond the range of sentences reasonably open to the sentencing judge, the Court of Appeal granted leave to appeal, allowed the appeal and re-sentenced the applicant to IMP16m/8m. This included a reduction in the sentence for a ‘rolled-up’ charge 2 (possession of substances, materials, documents and equipment for trafficking in a drug of dependence) from IMP2y4m to IMP9m. At [37] & [54] Niall CJ & T Forrest JA said:

[37] “It is uncontroversial that family hardship to an offender’s family members may be taken into account in two ways:

1. only in an exceptional case, where the plea for mercy is seen as irresistible can family hardship be taken into account. The focus of the enquiry is on the impact the sentence will have *on the offender’s family members*, and the court may tailor its sentence to relieve the plight of those family members [*Markovic* (2010) 30 VR 589, 592-3; [2010] VSCA 105, citing *R v Panuccio* (Court of Appeal of the Supreme Court of Victoria, 4 May 1998)]; and/or
2. a sentencing court may take into account, as a separate sentencing consideration, the effect on the offender of hardship caused to family members by his or her absence if imprisoned.”

[54] “The focus of the exceptional family hardship ‘*Markovic*’ consideration is to alleviate that hardship to the family, and in the rare case where the hardship circumstances are truly exceptional, the court ought to tailor its sentence to achieve this end. It may result in a sentence that on first blush may appear striking, but that is how the exceptional hardship doctrine can sometimes work. If, having found exceptional hardship circumstances, the sentence is moderated insufficiently to alleviate the family hardship in a practical sense, then the inquiry into family hardship and the finding that it is exceptional, is futile.”

At [52] their Honours also highlighted the nexus between the considerations of family hardship and the exercise of mercy, the latter discussed more fully in **section 11.3.5**:

[52] “The proposition that ‘there must always be a place in sentencing for the exercise of mercy is of longstanding and high authority and has been repeatedly affirmed by this Court’: *DPP v Snow (a pseudonym)* [2020] VSCA 67, [53], [80], citing *R v Kane* (1974) VR 759, 766; *DPP v Miceli* (1997) 94 A Crim R 327, 332; *DPP v Milson* [2019] VSCA 55, [51]. In *DPP v Milson* at [51] the Court said:

Mercy may justify the imposition of a sentence which may bear less heavily upon an offender than if he or she were to receive his or her just deserts [sic]. Mercy thus permits considerations such as extreme disadvantage and hardship to be recognised as a factor mitigating sentence. Mercy may also come into play where a judge forms the view that leniency at that particular stage of the offender’s life might lead to reform. Mercy must, however, be exercised ‘upon considerations which are supported by the evidence and which make an appeal not only to sympathy but also to well-balanced judgment’.

See also *R v Stanisavljevic* [2004] VSCA 144 at [28]-[31]; *R v Mitchell* [2005] VSC 219 at [26]; *R v Airey* [2006] VSCA 31 at [14]-[16]; *R v Ienco* [2008] VSCA 17 at [21]-[28]; *R v NAD* [2008] VSCA 192 at [5]-[9] & [51]-[52]; *R v Vipulkumar Gajjar* [2008] VSCA 268 at [18]-[19] & [35]-[39]; *DPP v Bourozikas* [2009] VSCA 29 at [32] and the cases cited in footnote 13; *R v Gerrard* [2011] VSCA 200 at [46], [57] & [59]-[61]; *R v El-Hage (Sentence)* [2011] VSC 452 at [47]-[49]; *DPP v MGP* [2011] VSCA 321 at [7]-[10] & [15]; *R v HAT & Ors* [2011] VSCA 427 at [68]-[71]; *Ramezanian v The Queen* [2013] VSCA 71 at [23]-[32]; *R v Johnson* [2014] VSC 175 at [121]-[125]; *Cross v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 310 at [49]-[54]; *Haberman v DPP* [2020] VSCA 286 at [48]; *Lam v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 241 at [25]-[39]; *Josie Gonzalez v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 110 at [62], [65] & [70]; *DPP v Hill (a pseudonym)* [2023] VSCA 56 at [20]-[23].

*Markovic* and the other cases referred to above involved sentencing for state offences. However, the impact which an offender’s incarceration for a Commonwealth offence is likely to have on an offender’s family and dependants is now not subject to the ‘exceptional circumstances’ qualification as the Court of Appeal (Maxwell P, Emerton & Sifris JJA) noted in *Ahmed Mohamed v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 136 at [82]-[84] & [91]-[93]:

[82] “In *Markovic v The Queen* (2010) 30 VR 589; [2010] VSCA 105, a five member bench of this Court reviewed the position at common law with respect to family hardship as a sentencing consideration. The Court reaffirmed the established position at common law, that family hardship could only be regarded as a mitigating factor in exceptional circumstances.

[83] When a person is being sentenced for a Commonwealth offence, the relevant provision is s 16A(2)(p) of the *Crimes Act*, which requires the sentencing court to consider ‘the probable effect of any sentence on the offender’s family or dependants’. Until the recent decision in *Totaan* [2022] NSWCCA 75, courts in all Australian jurisdictions had treated s 16A(2)(p) as subject to the same qualification as applies at common law, namely, that family hardship was only relevant if the circumstances were exceptional.

[84] In *Totaan*, the New South Wales Court of Criminal Appeal held that this approach was plainly wrong and should not be followed. Bell CJ (with whom the other members of the Court agreed) pointed out that there was ‘simply no textual support’ in s 16A(2)(p) for the ‘exceptional circumstances’ qualification.

…

[91] Significantly, the Commonwealth Director accepts that this Court should follow *Totaan*. Her submission is that:

‘[T]here is nothing in the interpretation of s 16A(2)(p) by the court in *Totaan* that would convince the Victorian Court of Appeal that the decision is ‘plainly wrong’. There is nothing in the text of s 16A(2)(p) that requires family hardship to be exceptional before being taken into account. As held in Totaan, s 16A(2)(p) should be applied according to its terms.’

[92] It follows, the Director concedes, that the sentencing judge was (unwittingly) in error in that he failed to take into account a relevant consideration, namely, the ‘hardship that the Applicant’s family would experience following [his] imprisonment’. The Director further accepts that, in resentencing, ‘some, albeit minimal weight’ should be given to the probable hardship his family will experience.

[93] We are content to act on those concessions. As already indicated, we had separately concluded — for reasons of totality — that this appeal must succeed and that the applicant must be resentenced. Since on a resentencing the Court must take into account up to date information about the offender, we had invited the applicant to file such additional material as he wished to rely on, bearing on the question of family hardship.”

In *Hooimeyer v The King* [2025] VSCA 37 the 23 year old applicant had pleaded guilty to charges of obtaining a financial advantage of $160,102 from a Commonwealth entity by lodging business activity statements containing false information. She had been sentenced to TES IMP18m with a $500 2y RRO after serving IMP8m. The applicant – who had a history of depression and social anxiety – was the primary carer of a 15-month old child and was pregnant at the time of sentencing. The applicant’s relationship with the child’s father had ended in the context of his ‘excessive alcohol use and verbally abusive behaviour’ and the applicant and her child were living with the applicant’s parents. Granting leave to appeal and allowing the appeal, the Court of Appeal held that the sentencing judge had erred by reducing the mitigatory weight to be given to hardship flowing from the applicant’s separation from her 15-month old child because she had not applied to have the child with her in custody. Orr & T Forrest JJA held at [14]-[15] & [22]:

[14] “Section 16A(2)(m) of the *Crimes Act 1914* (Cth) provides that a sentencing court must take into account ‘the character, antecedents, age, means and physical or mental condition of the person’ being sentenced. Section 16A(2)(p) requires a court to take into account ‘the probable effect that any sentence or order under consideration would have on any of the person’s family or dependents’. In *Totaan v The Queen* [2022] NSWCCA 75, the New South Wales Court of Criminal Appeal held that s 16A(2)(p) did not require a sentencing court to be satisfied that there were exceptional circumstances before taking probable hardship into account...

[15] *Totaan* has been followed in Victoria since 5 August 2022: *Rodgerson v R (No 2)* [2022] VSCA 154, [73].”

[22] “There is no statutory mandate nor sentencing principle to support the proposition that the probable effect of hardship on an offender, or a dependant, should be reduced or moderated based on what actions he or she has taken in an attempt to mitigate that hardship. Section 16A(2)(p) is a straightforward section that should be applied according to its terms. So should s 16A(2)(m).”

The applicant was re-sentenced to TES IMP12m with a $500 18m RRO after serving IMP4m.

See also *Rodgerson v The Queen [No 2]* [2022] VSCA 154 at [64]-[80], [84]-[85] & [91]; *El Masri v The King* [2023] VSCA 93 at [44]-[60]; *Ahmed Mohamed v The King [No 2]* [2022] VSCA 177 at [15]-[30]; *Chaarani v The King* [2023] VSCA 275 at [17]-[23]; *Farshchi v The King* [2024] VSCA 235 at [67]-[73].

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### **11.2.19 Relevance of Aboriginality**

In *Bugmy v The Queen* [2013] HCA 37; (2013) 249 CLR 571 at [37]-[39], French CJ, Hayne, Crennan, Kiefel, Bell & Keane JJ said:

[37] “An Aboriginal offender's deprived background may mitigate the sentence that would otherwise be appropriate for the offence in the same way that the deprived background of a non-Aboriginal offender may mitigate that offender's sentence. In this respect in *Kennedy v The Queen* [2010] NSWCCA 260 at [53], Simpson J has correctly explained the significance of the statements in *Fernando*:

‘Properly understood, *Fernando* is a decision, not about sentencing Aboriginals, but about the recognition, in sentencing decisions, of social disadvantage that frequently (no matter what the ethnicity of the offender) precedes the commission of crime.’

[38] The propositions stated in *Fernando* are largely directed to the significance of the circumstance that the offender was intoxicated at the time of the offence. As Wood J explained, drunkenness does not usually operate by way of excuse or to mitigate an offender's conduct: *Fernando* (1992) 76 A Crim R 58 at 62 (E).. However, his Honour recognised that there are Aboriginal communities in which alcohol abuse and alcohol-related violence go hand in hand [at 62 (C)]. His Honour considered that where an offender's abuse of alcohol is a reflection of the environment in which he or she was raised it should be taken into account as a mitigating factor [at 62 (E)]. To do so, he said, is to acknowledge the endemic presence of alcohol in Aboriginal communities and:

‘the grave social difficulties faced by those communities where poor self-image, absence of education and work opportunity and other demoralising factors have placed heavy stresses on them, reinforcing their resort to alcohol and compounding its worst effects.’ [at 62-63 (E)]

[39] The other respect in which Wood J proposed that an offender's Aboriginality may be relevant to the sentencing determination is in a case in which because of the offender's background or lack of experience of European ways a lengthy term of imprisonment might be particularly burdensome [at 63 (G)]. In each of these respects, the propositions enunciated in *Fernando* conform with the statement of sentencing principle by Brennan J in *Neal* (1982) 149 CLR 305 at 326:

‘The same sentencing principles are to be applied, of course, in every case, irrespective of the identity of a particular offender or his membership of an ethnic or other group. But in imposing sentences courts are bound to take into account, in accordance with those principles, all material facts including those facts which exist only by reason of the offender's membership of an ethnic or other group. So much is essential to the even administration of criminal justice. That done, however, the weight to be attributed to the factors material in a particular case, whether of aggravation or mitigation, is ordinarily a matter for the court exercising the sentencing discretion of first instance or for the Court of Criminal Appeal.’”

In *DPP v Taylor* [2005] VSCA 222 at Nettle JA, with whom Eames JA & Hollingworth AJA agreed, approved the relevance which the trial judge had placed on the respondent’s Aboriginality. At [14] His Honour said:

“As Eames JA put it in *R v Fuller-Cust* (2002) 6 VR 496 at 520:

79. To ignore factors personal to the applicant , and his history, in which his Aboriginality was a factor, and to ignore his perception of the impact on his life of his Aboriginality, would be to sentence him as someone other than himself. Not only would that offend principles of individual sentencing which apply to all offenders but in this case it would fail to identify the reasons for his offending and, in turn, the issues which have to be addressed if rehabilitation efforts are to successfully be adopted so as to ensure that he does not re-offend and, in turn, to ensure the long-term safety of the public.

80. To have regard to the fact of the applicant’s Aboriginality would not mean that any factor would necessarily emerge by virtue of his race which was relevant to sentencing, but it would mean that a proper concentration would be given to his antecedents which would render it more likely that any relevant factor for sentencing which did arise from his Aboriginality would be identified, and not be overlooked. Exactly the same approach should be adopted when considering the individual situation of any offender, so that any issue relevant to that offender’s situation which might arise by virtue of the offender’s race or history would not be overlooked by a simplistic assumption that equal treatment of offenders means that differences in their individual circumstances related to their race should be ignored.

81. In *Neal v R* (1982) 149 CLR 305 at 326 Brennan J held:

‘The same sentencing principles are to be applied, of course, in every case, irrespective of the identity of the particular offender or his membership of an ethnic or other group. But in imposing sentences courts are bound to take into account, in accordance with those principles, all material facts including those facts which exist only by reason of the offender’s membership of an ethnic or other group. So much is essential to the administration of justice. That done, however, the weight to be attributed to the factors material in a particular case, whether of aggravation or mitigation, is ordinarily a matter for the court exercising the sentencing discretion of first instance or for the Court of Criminal Appeal.’”

See also *R v Wordie* [2003] VSCA 107 at [31]; *DPP v Rose* [2005] VSCA 275 at [19]; *R v McCartney* [2006] VSCA 35 at [7]-[9]; *R v Clarke* [2006] VSCA 174 at [59]-[60]; *R v Charles* [2007] VSCA 190 at [14]; *R v Morgan* [2007] VSCA 192 at [15]-[16]; *Walker v The Queen; Dargan v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 137 at [41], [57], [69] & [74]; *Haberman v DPP* [2020] VSCA 286 at [71]-[73].

### **11.2.20 Relevance of recall or risk of recall by Parole Board**

In *R v Piacentino – R v* *Ahmad* [2007] VSCA 49 a Court of Appeal constituted by 5 judges held that-

* Where an adult offender falls to be sentenced for offences constituting breach of parole but is to be sentenced at a time when he has not had his parole revoked by the Adult Parole Board, then the sentencing judge may not have regard to the possibility that he might be later called upon by the Parole Board to serve some or all of the balance of his parole sentence {at [71] per Eames JA with whom Buchanan, Vincent, Nettle & Redlich JJA agreed}.
* The contrary decision of the Court of Appeal in *R v Orphanides* (2002) 130 A Crim R 403; [2002] VSCA 86 should no longer be followed {at [71] & [141]}. It follows that an approach to sentencing which has applied since 2002 to the benefit of offenders has been reversed and dicta such as that in *DPP v Reid* [2004] VSCA 105 at [18]; *R v Greenslade* [2004] VSCA 213 at [31] and *R v Airey* [2006] VSCA 31 at [10] is no longer good law.
* However, a sentencing court which takes into account the fact that parole has been revoked is not having regard to any possibility or likelihood that the length of time spent in custody will be affected in the future but rather having regard to a state of affairs then in existence. In those circumstances consideration of the revoked parole period may be relevant to application of the principle of totality. {See the judgments of Buchanan JA at [3], Eames JA at [78]-[88] and Nettle & Redlich JJA at [142], the latter citing *R v ffan* [2006] VSCA 129 at [28]-[29]}.

In *R v Scholes* [2007] VSCA 303 Whelan AJA, with whom Maxwell P & Buchanan JA agreed, referred to *R v Piacentino* [2007] VSCA 49 and said at [44]:

“The sentencing judge was not entitled, in considering totality or on any other ground, to have regard to the possibility that the Adult Parole Board would take action concerning the appellant’s unexpired parole period.”

### **11.2.21 Relevance of likely forfeiture under the Confiscation Act**

In *R v Le; R v Nguyen* [2005] VSCA 284 the Court of Appeal held that the sentencing judge had fallen into error in failing to take into account the fact that the appellant Le would almost certainly lose his house and car – tainted property as a result of being used for the purposes of trafficking – pursuant to the automatic forfeiture provisions of the *Confiscation Act 1997*. At [12] Charles JA – with whom Buchanan & Eames JJA agreed – said:

“The judge had been informed that the Crown had placed a restraining order over Le's house and his car. It was plainly open in these circumstances for his Honour to have regard to the likely forfeiture of Le's interest in his house pursuant to the provisions of the *Confiscation Act:* see *R v Do* [2004] VSCA 203 at [13] per Buchanan JA; *DPP v. Phillips* [2005] VSCA 112 at [7], [10], [13] & [14].. The nature of automatic forfeiture pursuant to this Act is that it will not occur until after conviction, but will occur thereafter as a matter almost of inevitability, provided the preconditions are met. As in *R. v. Do* and *DPP v. Phillips*, the appellant's house had been used for the purpose of trafficking, which tainted the property. It followed that forfeiture would occur unless an exclusion order were made. We were told this morning that an exclusion order had been made in favour of the appellant's wife, that the property itself had a value of approximately $100,000 and a mortgage on it of approximately $20,000. The forfeiture of the appellant's interest will therefore result in a loss to him of the order of $40,000. The appellant is a pensioner with a very limited capacity for work as a result of his injuries. To lose his interest in his house at the age of 64 is inevitably substantial additional punishment.”

In *R v Yacoub* [2006] VSCA 203 a bench of 5 members of the Court of Appeal found that the sentencing judge had erred in failing to take into account the risk of forfeiture of some or all of the appellant’s restrained assets which might well constitute a significant additional penalty. See also *R v Tabone* (2006) 167 A Crim R 18, 22 [12]; [2006] VSCA 238 at [12]; *R v Nguyen, Nguyen & Pham* [2007] VSCA 165; *R v McKittrick* [2008] VSCA 69 at [24]-[34]. However, no error is committed if the information available is insufficient to enable the sentencing judge to make an assessment of the likelihood of forfeiture or of its likely effect: *R v McLeod* [2007] VSCA 183 at [27]. Further, an offender who relies on forfeiture (whether it has occurred or is anticipated) as a mitigating circumstance will ordinarily bear the onus of establishing that it should be so regarded: *R v McLeod* at [29]; *R v Filipovic; R v Gelevski* [2008] VSCA 14 at [81]; *R v HAT & Ors* [2011] VSCA 427 at [55].

### **11.2.22 Sentencing for manslaughter / defensive homicide / attempted murder / murder**

In *DPP v TY (No 3)* [2007] VSC 489 at [66] Bell J summarized the outcomes of a number of cases in which young people have been sentenced for the crimes of manslaughter & murder:

**(1) manslaughter**: *R v KMW and RJB* [2002] VSC 93 (two accused 14YO and 16YO: 3Y good behaviour bond*); R v Woodburn* [2002] VSC 72 (18YO: 3Y youth training centre); *Director of Public Prosecutions v SJK and GAS* [2002] VSCA 131 (two accused 15YO and 16YO: 9Y/6Y); *R v Nguyen* [2003] VSC 62 (17YO: 8Y/5Y); *R v Perera* [2003] VSC 146 (17YO: 5Y/3Y); *R v Maretas* [2003] VSC 159 (18YO: 7Y/5Y); *R v Talj* [2003] VSCA 87 (19YO: 7Y/5Y); *R v PP* (2003) 142 A Crim R 369 (15YO: 5Y/2.5Y); *R v Johns* [2003] VSC 415 (19YO: 6Y/3.5Y); *R v Tipas* [2004] VSC 25 (17YO: 6Y/3Y); *Director of Public Prosecutions v Reynolds and Ors* [2004] VSC 533 (three accused 16YO and 16YO: 5Y/2Y; 18YO: 5Y/2Y); *R v LMA* [2005] VSC 152 (16YO: 5.5Y/3Y); *R v BTP* [2006] VSC 374 (15YO: 5Y/2.5Y); *R v GM* [2006] VSC 473 (16YO: 8Y – total effective sentence 9.5Y/6Y);

**(2) murder**: *R v JPD* [2001] VSC 204 (15YO: 16Y/12Y) (confirmed on appeal: *R v PDJ* (2002) 7 VR 612*)*; *R v Seater* [2001] VSCA 217 (19YO: 17Y – total effective sentence 20Y/15Y); *R v Kumar* (2002) 5 VR 193 (20YO: 20Y/16Y); *R v Khoder* [2005] VSC 445 (19YO: 19Y – total effective sentence 20Y/15Y); *R v Lam* *& Ors* [2005] VSC 495 (several accused: 23YO: 18Y + 18Y – total effective sentence 30Y/23Y; 27YO: 18Y + 18Y – total effective sentence 30Y/23Y; 23YO: 18.5Y/15Y; 22YO: 16Y/12.5Y; 20YO: 15Y/11Y; 20YO: 15Y/11Y; 20YO: 14.5Y/10Y); *R v JH* [2006] VSC 201 (18YO: 14Y/9Y); *Director of Public Prosecutions v DJE* [2006] VSC 339 (17YO: 14Y/9Y); *R v Tran* [2006] VSC 352 (21Y: 14.5Y/10Y);and *R v Athuai* [2007] VSCA 2 (17YO: 18Y/14Y); see also *R v Redenbach* (1991) 52 A Crim R 95.

In the following paragraphs a number of cases are discussed or cited which illustrate various aspects of sentencing for manslaughter, defensive homicide, attempted murder and murder.

### **11.2.22.1 Sentencing for manslaughter**

In *R v Mohamed & Ors* [2008] VSC 299 two young offenders, both students with evident remorse and excellent prospects for rehabilitation, were found guilty of manslaughter by unlawful and dangerous act. The deceased was killed when he ran from an altercation involving the defendants and was struck by a vehicle travelling at excessive speed. In the course of sentencing both offenders to detention in a youth justice centre for a period of 3 years, Nettle JA said at [15]-[16]:

“The nature of the crime of manslaughter is such that it may vary from ‘the very confines of murder’{*Timbu Kolian v The Queen* (1968) 119 CLR 47, 68 (Windeyer J); *R v Osip* (2000) 2 VR 595, 610 [46] (Batt JA)} down to a merely nominal offence of involuntary homicide. Consequently, although the maximum sentence for manslaughter is 20 years’ imprisonment, the range of possible penalty is very wide indeed: *R v Moore* [2002] VSCA 33 at [16] (O’Bryan AJA). But although there is no established sentencing tariff {*R v Blacklidge*, NSWCCA 12. 12. 95, BC9501665, 4}, cases in which the intended level of harm is slight and the consequences are great tend to be towards the lower end of the scale {Fox & Frieberg, *Sentencing, State and Federal Law in Victoria*, 2nd Ed at [12.218]}. In my view, the manslaughter of which you, Sharmake Aidid and MA, have been found guilty falls within that category.

It is of course a serious offence. Although, you were both youthful offenders and inexperienced, you were also educated and intelligent, and the deceased was drunk and irrational. It should have been obvious to you that, by confronting him on the roadway, you were exposing him to an appreciable risk of serious injury. I allow that you were provoked {*Okutgen* (1983) 8 A Crim R 262, 264; but cf *Pilgrim* (1983) 5 Cr App R (S) 140; *Wilson* (1981) 3 Cr App R (S) 30}. The deceased’s drunken behaviour towards you was unlawful and insulting. But in his state of drunkenness, it should have been obvious that there was no chance of persuading him of his misbehaviour, still less that he would acknowledge it. Your pursuit of him and attack on him in those circumstances necessitates a penalty which is adequate to express the court’s denunciation of your conduct and to provide general deterrence against others engaging in conduct of that kind.”

In *R v Johns* [2003] VSC 415 at [20] Nettle J said in sentencing a 20 year old offender who had been found guilty of manslaughter committed when he was 19 years of age:

"The maximum sentence for the offence of manslaughter is 20 years imprisonment. The circumstances which may give rise to a conviction for manslaughter are, however, so various and the range of degrees of culpability so wide, that it is not possible to point to any established sentencing tariff which can be applied to such cases: *R v Blacklidge* [Unreported, NSWCCA, 12/12/1995] BC9501665 at 4 per Gleeson CJ. Of all crimes, manslaughter throws up the greatest variety of circumstances affecting culpability, and because manslaughter covers such a wide range of circumstances, and includes both voluntary and involuntary acts of homicide, the range of penalty is very wide indeed: *R v Moore* [2002] VSCA 33 at [16]."

In *Nelis v The King* [2023] VSCA 128 the applicant had pleaded guilty to manslaughter by gross negligence and had been sentenced to IMP11y/8y. In allowing his appeal on the basis of the sentencing judge’s misunderstanding that the offence had a standard sentence of IMP13y, the Court of Appeal substituted a sentence of IMP9y/6y. At [28]-[29] Priest AP, Niall & Taylor JJA quoted with approval dicta of Weinberg JA in *R v Jagroop* [2008] VSC 25; (2009) 22 VR 80 – a case in which the offender had pushed the victim to the ground causing him to hit his head and then dragged him to a position of danger and made no call for assistance – enuniciating some principles which involved a categorisation of various forms of manslaughter:

[28] “[T]his was not a case of manslaughter by an unlawful and dangerous act. Instead, the applicant fell to be sentenced on the basis that he pulled the trigger of the shotgun deliberately, but in the belief that the shotgun was not loaded. It was grossly negligent of him to pull the trigger without first checking whether the firearm contained ammunition, but he bore no malice towards Mr Jacobs and had not anticipated that Mr Jacobs might be at risk of harm when he did so.

[29] In *R v Jagroop* (2009) 22 VR 80 at [63]-[68], Weinberg JA made the following pertinent observations concerning the offence of manslaughter (citations as in original; emphasis added):

‘It is well established that although manslaughter is one of the more serious crimes known to the law, the circumstances of its commission vary greatly. This makes it impossible to accept any notion of a ‘tariff’ for this offence: [*R v Williscroft*](https://jade.io/article/538665) [1975] VR 292 at [299](https://jade.io/article/538665/section/140798) and [*R v Papazisis and Bird*](https://jade.io/citation/2889488) (1991) 51 A Crim R 242 at [245.](https://jade.io/citation/2325198/section/1296158) Manslaughter is a crime that attracts a wide range of sentences, which can vary from lengthy terms of imprisonment to non-custodial dispositions.

None the less, there are some principles that seem to emerge from the cases. In the first place, voluntary manslaughter is generally regarded as more culpable than involuntary manslaughter.  In cases of voluntary manslaughter, the offender intends to kill or cause grievous bodily harm, not so in cases of involuntary manslaughter.

Manslaughter by unlawful and dangerous act is often regarded as one step down from manslaughter by provocation.  *Still further down the scale are those relatively few cases of manslaughter by criminal negligence that have been reported*.  *The reason is plain.  The moral culpability of an offender who has been convicted of manslaughter by criminal negligence is likely to be lower than that of an offender who has killed someone by an unlawful and dangerous act.* There is, after all, in most cases of criminal negligence, no intent on the part of the offender to cause any harm whatever to the victim. See generally Fox and Freiberg, *Sentencing: State and Federal Law in Victoria*, 2nd ed, (1999), [12.214].

The absence of intention to harm is, in my view, a significant factor in assessing the quality of an offender’s actions. The same point was made in [*R v Streatfield*](https://jade.io/citation/2347370) [(1991) 53 A Crim R 320](https://jade.io/citation/2344240) where the offender was convicted, after a trial, of the manslaughter of his wife through criminal negligence. He had discharged a gun while pointing it at her, mistakenly believing it to be unloaded. Thomas J, as his Honour then was, said at 326-327:

In the present case stupidity is revealed rather than wickedness.  Malice is nowhere to be found.  In this respect the case must be less seriously regarded than the ordinary domestic killings where there is a distinct intention to harm, albeit a fleeting one which may have been provoked by the injured party.

That is not to say that it is an inflexible rule that sentences for manslaughter by criminal negligence should be lower than those for other forms of manslaughter. Everything must turn upon the particular circumstances of the case.  Some cases, of which the present is an example, have aggravating factors that make it appropriate to impose more significant punishment. A search of the literature indicates that sentences for manslaughter by criminal negligence, in Victoria, have generally been more lenient than those other forms of manslaughter. That has long been the case. See generally Carter, *Australian Sentencing Digest*, (1985), pp 268–75 and particularly 271 and 275. Carter refers to [*R v Redman*](https://jade.io/citation/19063574) (unreported, Court of Criminal Appeal, 14 December 1977), a case of criminal negligence where a sentence of five years with a three-year minimum was reduced to three years with a 12-month minimum. He also draws attention to [*R v Taylor*](https://jade.io/citation/1402235) (1983) 9 A Crim R 358, in which a sentence of 18 months with a non-parole period of six months was permitted to stand in a case where a mother had caused her six-year-old son’s death by overdosing him on a liquid sleeping medication.’”

In *R v PP* [2003] VSCA 100 the 15 year old offender had been presented on one count of murder. He was found not guilty of murder but guilty of manslaughter. He was sentenced by Nettle J to 6 years imprisonment with a non-parole period of 4 years, the sentence being based on manslaughter by unlawful and dangerous act, not on a homicide reduced from murder to manslaughter by provocation. The Court of Appeal agreed with Nettle J that all the relevant purposes of sentencing could not be achieved by three years' detention in a youth training centre. At [13] Callaway JA (with whom Winneke P & Buchanan JA agreed) said:

"Notwithstanding the applicant's age, this was a bad example of manslaughter by unlawful and dangerous act. The melee was dying down and it was the applicant's associates who re-ignited it. The applicant then pursued the victim across the car park, armed with a knife (which involved a significant escalation from the pole that had been used to beat his brother) and stabbed him twice in the back. Just punishment, tempered by reference to the applicant's immaturity, was required and general deterrence was not irrelevant. There is a public interest in deterring violent fights and the use of lethal weapons, albeit a knife that lay ready to hand and had not been acquired for a criminal purpose. A maximum of three years' loss of liberty was not enough. (Compare *Attorney-General v. Benfield* (unreported, Court of Criminal Appeal, 13th September 1976) and *R v Misokka* (unreported, Court of Appeal, 9th November 1995) at 4-6."

At [23] His Honour concluded: "There are cases where detention in a youth training centre is an appropriate response to a homicide committed by a young person, but this was not one of them." However, the Court allowed the appeal on the basis that the non-parole period was manifestly excessive in the circumstances of the case, Callaway JA stating at [17]:

"There is no standard non-parole period (*R. v. VZ* [1998] VSCA 32 at [15]; *R. v. Pope* at [28]) but a non-parole period of four years in relation to a head sentence of six years' imprisonment is a common disposition. It usually implies that there is no special reason to emphasize the penal element of the non-parole period (as, for example, where the head sentence itself is moderate) and that there are reasonable prospects of rehabilitation without special factors. Here the head sentence was stern, the applicant's prospects of rehabilitation were outstanding and there was the ever-present need to facilitate his early release from the adult prison system if that could properly be achieved."

The sentencing discretion thus being re-opened the Court of Appeal re-sentenced the applicant to 5 years imprisonment with a non-parole period of 2½ years.

In *R v Tipas* [2004] VSC 25 the offender who was 17 at the time of the offence and 19 at the time of sentence had pleaded guilty to one count of manslaughter. Counsel for the accused referred the Court to a number of recent cases of manslaughter and in particular the decision of the Court of Appeal in *R v PP* and argued that the same sentence should be imposed. Bongiorno J disagreed at [25] "essentially, but not entirely, because the offender in that case was significantly younger…and you had armed yourself with a knife at a somewhat earlier stage of the offence than he did." In imposing a sentence of 6 years imprisonment with a longer than normal non-parole period of 3 years, His Honour said at [23]:

" As well as the matters of your youth and your prospects of rehabilitation to which I have already referred the Court must also take into account in fixing an appropriate sentence principles of deterrence and of denunciation by the community of an offence such as this which involved the taking of a human life. Violence by young men, especially violence involving the use of weapons, must be deterred by the imposition of gaol sentences commensurate with the seriousness of the offence under consideration. It must also take into account the protection of the community. In your case the Court is satisfied that if you achieve effective rehabilitation that will provide the community with the best protection possible. As it is satisfied that, as things stand, your rehabilitation is extremely likely there will be no need to consider community protection further in your case."

In *R v EJC* [2008] VSC 474 the 17 year old defendant was found guilty of manslaughter occasioned by a fist fight and was sentenced to detention in a youth justice centre for a period of 3 years. At [24]-[26] Osborn J said:

“Your actions raise significant issues of general deterrence. The combination of Saturday night alcohol and violence outside parties and entertainment venues, is one which our society must do all it can to control.

The Court, on behalf of the community it represents, must state unequivocally that it regards fist fighting between young men as both senseless and totally unacceptable. Fighting of the sort you engaged in, carries with it the ever present risk of the accidental infliction of serious injury and death.

Fighting at the age of 17 when affected by alcohol is at least, if not more stupid and dangerous, as driving at the same age in that condition. It carries with it the same underlying potential for the infliction of the tragic loss of life and serious injury.”

In *GAS v The Queen; SJK v The Queen* [2004] HCA 22 the High Court dismissed an appeal against sentences of 9 years imprisonment with a non-parole period of 6 years imposed on two boys, aged 16 & 15 at the time of the offences, who had pleaded guilty to manslaughter of an elderly woman in her home. Both had been sentenced as aiders and abettors. In *R v Simpas & HR* [2008] VSC 222 at [45] King J later said that that *DPP v SJK & GAS* was a case with “many levels of depravity associated with the offence”. At [23] the High Court agreed with the Court of Appeal that "it is not a universal principle that the culpability of an aider and abettor is less than that of a principal offender, and *R v Bannon and Calder* [Court of Criminal Appeal, unreported, 21/09/1993] did not decide otherwise. A manipulative or dominant aider and abettor may be more culpable than a principal. And even when aiders and abettors are less culpable, the degree of difference will depend upon the circumstances of the particular case." At [19]-[20] the High Court said:

"The Court of Appeal was right to accept that this was an extremely serious case of manslaughter, occurring in circumstances of extreme aggravation. It was common ground that the appellants were to be sentenced on the basis that the manslaughter involved killing by an unlawful and dangerous act, and that the relevant act was that of strangulation. The circumstances in which that act occurred involved home invasion, robbery, and a brutal assault on an elderly and vulnerable victim. By their pleas of guilty, expressed to be upon the basis that each admitted only to aiding and abetting, each appellant, although denying that he himself strangled the victim, admitted to being present at the act causing the death of the victim, and to providing intentional assistance or encouragement to the strangler. In *Giorgianni v The Queen* (1985) 156 CLR 473 at 506, Wilson, Deane and Dawson JJ, in a case concerning the elements of aiding and abetting manslaughter, said:

'There are ... offences in which it is not possible to speak of recklessness as constituting a sufficient intent. Attempt is one and conspiracy is another. And we think the offences of aiding and abetting and counselling and procuring are others. *Those offences require intentional participation in a crime by lending assistance or encouragement*. ... The necessary intent is absent if the person alleged to be a secondary participant does not know or believe that what he is assisting or encouraging is something which goes to make up the facts which constitute the commission of the relevant criminal offence. He need not recognize the criminal offence as such, but his participation must be intentionally aimed at the commission of the acts which constitute it.' [emphasis added]

There was, no doubt, an element of artificiality involved in sentencing each appellant on the basis that he aided and abetted the killer, in circumstances where one or the other must have been the killer. That, however, was the necessary consequence of the prosecution's decision to charge each appellant only with manslaughter in a situation where it could not prove that either of the two offenders strangled the victim, and neither admitted that he did it. But that to which each appellant was willing to admit was a very serious offence. Nowhere in his remarks on sentence did Bongiorno J spell out in detail the effect of the admissions necessarily involved in the pleas of guilty, in the circumstances of this case. When those admissions are examined in the light of what was said in *Giorgianni*, and attention is given to the nature of the unlawful and dangerous act causing death (strangulation), an act which occurred in the context of extremely aggravating circumstances, then it can be seen that the Court of Appeal was right to conclude that the sentences imposed at first instance were manifestly inadequate, and was justified in increasing the sentences as it did."

In *R v Stavreski* [2004] VSC 16 the accused had pleaded guilty to a charge of charge of manslaughter in a case in which he had used excessive self-defence to defend himself and his wife from his 26 year old daughter's attack. At [19]-[20] Redlich J said:

"[19] It is well recognised that manslaughter varies from a nominal crime to the boundaries of murder and that sentences can vary from being extremely light to very severe: *R v Osip* [2000] VSCA 237; *R v Weinman* (1987) 49 SASR 248 at 249; *R v Williscroft* *& Ors* [1975] VR 292 at 299; *R v* *Papazisis and Bird* (1991) 51 A Crim R 242 at 245. There is no tariff as to the appropriate sentence for manslaughter. In determining the appropriate sentence I am mindful of the denunciatory role of sentencing. As Gleeson CJ, President Kirby and Hunt CJ observed in *Regina v McDonald:*

'Manslaughter involves the felonious taking of human life. This may involve a wide variety of circumstances calling for a wide variety of penal consequences. Even so, unlawful homicide, whatever form it takes, has always been recognised by the law as a most serious crime. *Regina v Hill* (1981) 3 A Crim R 397 at 402. The protection of human life and personal safety is a primary objective of the system of criminal justice. The value which the community places upon human life is reflected in its expectation of that system. [NSWCCA, unreported, 12/12/1995].'

[20] There are exceptional circumstances where Courts have refrained from imposing a custodial sentence for the offence of manslaughter. See for example *R v Denny* [2000] VSC 323; *R v Southwell* [2002] VSC 526; *R v Gazdovic* [2002] VSC 588; *R v Makike* [2003] VSC 340*; R v Scott* [2003] NSWSC 627*; R v Yeoman* [2003] NSWSC 194; *R v Rodriguez* 7 May 1996; *R v Bunnett* 28 October 1996; *R v Bradley* 14 December 1994. It is recognised that a non-custodial sentence in domestic provocation cases will only be imposed in exceptional circumstances: *R v* *Bogunovich* (1985) 16 A Crim R 456 at 460-461 per Maxwell J; *Boyle* *v R* (1987) 34 A Crim R 202 at 204-6; *R v* *Alexander* (1994) 78 A Crim R 141."

And at [27] Redlich J held that there were such exceptional circumstances in this case: "Provocation or excessive self-defence manslaughter is a serious offence and the Court must be seen to uphold the sanctity of life but this consideration and the principle of general deterrence can be accommodated in these exceptional circumstances by a sentence of imprisonment which is wholly suspended."

In *R v Natan Kaplan* [2005] VSC 372 at [12] Teague J referred to a number of English manslaughter authorities reflecting the high incidence of single punch deaths outside drinking venues.

In *R v Leatham* [2006] VSC 315 an 18 year old offender had pleaded guilty to one count of manslaughter arising from a fight with his closest friend. Describing the case as “exceptional” and taking into account the offender’s age and very significant mitigating factors, Bongiorno J sentenced him to 3 years imprisonment wholly suspended for 2 years.

In *R v BTP* [2006] VSC 374 an offender who was aged 15y4m at the time of the offence was found guilty after trial of one count of manslaughter arising from the stabbing of a family friend. Taking into account BTP’s age, significant intellectual disability and remorse and noting the importance of rehabilitation for a youthful offender, Kellam J sentenced him to 5 years imprisonment with a non-parole period of 2½ years.

In *DPP v Samson-Rimoni (Sentence)* [2010] VSC 111 a 19 year old offender had been found not guilty of murder but guilty of manslaughter arising from a stabbing. Lasry J sentenced him to 9 years imprisonment with a non-parole period of 5 years. At [13] & [14] his Honour said:

“I can only hope that the real lesson from this tragedy is a greater and clearer understanding of how easily and quickly the production of even a small domestic knife in a minor confrontation can end in tragedy. It takes so little for a knife such as the one you used to fatally damage vital organs.

You are now 21 years of age without prior convictions and clearly fall into the category of a young offender. Your lack of previous convictions is significant. At the time of committing this offence, you were 19 years of age. [Y]our youth is an important factor and I take it into account. I do that both in relation to the desirability to maximise your rehabilitation and also accepting the submission that your youth combined with the alcohol you had consumed is relevant in understanding why you did what you did."

In *R v AB (No 2)* [2008] VSCA 39 at [35] (2008) 18 VR 391 the Court of Appeal agreed with the trial judge that the provocation to which AB may have been subject did not take his offence outside the category of “the gravest of homicides short of murder” and added: “The nature of the offending necessarily attracted firm application of the principles of deterrence, both specific and general. It also warranted the strongest denunciation.” In approving the sentence of 15 years imprisonment with a non-parole period of 13 years fixed by the trial judge, the Court of Appeal said at [48]-[49]:

“Because courts have hitherto not responded to the legislative command to increase sentences in manslaughter cases, his Honour was not fettered by the previous pattern of sentencing {*DPP v Arney* [2007] VSCA 126 [13]-[14] (Nettle JA); *R v Kalanj* (1997) 98 A Crim R 505, 510-1; *R v Boaza*  [1999] VSCA 126, [17]–[18]; *Sheppard* (1995)77 A Crim R 139, 140-1 (Fitzgerald P), 146 (Dowsett J)} but was obliged to give effect to Parliament’s decision to increase the maximum penalty {*R v Musson* [1997] 1 VR 656, 660}. As the maximum sentence is reserved for the worst sort of cases – and this was one – the increased maximum called for the imposition of a sentence higher than the general trend of those sentences relied upon by AB.

To have imposed a sentence for a manslaughter of this gravity which did not reflect the increase in the maximum penalty would have been to commit a sentencing error of a fundamental kind. By increasing the maximum penalty for manslaughter, the legislature conveyed in explicit, unequivocal language its expectation that the worst instances of manslaughter would attract a sentence approaching the maximum of 20 years.”

In *R v Reglis* [2010] VSC 58 King J sentenced the accused to 6y6m imprisonment with a non-parole period of 4y3m on a count, to which he had pleaded guilty, of manslaughter by unlawful and dangerous act involving the discharge of a firearm. At [11] & [33] her Honour said:

[11] “The sentence of a court is not something that reflects the value or worth of a human being, - it deals only with punishment of an offender for a particular offence”.

[33] “I accept that you have some prospects of rehabilitation, but as indicated, unlike Mr Cummins, I do not consider them to be very high prospects of rehabilitation, but there is hope. You need to obtain employment, stop using drugs, and become a contributing member of our community. Against all of those matters there needs to be a balance of the community need for a just and appropriate punishment, a reflection of the criminality for which you are to be punished, which is, as the defence and the Crown concur, at the lower end of the scale of punishment for manslaughter. I have read the authorities to which I have been referred, including *R v AB (No 2)* (2008) 18 VR 391; *DPP v Marcus William Phillips* [2009] VSCA 68; *DPP v John William Sypott* [2004] VSCA 9; and, *R v Robert John Osip [2000] VSCA 237*.”

In *R v John Likiardopoulos* [2010] VSCA 344 the 19 year offender had pleaded guilty to one count of manslaughter. He had fully participated in the prolonged physical abuse that caused the death of the 22 year old intellectually disabled victim and added his own touches by forcing the victim to drink toxic substances and wielded a hammer with which he struck the victim’s spine, neck, elbows and ankles. The Court of Appeal dismissed the offender’s appeal against IMP12y/9y, a sentence which was described by counsel as “the sternest head sentence ever imposed for the offence of manslaughter in Victoria”. At [173] Buchanan, Ashley & Tate JJA said:

“In our opinion, his Honour’s treatment of the applicant’s youth and the influence of his father was appropriate in the light of the circumstances of the offending. The imposition of a sentence slightly more than half the maximum sentence for this crime was not manifestly excessive. As Batt JA said in *DPP v Lawrence* (2004) 10 VR 125, 132:

‘W]ith an instance of [an offence] as grave as this one, the offender’s youthfulness and rehabilitation, achieved and prospective, whilst not irrelevant in the instinctive synthesis which the sentencing judge must make, were of much less significance than they would have been with a less serious offence. As has been said, youth and rehabilitation must be subjugated to other considerations.’”

In *R v Pyrczak* [2011] VSC 219 the accused pleaded guilty to one count of manslaughter of her mother by criminal negligence. She had voluntarily assumed the care of her mother who was unable by her age and incapacity to look after herself. She failed to do so which led to her mother’s death: cf. *R v Hall* (1999) 108 A Crim R 209. Remarking at [21] that “cases of manslaughter by omission are difficult conceptually”, Coghlan J sentenced her to IMP 3y of which all but 15 days already served was suspended.

In *R v Nurdag & Ors* [2011] VSC 254 the principal offender pleaded guilty to manslaughter, trafficking and firearm charges. He had prior convictions but genuine remorse. The deceased had been involved in a drug deal with two co-accused and owed money. The principal offender took a loaded firearm to the deceased’s home to pressure him in relation to money owed. A confrontation ensued and the deceased was shot. IMP 11y/8y6m. The three co-accused pleaded guilty to assisting the principal offender to flee the scene of the shooting. All were remorseful. One was young. One was suffering from ill-health, having been shot by the deceased. Each was sentenced to IMP 2y partially suspended.

In *R v RPJ* [2011] VSC 363 the accused pleaded guilty to one charge of recklessly causing injury and one charge of manslaughter. The offences occurred on consecutive Saturday nights. The accused was 17 at the time of the offences and 18 on the date of sentence. In an unprovoked attack described by Beach J as “entirely without cause and gratuitous”, the accused had struck the deceased with a clenched fist to his jaw, knocking him unconscious and causing him to fall to the ground with his head bouncing on the roadway. The sentence imposed for recklessly causing injury was IMP 18m, that for manslaughter was IMP 6y. A non-parole period of 4y was set. Unusually, the sentence imposed for manslaughter was outside the range of IMP 3y to 5y submitted by the Crown pursuant to *R v MacNeil-Brown* (2008) 20 VR 677. On appeal [2012] VSCA 50 the Court of Appeal, citing dicta of Buchanan JA from *DPP v Ross* (2006) 166 A Crim R 97 at 106–7, [39]–[40], held that error is not demonstrated merely by proving that the sentence was outside the suggested range. However, by majority (Buchanan JA & Hollingworth AJA, Bongiorno JA dissenting), the Court of Appeal held that these sentences were manifestly excessive. On the charge of manslaughter the offender was re-sentenced to 3 years’ detention in a youth justice centre. On the charge of recklessly causing injury, he was re‑sentenced to 6 months detention in a youth justice centre to be served concurrently with the sentence for manslaughter. After referring with approval to *R v Mills* (1998) 4 VR 235, Hollingworth AJA said at [49]-[51]:

[49] “As the applicant fell to be sentenced for manslaughter under the *Sentencing Act*, general deterrence and denunciation were available to the court as sentencing purposes [ss.5(1)(b) & 5(1)(d)]. However, the applicant’s conduct embodied the features of youthful impulsivity and lack of foresight that underlie the logic of not using children as vehicles of denunciation and general deterrence.

[50] Having regard to the nature of the offending, as well as the applicant’s age, co-operation with authorities and early plea, genuine remorse, lack of criminal record or any subsequent offending, and good prospects of rehabilitation, I am persuaded that the learned sentencing judge placed too much weight on the factors of general deterrence and denunciation, such as to lead him to impose a sentence that was outside the range reasonably open to him. To say that, is not to ignore the terrible pain and suffering of the Lowe family.

[51] Having had regard to manslaughter sentences imposed in relation to children since 2002 (but bearing in mind that the process of comparing cases has its limitations, given the differences in offending and young offenders), I would grant leave to appeal in relation to ground 4, set aside the sentence for charge 2, and resentence the applicant to 3 years’ detention in a youth justice centre.”

In *R v Tito* [2011] VSCA 303 the appellant, while intoxicated, killed his friend in a fight. He was aged 20 at the time of the offence. He had armed himself with a screwdriver. The victim was unarmed. The appellant was charged with murder but was found guilty by a jury of unlawful and dangerous act manslaughter. The Court of Appeal (Buchanan & Tate JJA, Sifris AJA dissenting) – focussing on dicta in *R v Mills* – allowed an appeal against a sentence of IMP 10y/6y3m and replaced it with IMP 8y6m/5y.

In *R v SV* [2012] VSC 478 the accused – who was aged 14 at the time of the offence (16 at the time of sentence) – had pleaded guilty at a relatively early date to manslaughter by stabbing the victim who had chased him and his group after they had thrown eggs at her house. He had no prior criminal history. Coghlan J imposed a sentence of IMP 5y6m/3y and recommended that the accused be transferred to the Youth Justice System. Other comments made by his Honour include:

[2] “Your youth will be a major feature of this sentence. The maximum term of imprisonment for the offence of manslaughter is twenty years. That maximum is a reflection of how our community regards any offence which leads to the taking of the life of another.”

[3] “This is yet another case where the availability of knives to young people through the internet and elsewhere has been shown to be a blight on our community. Many, if not most, knives are deadly weapons, as this and other cases show. The young seem to have an entirely inadequate appreciation of that fact. The legislature and the police have taken action to reduce the number of knives in the community, but there seems to me a very important role to be played by parents in preventing their children buying and having knives and in particular from carrying them. I do not single you out for any special treatment on this issue, but young men and women like you have to understand that if damage is done to others in the community by the use of weapons, it will be met with increasingly severe punishment.”

[26] “[T]his is a reasonably serious example of the offence. The matters in aggravation are that you were armed and that you had to prepare the weapon for use. On the other hand**,** particularly given your age, I am prepared to accept that you did not fully appreciate the consequences of your action and that you did not intend to kill [the deceased]. I am also prepared to accept that you did not arm yourself with the knife for the direct purpose of hurting anyone. I am also prepared to accept that you acted out of panic and that, most of all, you wanted to escape.”

[40] “I regard your youth and immaturity as being very important. It has been made clear by the Court [*R v Azzopardi & Ors* [2011] VSCA 372] that it would only be in the most unusual case that the importance of youth would be entirely extinguished as a sentencing consideration. Your case is not of that kind and your youth does mitigate the penalty you are to receive, but this is a serious offence.”

[41-43] “A number of cases were pointed out to me, in particular the decision of the Court of Appeal in *JPR v R* [2012] VSCA 50 in which the Court of Appeal imposed a three year Youth Justice Centre Order. Although I have taken all the matters put on your behalf in mitigation, it cannot be avoided that this is a serious example of an unlawful and dangerous act manslaughter. Were it not for the fact that you were only 14 at the time of the offending, I would have imposed a much higher sentence…The difference between this case and a one punch manslaughter case is patent.”

In *DPP v Kilpatrick*; *DPP v SW* [2019] VSC 779 the two accused (young Aboriginal men aged 18 & 17 respectively at the time of the offence) pleaded not guilty to manslaughter and guilty to attempted robbery and theft of a motor vehicle. After a trial, they were convicted of manslaughter. Coghlan JA said that the trial was conducted as economically as possible and that it was reasonable for both to have conducted the trial. They were convicted on the basis that they were jointly responsible for knocking the 34-year-old victim to the road in the course of an attempted robbery and they left him there in the knowledge or belief that he was incapable of getting off the road. He subsequently died after being hit by a motor car. Each accused suffered from intellectual impairment and had a deprived upbringing. On the manslaughter charge Mr Kilpatrick was sentenced to IMP5y/3y and SW was sentenced to a 4 year Youth Justice Centre order.

In *R v Aliti* [2021] VSC 825 the 18 year old accused LA pleaded guilty to manslaughter by unlawful and dangerous act of the 20 year old deceased TT who had come to assist friends in a possible fight with another group of young males. TT and three others chased the rival group as they ran away from the fight. LA then came to the scene in response to an earlier call for help from a friend in the rival group, LA followed both groups but then stopped. TT subsequently ceased chase, turned and headed back in direction of LA. TT was unarmed and displayed no aggression towards LA who was nevertheless frightened. LA, in fear and panic, stabbed TT once to the chest and once to the hip. The chest wound was fatal. LA fled without assisting TT and made a callous post-offence remark. He tried to conceal the crime by disposing of a SIM card and clothing. The knife was never found. There was profound victim impact, TT’s parents having lost their only child. LA had no prior convictions and was of positively good character. He had excellent prospects of rehabilitation. His epilepsy increases the hardship of incarceration as do pandemic restrictions in custody. LA pleaded guilty and displaye remorse. General deterrence, denunciation, just punishment and rehabilitation were of importance, specific deterrence and rehabilitation of less weight. LA was assessed as suitable for a YJC order but the 4y YJC maximum was disproportionate to the gravity of the offence. A longer sentence was required, achievable only by a prison sentence even though LA was was immature and impressionable and likely to be subjected to undesirable influences in adult prison. IMP6y6m/3y6m. Croucher J recommended to the Adult Parole Board that LA be transferred to YJC to serve the prison sentence.

In *R v Chol* [2022] VSC 341 the 15 year old offender fatally stabbed a 17 year old acquaintance once in the abdomen in circumstances where “a play fight turned serious”. The offence was described by Beale J as an “upper mid-range example of manslaughter by unlawful and dangerous act”. The offender had no prior convictions and had pleaded guilty at the first reasonable opportunity. Beale J moderated the sentence “to a modest extent” on the basis of *Verdins* principles 1, 3 & 4 because of the offender’s ADHD & ODD. In his reasons his Honour compared and contrasted the cases of *DPP v Kilpatrick* [2019] VSC 779, *R v Mohamed & Ors* [2008] VSC 299, *R v PP* [2003] VSCA 100; 142 A Crim R 369 and *DPP v SJK & GAS* [2002] VSCA 131. In imposing a sentence of YJC 4y, his Honour referred at [54] to “the adverse effects of adult prison [which] were discussed at some length by the Court of Appeal in *Boulton v R* [2014] VSCA 342; 46 VR 308 at [108]” and said at [82]-[83]:

“In accordance with s 32(1) of the *Sentencing Act 1991*, I am satisfied that if you are sentenced to detention in a YJC you have reasonable prospects of rehabilitation whereas if you are sentenced to imprisonment you are likely to be subjected to ‘undesirable influences’, to say the least…

In accordance with s 32(2C) of the *Sentencing Act 1991*, I declare that I am also satisfied that, notwithstanding the seriousness of your offence, exceptional circumstances exist which justify the imposition of a sentence of detention in a YJC. The combination of circumstances which in my view amount to exceptional circumstances comprise the mitigating circumstances referred to above, your vulnerability as described in the PSR and the potentially adverse effects of adult imprisonment, which would not be in your interests or the commuinty’s. As Nettle JA said in *R v Mohamed & Ors* at [40], ‘It appears to me that there would be very little to gain and in all probability a great deal to lose by imprisoning you within an adult gaol.’”

However, his Honour concluded at [85]-[86]:

“I declare that the time you have spent on remand is not to be counted as time served under your sentence save for 24 days from 26 May 2022 when I was originally intending to sentence you. This means in effect that you are sentenced to 5 years’ detention in a YJC, but I consider that to be appropriate given the seriousness of your offence.

But for your plea of guilty, I would have sentenced you to 7 years’ imprisonment with a minimum term of 4 years.”

In *DPP v McDonough* [2023] VSC 352 the offender had entered an early plea to manslaughter of his domestic partner who was attempting to leave the relationship – he had an extensive criminal history, poor prospects of rehabilitation and limited remorse – in imposing a sentence of IMP11y6m/8y6m Fox J said at [47]-[48]:

[47] “The unlawful and dangerous act causing death did not involve a weapon; there was a single strike, which caused the deceased to fall and hit her head. However, that single strike cannot be viewed in isolation. A most serious aspect of your offending is that it occurred in the context of ongoing family violence. [Your partner] was attempting to end the relationship, and you knew that. You also knew she was scared of you. [Your partner] understood the danger you presented to her life and she had every right to leave you. But when she tried to flee on this day, you caught her and used your greater strength and size to physically throw her into your unit. Once she was inside, you violently assaulted her and, ultimately, struck a blow to her face that caused her death. This is a serious example of family violence committed against a young woman who was trying to escape from her life with you.

[48] Serious violence continues to be committed by men against their female partners, or former partners. It is prevalent and deeply shocking. Through sentencing, the courts must send a message to other would-be offenders that if you commit such crimes, you should expect to receive a substantial term of imprisonment. It is necessary to publicly denounce your crime, and punish you for causing the death of [your partner].”

In *DPP v Rickerby (No 2)* [2024] VSC 334 the 26 year old offender had belatedly pleaded guilty to manslaughter of his domestic partner by unlawful and dangerous act. In imposing a sentence of IMP15y6m/11y Elliott J said at [54]:

“The court must ensure just punishment. What is just in part depends upon the nature and gravity of the offending. Manslaughter by unlawful and dangerous act is self-evidently a very serious offence. As for the gravity of your offending, the circumstances of this case are truly shocking. Inexplicably, by your vicious assault through multiple acts of aggression, you have brutally taken the life of someone who trusted you and who had moved far away from her family to be with you. Jessica was also particularly vulnerable given her mental health issues, and you knew of her vulnerability and that she relied on you for support and care. The taking of a domestic partner’s life undermines the foundations of personal relationships and family trust upon which our society rests: *Felicite v The Queen* (2011) 37 VR 329, 333 [20], citing *Diver v The Queen* [2010] VSCA 254, [41]. The sanctity of human life must be taken into account, as well as society’s abhorrence towards violence against vulnerable and trusting partners who could legitimately have expected the offender to be the protector, not the perpetrator of violent abuse: *Ibid*.”

See also *R v Stratton* [2008] VSCA 130 at [126]-[130].

In *DPP v Allen* [2025] VSC 219 the 23 year old accused had entered early pleas of guilty to a charge of manslaughter by unlawful and dangerous act and a charge of armed robbery arising from a separate incident. The accused was armed with a knife and a co-offender with a machete. They confronted the victim and an associate and the accused stabbed the victim with a knife. The accused – who fled to Queensland after the offence – had a substantial criminal history and childhood deprivation resulting in drug and alcohol dependency. Noting a significant utilitarian value of the pleas of guilty, Kaye JA sentenced the accused to IMP9y6m on the manslaughter charge and IMP4y on the armed robbery charge, of which 18m was to be served cumulatively on the sentence for manslaughter. This resulted in a TES IMP11y/7y4m. At [74] & [76]-[82] Kaye JA said:

[74] “I also take into account, as a mitigating factor, your relative youth, both at the time of the offending and at the time of sentence. In that respect I do note, however, that the offences, for which you are to be sentenced, are of a kind that are not uncommonly committed by other youthful offenders. To that extent, the mitigatory effect of your youth is reduced, in order to ensure that sufficient weight is given to the sentencing purposes of general deterrence and denunciation...

[76] In determining your sentence, I have had regard to current sentencing practices, particularly in respect of the offence of manslaughter. In that respect, I have been assisted by the sentencing decisions to which the prosecution has referred me, namely, *R v Gurlu* [2022] VSC 820, *R v Volpe* [2021] VSC 353, *DPP v Hocking* [2022] VSC 608, *DPP v Yasmin* [2021] VSC 780 and *DPP v Harrison* [2021] VSC 601. I have also been assisted by the sentencing decisions to which your counsel has referred me, namely, *R v Garrard* [2021] VSC 154, *R v Oakley* [2021] VSC 430, *DPP v Manuel* [2021] VSC 568, *R* *v Smart* *& Ors* [2023] VSC 469 and *DPP v Clifford* [2025] VSC 199.

[77] In considering those decisions, I bear in mind that, for any criminal offence, the range of factors, relating to the offending itself, and to the circumstances of the offender, necessarily vary significantly, so it is never a straightforward task to identify the appropriate range of sentence. Nevertheless, the decisions, to which I have been referred, have, in a broad sense, assisted to indicate the current sentencing practices that are relevant in respect of the offence of manslaughter, committed by you. As the High Court has emphasised, it is important to keep in mind that current sentencing practices are but one factor, out of many, which are relevant to be taken into account in the determination of your sentence: *DPP (Vic) v Dalgliesh (a pseudonym)* (2017) 262 CLR 428, 434 [5]–[9] & 453–4 [82].

[78] The principles, that apply to the determination of your sentence, are well established. It is necessary that the sentences, that I impose on you, be sufficient to express the condemnation by the Court, and the community, of your violent offending, and, in the case of the offence of manslaughter, to vindicate the value of the life of each individual member of our community.

[79] In addition, the sentences must be sufficiently severe to constitute a general deterrent, by sending a clear message to any person, who might be minded to engage in violent conduct of the kind resorted to by you in each of the two offences, that such conduct will be met with a stern sentence, involving the deprivation of the offender’s right to remain at liberty within our society for a significant period of time.

[80] The purpose of general deterrence is of particular relevance in the present case, given the proliferation of cases, which have come before the courts in recent times, involving the indiscriminate use of knives, and other such weapons, by young persons to commit serious criminal offences in our society. Such persons must understand that, upon apprehension and being brought before the Court, their offending will be met with stern sentences, involving a significant deprivation of their liberty.

[81] In addition, it is important that the sentence, that I impose on you, is sufficient to ensure that you yourself understand that any further conduct, of the kind to which you resorted in each of the two offences in this case, will be met with severe consequences to you.

[82] The two offences, for which you are to be sentenced, are separate offences. Nevertheless, the requirement, that the total effective sentence not exceed that which is appropriate in the circumstances, has the effect that there should be a reasonably substantial degree of concurrency between the sentences imposed on each of the two charges. Furthermore, in the interests of the community, it is important that there be a sufficient potential period of parole available to you to enable your successful rehabilitation into the community while you are subject to supervision.”

In *R v K*Y [2022] VSC 805 the offender – who was aged 16 at the time of the offence and 19 at the time of sentence – pleaded guilty just prior to trial to one count of manslaughter. The deceased had been struck with a baseball bat by another person (subsequently acquitted of manslaughter by a jury after a trial that lasted several weeks), causing the deceased to fall heavily onto the roadway and fracturing his skull. KY had then kicked and stomped on the severely injured victim’s head, thereby contributing to the victim’s death. At [71] Jane Dixon J said to KY:

“Following receipt of [the pre-sentence report, the prosecutor] made the entirely fair concession that exceptional circumstances could be made out in your case. He referred to the impulsive nature of your offending, your lack of criminal history or pending charges, the peer presence that provided a context to the offending, your young age at the time of the offence, your improved behaviour in the three years since the offence including increased victim empathy, abstinence from drugs and avoidance of negative peer associations, gainful employment, and the support of your family and JT’s family, along with your adjustment disorder and history of trauma within your own family. It was accepted by the Crown that both ss 32(1)(a) and (b) of the Sentencing Act were made out in your case.”

At [72]-[82] her Honour concurred with the prosecutor’s concession, detailing nine matters which support a finding of ‘exceptional circumstances’. These matters included the offender’s youth, remorse, lack of criminal antecedents, his increased awareness of the gravity of his offending and his very good prospects for rehabilitation. The consequence of the finding of ‘exceptional circumstances’ was that although manslaughter is a Category A serious youth offence, s.32(2C) of the *Sentencing Act 1991* – read in conjunction with ss.32(1)(a) and (b) – did not prevent her Honour from imposing a YJC sentence. In ultimately sentencing KY to 2y YJC detention, her Honour said at [84]-[86]:

“Whilst the nature of the offence to which you have pleaded guilty is a very serious offence, your age at the time of the offending, your otherwise good character, and your lack of other offending make it appropriate to impose a Youth Justice Centre order rather than a term of imprisonment.

I have had regard to the principle of parsimony in s 5(3) of the Sentencing Act 1991.

Taking into account all of the composite considerations to which I have referred, I am satisfied that the purposes of sentencing and the interests of the community will be served by the imposition of a Youth Justice Centre order in your case.”

In *DPP v ST* [2023] VSC 49 the offender – who was aged 15 at the time of the offence and 18 at the time of sentence – had pleaded guilty to manslaughter. He had brandished a small knife during a group attack on a 15 year old victim resulting in a single fatal stab wound. The Crown could not exclude that the infliction of the stab wound may have been accidental. He had no prior criminal history and very good prospects of rehabilitation. In imposing a sentence of 2y YJC detention and declaring that 237 days of pre-sentence detention be reckoned as already served, Fox J said at [45]‑[49]:

[45] “Manslaughter is a ‘Category A serious youth offence’ as defined in s 3 of the Act. That classification does not dictate any particular sentencing outcome. I note the principle of parsimony found in s 5(3) of the Act is not displaced, unlike when courts are dealing with a Category 2 offence. However, pursuant to s 32(2C), I must not sentence you to a youth justice centre order unless I am satisfied that exceptional circumstances exist. Your counsel submitted that exceptional circumstances exist in your case, but maintained you should not receive any further period of detention. The prosecution conceded it would be open to the court to be satisfied exceptional circumstances exist, and submitted your offending must be punished by some form of further detention or incarceration.

[46] There are a number of factors which, in combination, satisfy me that exceptional circumstances exist here. Those matters include the following: you were a child at the time of the offence, which reduces your moral culpability; you have very good prospects of rehabilitation and strong family support; you have a good work ethic, and plans for the future; for the past 14 months, you have been on bail without any form of Court-ordered supervision, during which time you have performed well and remained offence-free; at the time of the offending, you had no criminal history and any subsequent matters were dealt with by way of a without-conviction bond; and you pleaded guilty to the offence. Additionally, the necessary pre-sentence report was obtained and I am satisfied that both of the alternative requirements of s 32(1) of the Act are met. Specifically, there are reasonable prospects for your rehabilitation, and you are particularly impressionable and immature, and are likely to be subjected to undesirable influences if sent to an adult prison. Finally, while the prosecution’s concession is not determinative, it contributes in part to my finding that exceptional circumstances exist in your case.”

[47] …

[48] Sentencing young offenders who were children at the time they offended is never easy. On the one hand, your successful rehabilitation is an important and achievable sentencing purpose. You are progressing well in Queensland, and there has been no further trouble since you moved there. You have strong family support. You have been working casually with your auntie as a warehouse assistant which you enjoy, and you have realistic future goals and plans. If you are returned to detention, your rehabilitation will be interrupted, and you will be in detention in Victoria while your immediate family are in Queensland.

[49] On the other hand, your rehabilitation is not the only consideration here. The circumstances of this incident appear to be sadly becoming more common. That is, teenagers are bringing knives to fights, with the tragic result that other young people are being killed. General deterrence – that is, the need for the sentence I impose to send a message to other would-be offenders – has some relevance here, despite your young age. It is also necessary to publicly denounce what you did, and punish you for causing the death of [S]. In my view, a sentence that consists of no further period of detention cannot adequately meet all the requirements of sentencing.”

In *DPP v JN* [2023] VSC 500 the offender – who was aged 17 at the time of the offence and 18 at the time of sentence – had pleaded guilty to manslaughter by unlawful and dangerous act. The offender had stabbed the 17 year old deceased once to the head without any warning using a screwdriver that he had taken to the party where the offence occurred. The deceased was not behaving aggressively and had no weapon. Her Honour added at [18]: “It is also a serious feature of this offending that you stabbed [the deceased] in front of other children and young people.” The offender had prior convictions and was diagnosed with PTSD, schizophrenia and autism spectrum disorder in custody. Verdins principles were applicable and the offender had prospects of rehabilitation if suitable treatment and counselling was undertaken. In imposing a sentence of IMP6y/4y, Hollingworth J said at [67]‑[68]:

[67] “Although I have concerns about the prospect of you being sent to an adult prison at this relatively early stage of your treatment for serious mental illnesses, I am not satisfied that a youth justice centre order is appropriate, given the seriousness of your offending and your past history.

[68] However, this is an appropriate case in which to request the Adult Parole Board to consider transferring you to the youth justice system until you are 21 under s.471 of the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005*. In making that recommendation, I strongly urge the Adult Parole Board to have regard to the expert opinion of Dr [D] … and to focus on your conduct since you returned from TEH rather than during the period when you were not receiving adequate treatment.”

In *DPP v JA & Ors* [2023] VSC 531 a 16 year old offender JA had pleaded guilty to manslaughter arising out of his involvement – as part of a large group of youths – in a frenzied attack with multiple knives on an unarmed youth [V], culminating in V’s death. The circumstances of the offending are detailed in **subsection 10.3.3.5B and section 11.1.3** above. Hollingworth J imposed a sentence of 4y detention in a youth justice centre.

In *DPP v ZZ* [2024] VSC 762 a 15 year old offender ZZ had pleaded guilty to manslaughter by stabbing in the course of a group attack on a 20 year old member [H] of a rival gang at the St Kilda foreshore. ZZ had subsequent Children’s Court convictions for which he was close to completing a sentence of 2y detention in a YJC. In relation to the high objective gravity of ZZ’s offending, Jane Dixon J said at [31]‑[34]:

[31] “The following matters were relied on by the Crown as markers of the high objective gravity of your crime:

(a) The brazenness of the offending occurring during daylight hours in a densely populated seaside area, exposing many members of the public to horrific violence;

(b) The use of knives, including your decision to carry a knife while attending the St Kilda foreshore, in company with others who also were carrying knives, and your resort to using your weapon;

(c) The offending occurring in company;

(d) The victim being attacked while he was defenceless on the ground and while outnumbered by members of your group, as well as being unarmed and not one of the initial aggressors from Group 1;

(e) The return of you and your group to the scene soon after the stabbing, with verbal abuse and spitting, which further terrified members of the public and showed disregard for the victim as he lay dying;

(f) The post-offending pursuit of the lone male afterwards, a 16 year old New Zealander; and

(g) Your lies to police about your previous whereabouts when speaking to police after the offending, showing a continuing defiant attitude.

[32] In considering these matters relied on by the Crown, I note that your behaviour following the commission of the crime, whilst contextually relevant is not part of the offence of manslaughter: see, eg, *R v De Simoni* (1981) 147 CLR 383; *DPP v McMaster* (2008) 19 VR 191, 200; *LN v R* [2020] NSWCCA 131, [40]–[41]; *R v Nobile* [2006] VSCA 211, [8]; and the discussion in *Jackson v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 95, [66]; see also, eg, Judicial College of Victoria, Victorian Sentencing Manual (4th ed, 2023) 89–90 [5.2.8.5], 306 [21.3.2].

I also take into account my assessment as to:

1. The relatively spontaneous and un-premeditated nature in which the conflict erupted and in which [H] ultimately lost his life;
2. The fact that your Group of 7 males was confronted by a much larger group of 13 males, and that it was a member of Group 1 who first produced a knife.

[33] However, these latter aspects provide only slight mitigation of objective gravity. In considering the appalling way in which [H] lost his life, I endorse the remarks of Taylor J in *R v Tafa* [2022] VSC 466 at [47]:

Bravery is not demonstrated nor is respect found in pack behaviour. Being a member of a gang masks cowardice. True courage is shown by stepping away from a group bent on unlawful, violent behaviour and indeed, by opposing it.

[34] The Crown submitted, and I accept, that despite your youth, general deterrence is an important sentencing purpose because of the frequency of youth knife crime and its corrosive effect on community safety, amplifying the need for courts to respond appropriately.

At [77]-[82] her Honour said:

[77] “[The prosecutor] conceded that youthfulness is relevant to an assessment of subjective culpability and to your rehabilitative prospects. She referred to the recent statements of principle of Hollingworth J in *DPP v JA & Ors* [2023] VSC 531, [25]-[27], highlighting the delicate balance of factors to be weighed in cases such as yours. This includes recognition that children are understood to be less mature, less able to form moral judgments or control their impulses, and less aware of the seriousness and consequences of their actions, so that youthful actions may be committed impulsively. The Court must consider the public benefit in rehabilitating a young offender whilst also giving weight to offence gravity, since the more serious the offending, the less weight that can be given to youthfulness as a factor in mitigation.

[78] [The prosecutor] emphasised the importance of giving prominence to the nature and seriousness of your offence alongside consideration of your age, character and past history, in deciding if a YJC order is warranted: *Sentencing Act 1991* s 32(2).

[79] It was put by the Crown, and I accept, that your sentence should reflect denunciation and just punishment, as well as specific and general deterrence. Community protection was also submitted to be relevant because of the seriousness and public nature of the offence before the Court, grounded as it was in gang rivalry, and also in light of your other offending. In this regard it was also noted that when you were arrested in mid-December you were found in possession of a knife in circumstances where you had been involved in the crime before the Court only 11 days earlier.

[80] [The prosecutor] submitted that even if you meet the tests under s 32(1)(a) and/or (b) of the Act, your case does not overcome the need to show exceptional circumstances. You have, after all, accepted guilt of stabbing the deceased even though the Crown does not allege that you inflicted the fatal wound. Reliance was placed on the case of *Castillo (a pseudonym) v The King* [2023] VSCA 150, and it was argued that the combined factors referred to by [defence counsel] to invoke exceptional circumstances were routine, and not exceptional, individually or in combination. However, [the prosecutor] allowed that if the Court were satisfied that exceptional circumstances were made out, then the prerequisite criteria for a YJC order would otherwise leave such a sentence open for the Court to impose. She also conceded that totality was a relevant consideration for the Court.

[81] In considering each side’s submission on disposition, firstly, I make plain that based on the Newton Report and the Youth Justice report I find that both limbs of s 32(1) of the Act are met in your case, in terms of consideration of an order for YJC.53 I have also had regard to s 32(2), and note that although the nature of the offence is serious, you were only one of a number of young people embroiled in the incident and you are standing sentence for the most serious charge of all those involved. Whilst you have now been sentenced for a series of concerning offences committed prior to 4 December 2022, you had not been dealt with for those matters before being arrested for the current charge. Although the maximum available sentence of YJC is 4 years, that is still a lengthy sentence for a young person who went into youth detention at the age of 15 and who has been in custody for nearly two years and who is yet to commence serving a sentence for the current offence.

[82] Pursuant to s 32(2C) of the Act, I am also satisfied that exceptional circumstances exist justifying the imposition of a YJC order…”

Jane Dixon J also noted that–

* there were some *Bugmy* factors;
* ZZ had reasonable prospects of rehabilitation; and
* the most relevant comparative cases are those of *R v Chol* [2022] VSC 341; *DPP v JA & Ors* [2023] VSC 531 and *DPP v ST* [2023] VSC 49.

Her Honour imposed a sentence of 4y YJC to be served concurrently with the remainder of the sentence ZZ was currently undergoing. But for the plea of guilty she would have imposed a sentence of IMP6y/4y. For reasons detailed at [95]-[105] her Honour also ordered that a DNA retention order be made in respect of ZZ pursuant to s.464ZFB(1) of the *Crimes Act 1958*.

In *R v MA* [2023] VSC 613 a 17 year old offender MA had been charged with murder arising out of him approaching AC (aged 41) at a train station in the wee hours while concealing a large knife. MA jabbed at AC with the knife, without intending to stab him, but the blade entered AC’s chest accidentally and penetrated ten centimetres, causing internal injuries. AC fled to a friend’s residence nearby but bled to death in a driveway. The whole incident, except for the moment of stabbing, was captured on CCTV. MA was originally charged with common law murder on the basis of an alleged intention to cause really serious injury (not death). DPP rejected MA’s early offer to plead guilty to manslaughter. Prior to trial MA failed to renew the plea offer, despite awareness DPP would have accepted then. At trial, judge ruled no case to answer on murder, entered acquittal on that charge, and left manslaughter to jury. MA put prosecution to proof on identity, but accepted perpetrator committed manslaughter. Jury returned verdict of guilty of manslaughter. Offence serious, but less so than many other manslaughters. Profound victim impact. Prior appearances in NSW for offences of violence. MA was on youth parole and bail in NSW at time of offence. Hardship of custody given pandemic restrictions, ADHD, and family in NSW. MA now 19, but immature and impressionable, had reasonable prospects of rehabilitation. Importance of youth. Relevance of general and specific deterrence, just punishment, denunciation, community protection, and rehabilitation — Parsimony — Current sentencing practices — MA held in youth justice centre (YJC) since arrest in January 2022. MA vulnerable to more negative influences in adult prison. Sentence of detention in YJC may have been open had MA’s plea offer been accepted in 2022. The parties submitted imprisonment was the only available sentence now, but with a shorter non-parole period than usual. IMP6y/3y. The Court recommended to Adult Parole Board that MA remain in YJC to serve prison sentence.

In *DPP v Ali & Ors* [2024] VSC 601 four youthful coffenders – whose ages at the time of offending and at the time of sentencing were Ali:18y|20y5m, MI:17y|19y4m, MB:17y|19y, AS:16y|18y2m – had been charged with the murder of Mr Mahat in the aftermath of a group attack on another victim Mr Abdi who had been kidnapped and subsequently stabbed by other cooffenders. Following a sentence indication Ali, MI, MB & AS pleaded guilty to manslaughter of Mr Mahat by unlawful and dangerous act. At [31]‑[34], [36]-[37] & [39]-[42] Incerti J said:

[31] “Manslaughter is a serious offence and I consider that your offending has serious features. You appeared to engage in your conduct as an act of retaliation. The attack was not impulsive and clearly premeditated.

[32] Although I accept that you were not involved in the kidnapping [of Mr Abdi], you were all part of the broader group and became party to an agreement to assault the deceased by the time you were at Yulong Park. You were aware that your co-accused were in possession of knives, and witnessed the brutal assault inflicted on Mr Abdi. You were all present at the scene when Mr Mahat was killed. Mr Mahat was rendered defenceless when the white Corolla deliberately ran him down. He was then attacked and stabbed while surrounded by a group of people.

[33] The agreement you reached at Yulong Park set in motion a series of events that ultimately led to Mr Mahat’s tragic death. Mr Mahat was just 25 years old when he died. Considering this, the objective gravity of the offending is at the higher end.

[34] The next relevant matter is your age. The youth of an offender is a primary sentencing consideration: *R v Mills* [1998] 4 VR 235, 241 (Batt JA). For the purpose of determining whether you are considered ‘youthful’, your age is to be considered at the date of sentencing: *Ibid.*…

[36] I accept that each of you is significantly less to blame for your conduct than an adult who had behaved in the same way: see *CNK v The Queen* (2011) 32 VR 641, 661 [71]. Your youth is significant to an assessment of your prospects of rehabilitation. I consider your youth at the time of the offending, and at the time of sentence, a relevant mitigating factor. Nevertheless, you have committed a serious crime in serious circumstances and the weight to be given to your age must be appropriately moderated.

[37] You are all also entitled to a sentencing discount on account of your pleas of guilty, which were entered at an early opportunity. Your plea facilitates the course of justice and serves a utilitarian value, avoiding the need for what could have been a lengthy trial, and one which would no doubt have been distressing for Mr Mahat’s family and friends. This incident occurred almost two years ago. You were all initially charged with murder. It was not until June and July this year, following sentence indications given by me, that you pleaded guilty to the charge of manslaughter. Given your age and as a matter of fairness, your sentences should reflect that you have had a charge of murder hanging over your head for almost 18 months…

[39] There are other factors that I am required by law to consider when imposing a sentence: see s.5(1) *Sentencing Act 1991*. General and specific deterrence, denunciation and just punishment require some recognition in determining your sentence. Those objectives will be met by the imposition of a custodial sentence. General and specific deterrence are particularly important sentencing considerations in this case. The offending was carried out in the middle of the day and involved the use of knives. This type of offending has reached a concerning level in our community. It must be made clear that it is unacceptable for young people to take matters into their own hands and to resort to such terrible conduct. It is important that my sentence reflect the Court’s, and the public’s, condemnation of such violence.

[40] Community protection is also an important consideration. However, this is firmly linked to your rehabilitation, which I consider can be achieved through targeted programs for you.

[41] I have had regard to current sentencing practices, particularly the sentences in *DPP v ST* [2023] VSC 49, *DPP v JA & Ors* [2023] VSC 531 and *R v KV* [2022] VSC 805.

[42] I have also had regard to the common law principle of parsimony, reflected in s.5(3) of the *Sentencing Act 1991*, and I have not imposed sentences on you that exceed the sentencing purposes.”

Incerti J found that exceptional circumstances existed pursuant to s.32C(2C) of the *Sentencing Act 1991* to enable a YJC order to be made for MI, MB & AS. Her Honour imposed the following sentences on the charge of manslaughter: Ali: IMP4y/2y9m, MI: YJC2y, MB: YJC3y, AS: YJC3y.

Other cases involving sentencing for **manslaughter** include:

* *R v Pollock* [2004] VSC 189 per Warren CJ; *R v Winter* [2004] VSC 329 per Osborn J; *DPP v Reynolds & Ors* [2004] VSC 533 per Cummins J; *R v Andos & Basile* [2005] VSC 22 at [71]-[72] per Kaye J; *R v Newling* [2005] VSC 54 per Teague J; *R v Grieef* [2005] VSC 60 per Teague J; *R v LMA* [2005] VSC 152 per Teague J; *R v Blundell* [2005] VSC 175 per Kellam J; *R v Thao Thi Tran* [2005] VSC 220 per Kaye J; *R v Coldbeck* [2005] VSC 187 per Hollingworth J, esp. at [40]‑[42] & [62]-[63]; *R v Bangard* [2005] VSCA 313; *R v Detenamo* [2005] VSC 411; *R v Ross* [2005] VSC 428; *R v Martin* [2005] VSC 497; *R v Flower* [2005] VSC 462; *DPP v Wilson* [2006] VSC 23; *R v Celso Cuenco* [2006] VSC 7; *R v Lamb* [2006] VSC 84; *R v Nolan* [2006] VSC 85; *R v Stenhouse* [2006] VSC 147; *R v BTP* [2006] VSC 374; *DPP v Lewis* [2006] VSC 393; *R v Vandergulik* [2009] VSC 3 at [23]-[24]; *R v Smart* [2018] VSC 568 & *R v Levy* [2018] VSC 567;
* *R v Ibrahim* [2006] VSC 96 per Nettle JA [“manslaughter of the gravest kind”];
* *R v D’Aloisio* [2006] VSC 216 [assaults causing death of 6 year old son];
* *R v Randall* [2007] VSC 35 [manslaughter of mother by son];
* *R v Stein* [2006] VSC 345 [consensual bondage];
* *R v McMaster* [2007] VSC 133 [brutal systematic attacks on defacto’s 5 year old child];
* *R v Stratton* [2007] VSC 132 & *R v Helal* [2007] VSC 135 [firearm discharged in course of burglary to steal cannabis crop];
* *R v Oznek* [2007] VSC 192 [stabbing in fight re drug proceeds];
* *DPP v Arney* [2007] VSCA 126 [vicious bashing of defendant’s 5 month old baby];
* *R v Detenamo* [2007] VSCA 160 [professional weightlifter strangled sex worker];
* *DPP v Felsbourg* [2008] VSC 20 [stabbing in anger over 30 times of former boyfriend];
* *R v Lovett* [2008] VSC 60 [victim stabbed in neck];
* *R v Laracy (Sentence)* [2008] VSC 67 [application of ligature to defacto’s neck];
* *R v Casey* [2006] VSC 146; [2008] VSCA 53 [stabbing of brother];
* *R v Robert Shane Lovett* [2008] VSCA 262 [unpremeditated stabbing by intellectually impaired 26 yr old];
* *R v Rajbinder Singh Shahi* [2008] VSCA 281 [30 year old taxi driver who ran down passenger];
* *R v AO* [2009] VSC 13 [16 year old defendant hit deceased on head with bottle in course of armed robbery];
* *R v Kulla Kulla* [2010] VSC 60 [23 year old Aboriginal woman stabbed her partner in the chest – 6y/3y];
* *DPP v Sazdov* [2010] VSC 118 [unprovoked vicious violent attack on defenceless victims by young men acting on concert but in which accused’s involvement and culpability was less than that of the co-accused];
* *DPP v Akotou* [2010] VSC 364 [22 year old Tongan man with no priors stomped or kicked deceased in head in alcohol and drug related violence outside a hotel – 10y/7y];
* *R v Polutele* [2011] VSC 381 [manslaughter by unlawful and dangerous act – 24 year old offender punched deceased in head rendering him unconscious whereupon co-accused *Akotou* stomped on deceased’s head – 10y/7y];
* *R v Reid* [2010] VSCA 234 [manslaughter by criminal negligence – alcoholic man bashing alcoholic de facto wife on head with wine cup – 5y/3y];
* *R v Nghia Nguyen* [manslaughter by criminal negligence – 22 year old offender used “ice” and killed friend by discharge of firearm – previous violent convictions – 6y/4y];
* *R v Andreevski & Ors* [2010] VSC 618 [3 youthful offenders aged 22, 22 & 17 at the time of sentencing found guilty of manslaughter, recklessly causing serious injury/injury and affray in “pay-back” fight – genuine remorse and good prospects of rehabilitation – longer than usual parole period because of youth – total sentences 5y6m/3y, 6y/3y9m & 6y6m/3y6m respectively];
* *R v Borthwick* [2010] VSC 618 [victim struck by motor vehicle driven by 19 year old offender – serious example of manslaughter by criminal negligence – good prospects for rehabilitation – 7y6m/5y];
* *R v Freeman* [2010] VSC 346 [‘one punch’ – no remorse – psychiatric history – 8y6m/6y];
* *R v Docking* [2010] VSC 566 [punch to head – fractured skull – use of alcohol – previous violent convictions – 8y6m/5y6m];
* *Derek Bedson v The Queen* [2011] VSCA 379 [manslaughter & reckless conduct endangering life – 21 YO offender’s intention to shoot at a motorcycle clubhouse – his brother deliberately shot two persons outside the clubhouse – good prospects of rehabilitation – 8y/5y];
* *DPP v Tate* [2011] VSC 173 [after heavy drinking session stabbed friend with steak knife being used to eat dinner – see list of comparable cases in footnotes 4 & 5 in paragraph [37] – 10y/7y6m];
* *R v Brooks* [2011] VSC 211 [victim was a friend and housemate of accused – both engaged in excessive alcohol use – accused suffered from epilepsy and schizophrenia and had memory of the events – cause of death was blunt force abdominal injuries – 8y/5y];
* *R v Bourbaud* [2011] VSC 374 [fight involving accused & deceased – single stab wound to deceased’s back causing death – 9y/6y];
* *R v Grimmett* [2011] VSC 506 [female victim bashed and strangled – accused intoxicated- prior conviction for intentionally causing injury to female – 11y/8y];
* *R v McNiven* [2011] VSC 569 [44 yr old intellectually compromised and alcoholic Aboriginal woman poured petrol on older man who had touched her breasts – 7y/4y];
* *R v Saleh* [2012] VSC 120 [victim struck by motor vehicle driven by offender after earlier altercation and pelting of motor vehicles – 8½y/6y];
* *DPP v Smith* [2012] VSC 314 [23 year old man with unblemished record hunting deer in bush with friends when accidentally mistook friend for deer and shot and killed him – 5y adjourned undertaking];
* *DPP v Kelly* [2012] VSC 398 [severe beating of victim by fists by intoxicated Aboriginal man with a long history of alcohol related previous offending – 7½y/5y];
* *R v Drummond* [2012] VSC 505 [serious and sustained attack on partner in her home and in the presence of teenage daughter – relevant prior convictions and offending occurred during operational period of suspended sentence – 10y/7y];
* *R v Scott* [2012] VSC 514 [victim struck by motor vehicle driven by angry 19 year old offender after earlier altercation between offender and other youths outside a party from which he had been excluded – 8½y/6y];
* *R v Pitt* [2012] VSC 591 [single stab to partner by 68 year old female with no prior convictions – remorse – 7y/4y6m];
* *R v Borthwick* [2012] VSCA 180 [19 year old victim struck by motor vehicle driven by 18 year old offender after a period of hostility arising from a perception by the offender that the victim was intruding on his relationship with his girlfriend – 7y6m/5y];
* *R v Kells* [2013] VSCA 7 [accused stabbed her partner once in the chest during an argument about money and mobile phones she claimed he had stolen from her – 8y/5y];
* *R v Carleton* [2014] VSC 19 [accused a long-standing alcoholic punched and stomped on victim in an outburst of anger – remorse – rehabilitation – 7y6m/5y6m];
* *R v Parker* [2013] VSC 479 [one punch manslaughter by offender on suspended sentence and family violence order at the time [8y{+6m}/6y3m];
* *R v Torun* [2014] VSC 146 [manslaughter by unlawful and dangerous act – 24 year old accused pointed gun at his girlfriend and pulled the trigger deliberately having failed, because of his drug-addled state, to remember he had loaded the gun earlier – early plea guilty – 8y/5y];
* *R v Howard* [2014] VSC 194 [loaded handgun taken by 64 year old accused to potential confrontation with victim – knowledge that daughter had been assaulted by victim the previous evening – 8y/5y3m];
* *DPP v Brandon Osborn* [2018] VSCA 207 [respondent shot partner in head at close range; no challenge to judge’s finding that respondent did not intend gun to discharge when he pulled trigger – 9y2m/6y not manifestly inadequate];
* *Shengliang Wan v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 217 [23YO student tried for murder but found guilty of manslaughter – played active role in organised fight about a girl and threw deceased on ground and stomped on his head five times – 11y/7y6m];
* *R v Russo* [2018] VSC 395 [manslaughter by criminal negligence – accidental discharge of firearm – 43YO accused angry at deceased for running over his dog and leaving it for dead approached deceased’s vehicle and stumbled causing barrel of gun to strike driver’s side window causing defective gun to discharge without pulling trigger – plea guilty despite arguable defence – 5y/2y6m – see also cases referred to in footnotes to [192]-[194];
* *R v Kerry Jones* [2018] VSC 415 – 40YO accused stabbed partner in course of domestic argument – accused previously convicted of using a knife to stab a partner during a domestic dispute – genuine remorse – 9y/7y];
* *R v Naddaf* [2018] VSC 429 [manslaughter by criminal negligence – accused left his seriously injured wife on a hard tiled bathroom floor for 4-5 days – diagnosis of anti-social personality disorder, adjustment disorder and mild intellectual development disorder but disorders not causally linked to offending – 11y/8y]; [2020] VSCA 41 [leave to appeal refused];
* *DPP v Curtin* [2018] VSC 493 [plea guilty by 59YO who while intoxicated caused a single stab to chest of deceased – chronic lymphocytic leukaemia but stable long-term prognosis – 8y/6y];
* *R v Yucel* [2018] VSC 506 [plea guilty to shooting victim twice – accused had ongoing, genuine and reasonable fear of being shot – early plea – genuine remorse – 5y/3y];
* *R v O’Connor* [2018] VSC 516 [plea guilty to stabbing victim with sharpened screwdriver multiple times in the course of a dynamic physical fight – mid-range seriousness of offending – prior history of violence – 10y/7y – but for plea of guilty 12y/9y];
* *Lee v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 343 [plea guilty to manslaughter by unlawful and dangerous act – single punch to head of victim cusing non-survivable brain injury – 33 year old accused with no prior convictions – 8y/5y];
* *DPP v Smith* [2018] VSC 684 [offer accepted of plea of guilty to charge of manslaughter after accused committed on but before trial of charge of murder — accused man non-consensually strangled or choked woman to death during consensual sexual activity — man physically strong and woman small and petite — killing took place in confined space of motor vehicle, rendering woman virtually defenceless — accused had previously caused physical distress to another woman during strangling and choking in similar circumstances — actions of accused associated with disrespectful, contemptuous and misogynistic views and opinions about women and deceased — limited remorse — accused buried body of victim and evaded responsibility for her death by telling lies and blaming others for the killing — as result of covert police operation, accused revealed location of victim’s grave 20 months later — 13y/10y];
* *DPP v Yucel* [2019] VSCA 53 [28 year old offender shot victim in belief he was in imminent danger of being shot himself – offender’s state of mind one of ongoing, genuine and reasonable fear – case a ‘notch’ above self-defence – early plea – genuine remorse – delay – good prospects of rehabilitation – IMP5y/3y not manifestly inadequate in unusual circumstances – appeal dismissed];
* *R v Allan* [2019] VSC 18 [23 year old offender pleaded guilty to manslaughter by unlawful and dangerous act – altercation in street – accused punched deceased to the face, causing deceased to fall a second time – cccused kicked motionless deceased to the upper body and stomped on deceased’s head more than once, and multiple times again later while unconscious – accused injured in further altercation with others – objective gravity of offence severe in particularly vicious attack – prior convictions for violence – 10y/7y];
* *R v Giannioudis* [2019] VSC 75 [29 year old female heroin trafficker who had suffered profound childhood deprivation and was herself a heroin addict pleaded guilty to stabbing a former customer – reasonable prospects of rehabilitation – 8y/5y6m];
* *R v BA & Stanley* [2019] VSC 90 [killing by unlawful and dangerous act during enforcement of a drug debt – victim abandoned – attempt to dispose of body and to sever feet to manoeuvre body into barrel – attempt to incinerate body – prior and subsequent criminal history – 11y/9y {BA} & 10y/8y {Stanley}];
* *R v Phan* [2019] VSC 153 [plea guilty to stabbing co-resident at Salvation Army Crisis Accommodation Centre – history of schizophrenia – 8y/5y6m];
* *DPP v Colton* [2019] VSC 154 [plea guilty – deceased killed in course of brutal, prolonged, unprovoked attack by 3 offenders which was instigated by the offender – prior convictions for violence – some remorse – 11y/8y];
* *DPP v Russo* [2019] VSCA 129 esp at [56]-[68] [plea guilty to manslaughter by criminal negligence – respondent shot victim in head as he approached victim’s vehicle in anger and accidentally discharged loaded shotgun – 5y/2y6m];
* *R v Samaras* [2019] VSC 120 [plea guilty – unintentional shooting of domestic partner during course of a struggle – handgun deliberately discharged by accused in close proximity to deceased – no attempt to seek medical assistance – avoidance of authorities and disposal of firearm – 11y/8y];
* *DPP v Esmali* [2019] VSC 218 [plea not guilty – 22 year old offender with numerous prior convictions – single strike or punch to the head or neck of victim – victim was a surgeon who was trying to get offender to leave a hospital – statutory minimum non-parole period per s.9C *Sentencing Act* applicable in absence of ‘special reason’ – 10y6m/10y]; [2020] VSCA 63 [leave to appeal refused];
* *R v Stacey Edwards* [2019] VSC 234 [early plea guilty to manslaughter by unlawful and dangerous act – stabbing of domestic partner – single stab wound to neck in context of family violence – drug dependency – genuine remorse – childhood disadvantage reducing moral culpability – no priors – good prospects of rehabilitation – delay – 9y/6y9m]; sentence upheld on appeal [2020] VSCA 339.
* *DPP v Ristevski* [2019] VSC 253 [plea guilty to manslaughter by unlawful and dangerous act – offender killed wife of 27 years in marital home and disposed of her body which was not found for 8 months – cause of death unable to be determined due to decomposition of body – how or why offender killed wife unknown – no priors – good prospects of rehabilitation – 9y/6y];
* *DPP v White* [2019] VSC 400 esp at [74] [plea guilty to shooting in chest in course of scuffle in which larger victim “came at” accused with a knife – 6y6m/3y6m]; [2020] VSCA 37 [DPP appeal allowed and sentence increased to 9y/6y];
* *R v Awad* [2019] VSC 706 [plea guilty – genuine remorse – excessive self-defence – single knife wound to chest of victim after consumption of drugs and recent epileptic fit – moderately extensive criminal history – imprisonment more onerous due to epilepsy – 7y/5y];
* *R v Amy Tran* [2019] VSC 822 [early plea of guilty – unprovoked attack upon elderly woman in suburban street causing substantial injuries to victim who fell on to concrete driveway – accused suffering from schizophrenia and was behaving strangely at the scene – 7y/4y6m];
* *Levy v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 44 [plea guilty – victim died from injuries sustained in course of assault by applicant and two co-offenders related to overdue rent – applicant cooperated with authorities and gave undertaking to give evidence against main offender – main offender sentenced to IMP11y – applicant sentenced to IMP7y6m/4y6m - Principle of parity infringed – applicant re-sentenced to IMP5y6m/3y6m];
* *R v Ashman* [2020] VSC 105 [49 year old Aboriginal man shot neighbour in chest in course of a struggle over a shotgun – plea guilty – remorse – general deterrence, denuncxiation and just punishment important – specific deterrence and community protection less important – 6y/4y];
* *DPP v Williams & Godfrey* [2020] VSC 483 [32 & 27 year old offenders fired a gun into a vehicle occupied by the deceased – plea guilty - W: IMP9y G: IMP 7y];
* *DPP v Dolhugey* [2020] VSC 704 [Young woman with personality disorder and impaired mental functioning and a history of childhood abuse and deprivation strangled a man she had met on a “dating website” – some premeditation – acquitted of murder but had offered to plead guilty to manslaughter, objectively a very serious example thereof – IMP9y/5y6m];
* *DPP v Wang (No 2)* [2020] VSC 884 [68 year old accused found guilty of killing his 57 year old sister by an unlawful and dangerous act – IMP10y/6y4m];
* *R v Scott* [2021] VSC 81 [40 year old accused punched deceased twice to face – deceased rendered unconscious by second blow, then collapsed on to path – PG – IMP9y/6y];
* *R v Field* [2021] VSC 134 [38 year old accused pleaded guilty to manslaughter of his grandmother – he had ingest magic mushrooms which had an unexpected effect – he pushed grandmother to the floor and kicked her to abdomen – she ultimately died of abdominal injuries – IMP7y6m/4y9m];
* *R v Taylor* [2021] VSC 69 + 219 [in a contested plea the 48 year old accused pleaded guilty to manslaughter of a neighbour by striking him in the back with a bladed weapon in responding unreasonably to a threat to the accused’s wife – IMP8y6m/6y];
* *R v Dellamarta* [2021] VSC 220 [41 year old accused pleaded guilty to manslaughter of her partner by stabbing him once in the chest – accused has lifelong intellectual disability and persistent depressive disorder – no causal connection between disability/disorder and offending but disability relevant to burden of imprisonment – IMP7y6m/5y];
* *DPP v Ackerley (No 2)* [2021] VSC 257 [50 year old accused with intellectual disability pleaded guilty to manslaughter by stabbing of a housemate who had assaulted him – IMP6y6m/4y];
* *DPP v Janson* [2021] VSC 298 [32 year old accused pleaded guilty to manslaughter by grabbing the steering wheel of a moving car, causing it to swerve into the oncoming lane into the path of an incoming motorcycle – IMP9y/6y];
* *DPP v Timoteo & Ors* [2021] VSC 312 [3 cooffenders T aged 24, B aged 24 and F aged 21 pleaded guilty to manslaughter, causing serious injury intentionally and common assault in the course of an attack by 2 cooffenders against a single victim and a series of attacks by the 3 cooffenders against 4 victims – the attacks were in broad daylight on public streets and the offenders were armed with weapons – T: IMP11y10m/8y9m; B-IMP11y2m/8y2m; F-IMP10y1m/7y4m];
* *R v Biba* [2021] VSC 327; [2022] VSCA 168 [offender armed himself and attended a hydroponic cannabis crop house after deceased triggered a burglar alarm – offender confronted deceased as he was leaving premises and deliberately discharged firearm – high end example of manslaughter by unlawful and dangerous act – late guilty plea – limited remorse – late guilty plea – PTSD exacerbated by incarceration – good rehabilitation prospects – deportation very likely – IMP10y/7y];
* *R v Volpe* [2021] VSC 353 [single stab wound to chest by offender aged 61 – plea guilty – dysfunctional childhood including early exposure to hard drugs – strong family support and good prospects for rehabilitation – IMP9y/6y];
* *R v Horton* [2021] VSC 396 [accused aged 18 at time of offence and 20 at time of trial found guilty of manslaughter after trial for murder – unprovoked knife attack at bus stop upon brothers aged 17 & 18 – early offer to plead guilty to manslaughter and intentionally cause serious injury – serious criminal history – lack of remorse – reduced impact of youth – on manslaughter IMP11y – TES 13y6m/9y6m];
* *R v Farrell* [2021] VSC 414 [accused aged 22 at time of offence – plea of guilty to manslaughter of long-standing friend – single stab wound to chest in context of excessive self-defence – strong family support – good prospects for rehabilitation – IMP7y/5y];
* *R v Oakley* [2021] VSC 430 [accused aged 25 at time of offence – plea of guilty to manslaughter of acquaintance with whom he “did not get on” – a “serious example” of manslaughter involving the infliction of 5 stab wounds on an unarmed man, albeit one who had thrown “the first few punches which were largely ineffective in the circumstances” – IMP9y6m/6y6m];
* *R v Burns* [2021] VSC 518 [accused aged 45 at time of offence – plea of guilty to manslaughter of 65 year old housemate in a violent physical assault – victim died from internal injuries resulting from multiple blows to his face, head, neck, chest, abdomen, arms and legs – accused has long-standing mental health history and currently an in-patient at Thomas Embling Hospital – reduced moral culpability – specific and general deterrence moderated – delay – utilitarian value of plea in light of accused’s psychiatric illness and COVID-19 pandemic – IMP8y6m/6y];
* *DPP v Manuel* [2021] VSC 568 [offender aged 28 at time of offence – offender started a fight with the deceased and inflicted a single stab wound in the course of the fight – offender stole deceased’s car – mild intellectual disability – long criminal history – guarded prospects of rehabilitation – prospects of deportation – IMP7y9m/5y];
* *R v Ooi* [2021] VSC 591 [offender aged 29 at time of offence – unlawful and dangerous act involving a prolonged attack in company: “the level of sustained violence perpetrated against Mr Bolat during this incident is repulsive and would shock the public consciousness” – conceded “a very serious example of the offending to which you have pleaded guilty” – deliberate concealment of body – lies to investigating police – late plea – no prior offending – guarded prospects of rehabilitation – deportation upon release – utilitarian value of plea during COVID-19 pandemic – delay – IMP11y6m/8y6m];
* *DPP v Harrison* [2021] VSC 601 [Aboriginal offender aged 32 at time of offence pleaded guilty to manslaughter comprised of single stab wound to chest of deceased – *Bugmy v The Queen* considerations – IMP9y9m/6y6m];
* *DPP v Cugurno-Pfabe & Nagy* [2021] VSC 749 [offenders aged 25 & 22 at time of offence entered early pleas of guilty to manslaughter in the context of attending to steal drugs – additional benefit of guilty plea where prosecution may have had difficulty establishing causation – both offenders equally culpable for offence – remorse – C-G no priors IMP7y6m/4y6m – NAGY prior convictions for armed robbery and aggravated burglary and on CCO at time of offending IMP8y/5y];
* *DPP v Yassin* [2021] VSC 780 [offender aged 24 at time of offence entered plea of guilty to manslaughter in context of stabbing deceased to the chest – strong famiy support – guarded prospects of rehabilitation – IMP7y/4y];
* *DPP v Panagiotou* [2022] VSC 9 [offender aged 59 accidentally discharged a shotgun during a home invasion in which he was assisting his two sons and a number of other associates to recover rented sound equipment which had been ‘held over’ – limited prior offending and otherwise of good character – good prospects of rehabilitation – *Verdins* principles applicable onerous custodial conditions whilst on remand – IMP9y/6y];
* *DPP v Walia* [2022] VSC 12 [offender aged 27 entered early plea of guilty to manslaughter of his 25 year old coresident whom he had stabbed 3 times in chest and neck after a fight – remorse – previous good character – excellent prospects of rehabilitation – risk of deportation – IMP8y6m/5y6m].
* *DPP v Nelis* [2022] VSC 50 [offender aged 38 pleaded guilty to manslaughter by criminal negligence of a close friend whom he had shot in circumstances where he believed that the gun was unloaded without having checked that was so – offending occurred in the context of drug use – evidence of remorse notwithstanding post-offence flight – relevant criminal history – guarded prospects of rehabilitation – custody likely to be more burdensome due to PTSD and COVID-19 – utilitarian value of plea – IMP11y/8y reduced on appeal to IMP9y/6y: see [2023] VSCA 128].
* *R v Angela Surtees* [2022] VSC 124 [offender aged 35 pleaded guilty to manslaughter of her husband by unlawful and dangerous act in circumstances where she had doused her husband in petrol before lighting a cigarette lighter in close proximity to him – intention was not to set fire to but to terrify him – victim burnt to death – requisite connection between PTSD and offending required by *R v Verdins* not established – no consequent reduction in moral culpability and no reason why just punishment and general deterrence should assume less than usual importance – rehabilitation of some significance – IMP12y/8y – on appeal sentence reduced to IMP10y6m/7y: see *Surtees v The King* [2023] VSCA 42].
* *DPP v McEachran* [2022] VSC 386 [offender aged 44 pleaded guilty to manslaughter on the basis of criminal negligence, having assaulted the deceased in the course of an armed robbery, restrained him in a vulnerable position and left him in a car park – none of the injuries inflicted on the victim were particularly serious and the exact cause of death was unable to be ascertained – Hollingworth J accepted that the offender may not have known what drugs the victim had used that day or about his heart condition – offender had a long and extensive criminal history including multiple terms of imprisonment and ongoing substance abuse problems – TES IMP9y9m/7y].
* *DPP v Folau* [2022] VSC 514 [offender aged 24 at time of offending pleaded guilty to one count each of manslaughter, intentionally causing serious injury and home invastion – he made spontaneous attacks on two strangers during a drug-and-alcoho-fuelled home invasion, stabbing the deceased multiple times – TES IMP16y/12y including IMP12y on charge of manslaughter].
* *R v Johnson* [2022] VSC 681 [Aboriginal offender aged 37 pleaded guilty to one count of manslaughter by unlawful and dangerous act involving the discharge of a loaded shotgun – limited prior criminal history and moderate prospects for rehabilitation – supportive partner in relationship for 18 years – restrictions in custody due to COVID-19 pandemic and utilitarian value of plea during pandemic – *Bugmy* principles enlivened – IMP9y/6y].
* *R v Gurlu* [2022] VSC 820 [offender offered to plead guilty at an early stage to intentionally causing injury to ND by cutting his cheek with a knife and manslaughter of LH by stabbing him twice to the chest with a knife – the accused and others left the scene without attempting to assist LH or call emergency services – accused showered and changed clothes – accused later apologised to ND about the incident – accused was intoxicated but aware that intoxication makes him violent – although accused had previously been imprisoned for offences of violence he had reasonable to good prospects of rehabilitation – the accused’s intellectual disability and schizophrenia and the need to protect the community from the accused’s behaviour seen by Croucher J “as wholly offsetting each other” – TES IMP 11y/7½y [10½y for manslaughter, 1½y for intentionally causing injury of which 6m is cumulative].
* *R v Lovett* [2023] VSC 50 [Deceased was stabbed and gravely injured during an altercation with two others at the accused’s home – the 47 year old accused volunteered to take the deceased to hospital by car but ultimately failed to do so — instead, fearing unjust blame for stabbing, accused drove elsewhere — deceased died in car within undetermined period after accused set off — after expiry of deceased, accused slept at friend’s premises for several hours, leaving body in car — accused later attempted suicide by overdose of heroin, with body still in back seat of car — accused was originally charged with murder on basis he stabbed deceased — there was a rival suspect for stabbing and the prosecution was unable to establish who stabbed deceased — no medical evidence deceased would have survived if treated promptly — 3 years after initial charge, accused nevertheless offered, and Director accepted, plea of guilty to manslaughter by negligent failure to take deceased to hospital — no lawful conviction without plea of guilty — admissions — remorse — delay — extensive history of offending, drug abuse and poor mental health — appalling deprivation in early life — reasonable prospects of rehabilitation — hardship of prison conditions during pandemic — IMP 5y/3½y].
* *R v Bos* [2023] VSC 68 [Following a sentence indication accused pleaded guilty to manslaughter by unlawful and dangerous act – accused agreed that co-accused would assault her boyfriend to make him leave town and gave information to the co-accused to facilitate the ambush of the deceased – accused was aware it was probable co-accused would commit a more serious assault in course of agreed assault, but did not contemplate killing, extreme gravity of assault or carrying or use of weapons by co-accused — co-accused assaulted deceased brutally and repeatedly with hammer and knife, killing him — accused was not present at attack —deceased had been nasty to accused, but not violent — accused was psychologically vulnerable — accused’s offence was serious, but less so than many other manslaughters — guilty plea despite arguable defence based on co-accused’s radical departure from agreement — remorse — no prior convictions and excellent prospects of rehabilitation — hardship of prison conditions during pandemic — prison likely to worsen accused’s mental state — IMP6y3m/3y3m (which was 3m shorter than indicated in an earlier sentence indication].
* *DPP v Griffith (sentence)* [2023] VSC 218 [Jury verdict of manslaughter by unlawful and dangerous act – unprovoked assault involving multiple punches to the head of an innocent victim who was older and smaller than the offender – Offender had a substantial criminal record including multiple convictions for offences of violence – limited remorse and guarded prospects of rehabilitation – difficult circumstances in custody due to COVID-19 restrictions – IMP10y/7y].
* *R v Guillerme* [2023] VSC 36 [Sentence following sentence indication — Manslaughter by unlawful and dangerous act — Statutory complicity — On pretext, accused lured deceased to remote location into clutches of two co-accused believing they would “kick the shit out of him” — Co-accused sent accused down road to wait while they took deceased into bush at gunpoint — Deceased not kicked, bashed or shot by co-accused — Instead, on prosecution case, deceased murdered by administration of GHB — Accused absent when drugging and death occurred — Accused did not contemplate killing or means by which effected — Deceased’s partly decomposed body discovered in bush five weeks later — Accused pleaded guilty despite arguable defence based on co-accused’s departure from agreement — Remorse — No history of violence — Limited criminal history — Undertaking to give evidence against two co-accused at murder trial — Excellent prospects of rehabilitation — Return to prison likely to restore accused’s prior depression — Hardship of prison conditions during pandemic — IMP3½y/15m (less severe than indicated at sentence indication – But for plea of guilty and undertaking to assist authorities IMP8½y/6y – Plea of guilty without undertaking to assist IMP6y/3y].
* *DPP v Clark* [2023] VSC 220 [Sentence following a relatively early plea – 64 year old deceased initiated two verbal confrontations with the 27 year old offender who punched deceased 3 or 4 times, including whilst unconscious – prospects of rehabilitation – IMP8y/5y].
* *DPP v Newell* [2023] VSC 237 [Sentence followinga relatively early plea – 25 year old offender with IQ of 59 stabbed deceased three times in a ferocious but unpremeditated intervention when the deceased man was slapping the deceased’s son – *Bugmy* considerations – prospects of rehabilitation despite significant prior convictions – TES IMP8y6m/6y6m made up of IMP8y on manslaughter and IMP1y (6m CUM) on recklessly causing injury to deceased’s son – at [46] Lasry J said: “And so ended an extended, violent and futile series of incidents with the culmination being that a life was lost, another person was injured all entirely without reason or logic. Yet another violent, drug and alcohol-induced tragedy.”].
* *R v Deng* [2023] VSC 257 [Sentence following a plea to manslaughter by unlawful and dangerous act – in a public place the 23 year old accused stabbed the 24 year old deceased, whom he did not know, with a single stab wound to the abdomen – *Verdins* considerations discussed – genuine remorse and good rehabilitation prospects – general deterrence, denunciation and just punishment important – specific deterrence and community protection less important – IMP7y6m/5y].
* *DPP v Seymour* [2023] VSC 324 [Sentence following a plea to manslaughter – 55 year old offender and deceased lived in adjoining rooms in boarding house – dispute over noise – offender stabbed deceased once in the chest with a knife – offender suffering from treatment-resistant schizophrenia and moderate personality disorder leading to Verdins principles being applied – prior convictions and complex treatment needs – shorter than usual non-parole period justified – IMP7y/4y].
* *R v Price & Brown* [2023] VSC 347 [Sentence following a plea to manslaughter by unlawful and dangerous act after a sentence indication - on a pretext, SG lured deceased to remote location into clutches of AP and JB believing they would “kick the shit out of him” — AP and JB sent SG down the road to wait while they took deceased into bush at gunpoint — AB and JB forced deceased to ingest GHB in large quantities — JB left scene while the deceased was still standing and conscious — AB left the deceased while unconscious, stranded and alone — the aim of the offending was to warn deceased off vis-à-vis AP’s girlfriend and make him walk home alone from remote location — deceased died from GHB toxicity and his partly decomposed body was discovered in the bush 5 weeks later — AP and JB were originally charged with murder — an important prosecution witness died and much of his recorded evidence was excluded – AP is aged 50 with 3 children, no prior convictions and health issues – JB is aged 31 with 2 young children but has prior convictions, including for violence – both were remorseful and both remained drug-free and worked solidly while on bail – AP: IMP7y6m/4y6m – JB: IMP7y/4y].
* *DPP v Armstrong* [2023] VSC 374 [Sentence following a plea to manslaughter by unlawful and dangerous act – unprovoked attack upon innocent victim in public place – accused intoxicated at time – significant criminal history for violence – troubled background of accused not of sufficient magnitude to enliven *Bugmy* principles – no limb of *R v Verdins* enlivened – serious example of offence of manslaughter – high moral culpability – questionable prospects of rehabilitation – IMP10y/8y].
* *R v Smart & Ors* [2023] VSC 469 [Sentence after plea of guilty to manslaughter following a case conference and a sentence indication hearing – 3 accused aged 23, 20 & 18 at time of offending – the 18 year old victim was killed in the course of a joint assault committed by the 3 accused and another unidentified co-offender – the victim was stabbed 8 times in the lower back, buttocks and upper back leg, the assault motivated by retaliation because it was believed that the deceased had broken into a friend’s car – utilitarian value of guilty pleas – remorse – moderate *Bugmy* factors for all 3 offenders – the youngest offender was at risk of deportation – favourable prospects for rehabilitation – some disparity justified between oldest offender and younger two - Importance of fixing a non-parole period giving weight to combined sentencing factors – IMP8y6m/5y for oldest offender, IMP7y6m/4y6m for the two younger offenders].
* *DPP v Pearson* [2023] VSC 483 [Sentence after plea of guilty entered after 7 days of a murder trial – accused aged 33 stabbed deceased multiple times with a knife but the prosecution accepted that his actions were not done with the required intent for murder – relevant prior criminal history – harsh and restrictive conditions of confinement on remand – 5th Verdins principle and Bugmy considerations – IMP8y6m/6y].
* *R v Tovey* [2023] VSC 530 [Sentence after plea of guilty to manslaughter by unlawful and dangerous act – during altercation, 26 year old accused stabbed 29 year old brother to chest, root of neck and each shoulder — brother fled and collapsed in nearby carpark — accused left scene believing brother would be ‘pretty sore’ but “alright” — later, after hearing brother died, accused disposed of knife — two weeks earlier brother had struck accused to head with mallet — brother had sent threatening texts to accused who had responded in kind — guilty plea entered in face of arguable defence (self-defence) — remorse — accused exposed to family violence and illicit drug use from early age and had been sexually assaulted as a child — illicit drug use since teenage years — criminal history for various offences, including breaches of family violence orders and minor violence — limited work history — hardship in prison because of PTSD and pandemic restrictions — PTSD likely to worsen in prison — notwithstanding history of offending and drug use, good prospects of rehabilitation — IMP8y3m/5y].
* *R v Jeffrey* [2023] VSC 538 [Sentence after plea of guilty to manslaughter by unlawful and dangerous act – accused believed deceased disposed of her property and informed on her to police — precise circumstances of killing unclear, but accused accepts she bashed deceased in unlawful and dangerous manner, causing her death — accused then strung up deceased’s body in house to give appearance of suicide — with another, accused later removed body from scene and dumped in disused mineshaft — accused spread false rumour deceased had gone to Queensland and moved into her house — eight months after disappearance, police found deceased’s decomposed body in mineshaft — serious example of offence aggravated by post-offence conduct — troubled upbringing & abusive relationships — PTSD — drug addiction — limited work history — criminal history, but comparatively modest for violence — support of family and reasonably good prospects of rehabilitation — IMP10y/7y].
* *DPP v Maskell* [2023] VSC 689 [Sentence after jury verdict – manslaughter by unlawful and dangerous act – 45 year old accused who was intoxicated at the time spontaneously threw a full plastic bottle at the head of the 73 year old victim and kicked his hip – prospects of rehabilitation – IMP8y/5y].
* *R v LH Holding & Hanna* [2024] VSC 90 [First prosecution of workplace manslaughter – Forklift operated negligently by LH at his company’s factory toppled and killed MT employed by business contracting to LH’s company at factory — LH’s company charged with workplace manslaughter — LH, as sole director and shareholder of company, charged as officer of company that committed workplace manslaughter attributable to officer’s failure to take reasonable care — Accident reasonably foreseeable — Co-operation — Pleas of guilty — Remorse — Previous good character — Excellent prospects of rehabilitation — Agreed compensation of $120,000 to MT’s sister — Limited financial resources of company and LH — Company convicted and fined $1,300,000 — LH convicted and placed on two-year CCO with 200 hours’ unpaid community work and forklift safety course.
* *DPP v Nguyen* [2024] VSC 99 [Sentence after guilty plea – 46 year old accused stabbed deceased in the leg in the course of a struggle – spontaneous attack – IMP8y/5y6m].
* *DPP v Ho* [2024] VSC 162 [Sentence after jury verdict on manslaughter by unlawful and dangerous act and after guilty plea to a charge of cultivating a commercial quantity of cannabis – 55 year old accused attended cannabis factory to seek payment for work – victim met accused at door holding knife – accused wrested knife from victim and stabbed victim to thigh severing femoral artery – accused in Australia on visa and liable to be deported on completion of sentence – difficult circumstances in custody – on charge of manslaughter IMP7y, on charge of cultivate cannabis IMP2y,4m cumulative – TES IMP7y4m/5y].
* *DPP v Belmore* [2024] VSC 213 [Sentence after early guilty plea to manslaughter by unlawful and dangerous act after a charge of murder was withdrawn – 24 year old offender – the prosecution agreed they cannot prove beyond reasonable doubt that this offender was the shooter or had gone into the deceased’s house – however the offender accepted that he entered into an agreement, arrangement or understanding with a coaccused to threaten the deceased with a rifle – IMP9y/5y6m].
* *DPP v Atkinson* [2024] VSC 286 [Sentence after early guilty plea – young indigenous offender (aged 19 at date of offence, 20 at date of sentence), believing that the deceased had behaved in a sexually inappropriate way towards his underage sister, had spontaneously attacked the deceased in a public supermarket – *Bugmy* & *Verdins* principles were applicable – despite his criminal history offender had reasonable prospects of rehabilitation with appropriate treatment and supports – merciful sentence justified with shorter than usual non-parole period – IMP6y/3y6m].
* *R v Bell* [2024] VSC 384 [Sentence after plea of guilty at first reasonable opportunity – manslaughter by criminal negligence – 51 year old offender killed friend and co-worker when he accidentally ran over him in a bobcat in the work yard whilst affected by alcohol – remorse – difficult childhood due to sexual abuse – PTSD & ADHD – *Verdins & Bugmy* principles – IMP7y/4y].
* *R v Kidd* [2024] VSC 458 [Sentence after plea of guilty to manslaughter by unlawful and dangerous act – 20 year old offender killed his grandmother by striking her several times to the head and torso with a mattock, leaving the mattock embedded in the back of her head – offender’s cousin aged 7 witnessed killing – offender suffering from temporary cannabis-induced psychosis at time – in deluded state, offender believed his grandmother to be his sadistic stepfather posing threat to his younger self (in truth, his cousin) – offender initially indicted on murder – during trial, expert evidence from two psychiatrists cast doubt on murderous intent – accused had no reason to suspect cannabis would induce psychotic violence – by consent, jury discharged without verdict and offender pleaded guilty to manslaughter – because of temporary psychosis, very little moral culpability – plea of guilty to manslaughter offered well before trial – remorse – no prior convictions – good prospects of rehabilitation – sentencing purposes of general and specific deterrence, denunciation, and community protection of less weight than usual – singular case calling for merciful sentence – prison sentence combined with community correction order inappropriate – IMP5y/2y6m].
* *DPP v Tiumalu* [2024] VSCA 192 [Crown appeal against sentence of IMP7y6m/5y imposed after plea of guilty to manslaughter by unlawful and dangerous act – deceased was injured by a slap and punches in the course of an eviction – respondent prevented deceased from obtaining medical treatment and concealed deceased respondent’s remains – cause of death unable to be discovered due to body’s state of decomposition – sentence manifestly inadequate – appeal allowed – respondent resentenced to IMP9y6m/7y].
* *DPP v Mohamed* [2024] VSC 318; *DPP v Sisal* [2024] VSC 589 [Sentence after plea of guilty – youthful offenders (M was 18 at time of offence and 20 at sentence; S was 19 at time of offence, 22 at sentence) – 24 year old victim was fatally shot in a home invasion by several masked intruders whose purpose was to steal drugs and/or money – intruders were armed with a loaded gun, a machete and a taser – both M & S were aware prior to the home invasion that the cooffending shooter’s gun was loaded – M transported the intruders to and from the scene of the crime in his mother’s car but did not enter the victim’s home – parental separation and COVID-19 lockdowns impacted severely on M around the time of the offence – both offenders had been held in isolation for approximately 10 months of the 2.5 years spent on remand in an adult prison which in M’s case had a significantly adverse effect on his mental health, including experiencing auditory hallucinations – M had no prior criminal history – S had mostly Children’s Court priors but priors for offences involving violence – M had reasonable prospects of rehabilitation – only a few months after the manslaughter S plotted another home invasion with a loaded firearm – despite his youth S's prospects of rehabilitation were guarded – a murder charge was hanging over both offender’s head for approximately 2 years while on remand – for M exceptional circumstances existed justifying a sentence YJC4y (presentence incarceration not counted as time served), the reasons pro and con being summarised in [2024] VSC 318 at [63]-[64] – sentence for S was IMP9y/6y).
* *DPP v Wain* [2024] VSC 533 [Sentence after plea of guilty to manslaughter by unlawful and dangerous act – victim was housemate of accused – circumstances of killing unknown – cause of death was blunt force trauma – significant criminal history – IMP10y/8y].
* *DPP v Blake* [2024] VSC 592 [Sentence after plea of guilty following sentence indication – 35 year old accused with limited criminal history and no matters of violence – accused and deceased were drug associates – during an argument surrounding a debt the deceased was hit over the head with a log – extensive efforts to conceal deceased’s body – disclosure after sentence indication of last known location of body but body not located – serious example of manslaughter – specific deterrence and community protection important – IMP9y/6y].
* *R v Nguyen & Curham* [2024] VSC 616 [Cooffenders aged 43 & 21 were in an intimate relationship and were involved in a fatal shooting of victim in a car in a public street — C had previously been in an intimate relationship with victim — C texted victim multiple times on day in question and lured victim to car on false pretences — Whilst victim sat in front passenger seat, and C sat in drivers seat, N, whilst sitting in rear passengers seat, shot victim once in upper right back — At his trial, N admitted shooting victim fatally but denied murderous intention — N found guilty of murder after trial — C pleaded guilty to manslaughter at an early stage – N suffers from schizophrenia – C had one prior and good prospects of rehabilitation – C suffers from PTSD – N sentenced to IMP29y/21y for murder – C sentenced to IMP10y/6y for manslaughter].
* *DPP v Gatwech-Chouil* [2024] VSC 700 [29 year old offender (aged 31 at sentence) pleaded guilty to manslaughter by unlawful and dangerous act, namely stabbing the deceased twice to the chest with a kitchen knife – when police arrived the offender was lying on the bed next to the deceased amidst the chaos of the other partygoers seeking to give him assistance – the offender was assessed as unfit for interview – early guilty plea – no evidence of remorse – *Bugmy* & *Verdins* considerations applied – IMP9y/7y].
* *Armstrong v The King* [2024] VSCA 316 [26 year old offender pleaded guilty to manslaughter in the context of an alcohol-fuelled unprovoked attack on a stranger – offender had a history of violent offending while intoxicated and a CCO for prior offending had not been complied with – sentencing judge entitled to place limited weight on prospects of rehabilitation – IMP10y/8y].
* *DPP v Voung & Juan* [2024] VSC 821 [36 year old offender and his 48 year old partner found guilty of manslaughter on a complicity basis – the deceased was stabbed 5 times in the context of a ‘drug rip’ of a large amount of heroin reportedly worth about $70,000 to Ms Juan – these co-accused did not stab the deceased and a witness admitted in the course of the trial to having stabbed the deceased – visa status complications for Ms Juan – *Verdins* enlivened for Ms Juan – sentence for Mr Vuong IMP9y/6y6m – sentence for Ms Juan IMP8y/5y6m].
* *DPP v Riley* [2024] VSC 777 [42 year old offender who was a diagnosed paranoid schizophrenic entered an early plea of guilty to manslaughter on the basis of being complicit in the stabbing of the victim in the company of another – victim succumbed to wounds shortly after being driven to hospital by the offender – the offender had reported suffering sporadic episodes of psychosis in the years preceding the offence and the illness was untreated at time of offence – the offender was likely suffering from symptoms of psychosis at time of offence leading to reduced culpability – offender had previously served a term of imprisonment for assault – significant utilitarian value of plea – IMP8y6m/5y3m].
* *DPP v Ford* [2024] VSC 797 [29 year offender pleaded guilty to manslaughter by unlawful and dangerous act, namely stabbing the deceased who was a friend of the offender’s former partner – IMP10y6m/7y].
* *R v JL* [2024] VSC 803 [After a sentence indication the 17 year old offender pleaded guilty to manslaughter by unlawful and dangerous act, namely stabbing the deceased once – the deceased was a friend of a woman with whom the offender had commenced a relationship via social media – there was no pre-meditation and the offender had had a difficult childhood giving rise to *Bugmy* and *Verdins* considerations – positive prospects of rehabilitation – YJC36m].
* *DPP v Ivankovich* [2025] VSC 50 [After a sentence indication the 57 year old offender pleaded guilty to manslaughter in the context of an assault on his elderly mother causing her death – reasonable prospects for rehabilitation – IMP8y/5y].
* *R v Fenwick* [2025] VSC 95 [In 2006, accused now aged 61 assisted AB to assault deceased, who died, and to bury body in bush — for next 16 years, deceased’s fate unknown to family — in 2022, accused confessed to covert operative of his and AB’s involvement in killing — accused tried, but failed, to find deceased’s bush grave — when arrested, accused denied involvement in homicide, but later admitted presence when AB assaulted deceased — accused and AB charged with murder — AB’s charge withdrawn before committal — accused then made statement to police implicating himself and AB, pleaded guilty to manslaughter, and gave undertaking to give evidence in fresh proceeding against AB — serious instance of manslaughter — offence aggravated by disposal of body, extended delay in disclosing deceased’s fate, and burning car — accused vulnerable to AB’s domineering influence – prison likely to affect mental health adversely — low risk of violent reoffending — good prospects of rehabilitation — IMP5y6m/2y9m – had there been a plea of guilty but no undertaking to give evidence IMP10y/6y6m – had there been neither a plea of guilty or an undertaking to give evidence IMP13y6m/10y].
* *DPP v Clifford* [2025] VSC 199 [18 year old offender (now aged 20) entered an early guilty plea to manslaughter by stabbing the 40 year old victim seven times when confronted by the victim while searching inside the victim’s parked car – offender has a severe traumatic brain injury as a result of a car accident enlivening *Verdins* principle 5 – limited criminal history – genuine remorse – offender’s drug and alcohol addiction discussed in **section 11.2.16** – reasonable prospects of rehabilitation – IMP8y6m/5y].
* *DPP v Costanzo* [2025] VSC 421 [33 year old offender (now age 35) pleaded guilty to manslaughter by criminal negligence in the context of driving a motor vehicle in pursuit of the deceased following an earlier altercation – no aggressive intent – dishonest account to police – good prospects of rehabilitation despite prior convictions of a different kind – IMP5y/3y].
* *R v Twomey* [2025] VSC 529 [In the days before his death the deceased suffered significant facial and head injuries by falling off pushbike, falling into a car and assault by unknown person/s — on day of offence, accused went to deceased’s home to check on his welfare — both men drank heavily all afternoon and into evening, and were sozzled — after deceased left room, without warning, person accused believed to be intruder (not deceased) attacked accused on couch, and scuffle ensued — after trading blows with “intruder”, accused told him to stop fighting — as “intruder” then came towards him, accused threw two punches at head, causing him to fall to floor — “Intruder” unresponsive thereafter — accused went next door and told neighbour, “You better come … someone’s dead” — in truth, “intruder” was deceased — on Arunta calls, accused told ex-wife and daughter that deceased “just lost it”; “I fought back, and … went overboard, obviously”; “I was telling him to stop”; “I had no choice but to fight back”; “If I hadn’t … fought back, I would have been the victim on the floor” — offence constituted by spontaneous drunken acts of excessive self-defence with fists in response to unexpected violence by deceased — moral culpability reduced accordingly — objective gravity of offence at lower level for manslaughter — Plea of guilty following sentence indication (of seven years’ imprisonment with non-parole period of four years) — plea of guilty despite viable defences concerning self-defence and causation — genuine remorse — limited and irrelevant criminal history at age 47 — IMP6y/3y].
* *DPP v Hansen* [2025] VSC 534 [25 year old offender – serious example of manslaughter – criminal history including violence and driving offences – guarded prospects of rehabilitation – limited evidence of remorse – boy not located for a period of 2years – guilty plea – IMP9y6m/6y6m].

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### **11.2.22.2 Sentencing for defensive homicide [now abolished]**

**The offence of defensive homicide was introduced by the *Crimes (Homicide) Act 2005* but was subsequently abolished in Victoria in November 2014 following a widely held perception that it was being abused by violent men.**

In *R v Smith* [2008] VSC 87 the defendant pleaded guilty to the offence of **defensive homicide**. In sentencing the defendant to IMP7y/5y6m, Whelan J said:

[4] “The offence is committed where a person carries out conduct that would otherwise be murder, believing that conduct to be necessary to defend himself or another from the infliction of death or really serious injury but in circumstances where the person did not have reasonable grounds for that belief.”

[33] “Counsel for the Crown submitted that it could not be said that the offence of defensive homicide was necessarily less serious than manslaughter by unlawful and dangerous act, as where defensive homicide occurred there was an intention to kill or cause really serious injury, which was not the case where the offence of manslaughter by unlawful and dangerous act occurred. In my view the prosecutor’s submission on this issue is correct. The circumstances in which each of the two offences may be committed are so varied that it cannot be said that one is necessarily more serious than the other. When Parliament introduced the offence of defensive homicide it determined to fix the same maximum penalty (20 years) as is fixed for manslaughter.”

[35] “Counsel for the Crown referred me to two recent decisions of the Court of Appeal concerning offences of manslaughter in circumstances where there had been a stabbing {*R v Moore* [2002] VSCA 33 and *R v Deniz* [2003] VSCA 23}, to a recent decision of this Court concerning a manslaughter in circumstances said to have some similarity to this but not involving the use of a knife {*R v Holden* [2007] VSC 417} and to a decision in New South Wales concerning manslaughter under s 421 of the *Crimes Act 1900* (NSW) {*R v Boyd* [2004] NSWSC 263}. In my view it is appropriate to have regard to the authorities relied upon by the Crown and I have done so. I have also considered the judgments of the New South Wales Court of Criminal Appeal in *R v Trevenna* [2004] NSWCCA 43*,* the published statistics on manslaughter sentences in Victoria {*R v Bangard* (2005) 13 VR 146, 149, & 153}, and recent Court of Appeal judgments concerning manslaughter sentences in addition to those relied upon by the Crown. I have had regard to the Court of Appeal decision in *R v AB (No.2*) [2008] VSCA 39 which was delivered after the plea in this matter. In considering this material I was mindful of the caution which is necessary when considering manslaughter sentence statistics given the very broad range of circumstances encompassed, and given the Court of Appeal’s very recent analysis of the previous pattern of sentencing for manslaughter in *R v AB (No.2*). I was also mindful of the fact that this offence is a different offence, and of the fact that the maximum sentence for manslaughter in New South Wales is 25 years imprisonment.”

In *R v Edwards* [2012] VSC 138 Weinberg JA imposed a sentence of IMP 7y/4y6m on an offender who had pleaded guilty to a defensive homicide of her husband using a spear gun and a knife. In a footnote at [46] his Honour listed 20 sentences for the offence of defensive homicide imposed since its introduction in 2005. These range from IMP 7y to 12y with non-parole periods ranging from 4y to 8y. At [47] his Honour agreed with the characterisation of the gravity of the offending as “at the lower end of the scale for the offence of defensive homicide”, the prosecutor specifically acknowledging the offender’s culpability was “somewhat less than that of the offender in *R v Black* [2011] VSC 152” who had received a sentence of IMP 9y/6y.

Other cases of sentencing for defensive homicide include *R v Edwards* [2008] VSC 297 per Whelan J applying dicta from his own judgment in *R v Smith*; *R v Taiba* [2008] VSC 589; *R v Middendorp* [2010] VSC 202; *R v Black* [2011] VSC 152; *R v Ghazlan* [2011] VSC 178; *R v Martin* [2011] VSC 217; *R v Svetina* [2011] VSC 392; *R v Jewell* [2011] VSC 483; *R v Monks* [2011] VSC 626; *Director of Public Prosecutions v Luke John Middendorp* [2012] VSCA 45; *R v Creamer* [2012] VSCA 182 where at [38] a table of 13 sentences for defensive homicide were listed; *R v Talatonu* [2012] VSC 270; *DPP v Chen* [2013] VSC 296, especially at [32]-[35] and the cases referred to therein; *Dambitis v The Queen* [2013] VSCA 329 at [101]-[119]; *R v Koltuniewicz* [2013] VSC 650; *R v Copeland* [2014] VSC 39; *R v Drayton* [2014] VSC 92.

### **11.2.22.3 Sentencing for attempted murder**

In *R v McIntosh* [2005] VSCA 106 at [15] the Court of Appeal described attempted murder as “a very serious offence” and cited with approval dicta of Winneke P in *Boaza* [1999] VSCA 126 at [45]:

“It goes without saying that [this] crime is, and is regarded by the community as, a most serious crime. This fact is reflected in the actions of the Parliament of this State, which has increased the maximum penalty for the crime from 15 years in 1986 to 25 years [on 1 September 1997].”

In *R v Kostov* [2004] VSC 445 Kellam J imposed a sentence of 11 years imprisonment with a non-parole period of 8 years on a man who had pleaded guilty to counts of attempted murder and aggravated burglary in committed in circumstances where he had entered his ex-wife’s home armed with an axe and attacked a friend of his ex-wife in the presence of his 11 year old son. That day his wife was to attend the Family Court in relation to divorce proceedings. The victim suffered serious injuries for which he had endured 6 operations. At [18], [19] & [21] Kellam J said:

“[T]he issue of general deterrence looms large in cases such as this. Regrettably, it is not uncommon for partners to a relationship breakdown to seek to bring violence to bear on others whom they see as being associated with that breakdown. In this case, you entered the home of your wife and children in the early hours of the morning armed with an axe and attempted to murder a decent man who was babysitting your children only hours before the hearing of the proceeding to dissolve your marriage. You attacked him with horrendous and frightening violence… Our community has established processes and support systems for people who suffer emotional trauma by reason of relationship breakdown. No matter how traumatic and upsetting the relationship breakdown is, the fact is that civilised members of the community use such resources as are provided by the community to enable them to cope. The community cannot tolerate people such as you deciding to exact vengeance and/or retribution by way of violence upon others in consequence of a relationship breakdown. Those persons who contemplate such a course must expect that there will be serious consequences should they engage in violence to attempt to resolve the issues arising from relationship breakdown…[Y]our conduct is such that it requires a stern sentence of imprisonment in order to manifest the community’s denunciation of your conduct and, as I have said, to deter those who breach the safety of family homes and commit acts of violence. In all the circumstances there is no alternative but to sentence you to a term of imprisonment.”

In *R v Markham* [2004] VSC 443 Kellam J imposed a sentence of 11 years imprisonment with a non-parole period of 8 years on a man who had pleaded guilty to a count of attempted murder. The attack was pre-meditated and carefully planned and at least partly motivated by payment of money. At [22]-[26] Kellam J said:

“[22] [A]s well as matters personal to you such as the chances of your rehabilitation and special deterrence I must also take into account the question of general deterrence and the protection of the community from you. Regrettably, conduct such as yours has proved to be far from uncommon in this State in recent years. Those who seek to use violence for the settlement of grievances, whether for their own purpose or those of other persons, must know that if they are apprehended severe consequences will follow. I am also required by the *Sentencing Act 1991* to manifest the community’s denunciation of your conduct and to impose a just punishment.

[23] The crime of attempted murder is a most serious offence and this court must do what it can to underline the importance of the sanctity of life. The circumstances of your offence are a serious example of a serious offence. There is clearly no alternative, as indeed is properly recognised by your counsel, other than to impose a term of imprisonment upon you.

[24] However, [counsel] submits, that by reason of your plea of guilty and the remorse which he submits that plea demonstrates, your personal circumstances and the principles of parsimony, your sentence should be a moderate sentence. He submits specifically that your sentence should be less than that imposed in *R v Guthrie* [2002] VSC 323; *R v Keshtiar* [2004] VSC 140; *R v Alipak* [2004] VSC 206 and *R v Goldman* [2004] VSC 245. As he correctly notes, each of those cases involved a finding of guilt of attempted murder after trial and thus no discount was allowed for a plea of guilty.

[25] The head sentence imposed in those cases ranged from 7 years in *Keshtiar* to 14 years in *Goldman*. In fixing the appropriate sentence I have had regard to the views expressed by the Court of Appeal in *R v Boaza* [1999] VSCA 126, *DPP v Adajain* [1999] VSCA 105 and *R v Kelly* [2000] VSCA 59. I note the comments of Chernov JA at para 18 in *R v Boaza* and the comments of Callaway JA at para 28 of *Adajain* to the effect that each case depends on its own circumstances and that other sentences are not “precedents to be applied unless they can be distinguished”. There are obvious differences in circumstances, both in relation to the criminal conduct and the personal circumstances of those convicted in the cases relied upon by [counsel].

[26] In my view, a closer analogy than the cases relied upon by Mr Grant in the case before me might be found with *R v Jaafer* [2003] VSC 157 where Teague J imposed a sentence of 11 years as a head sentence upon a prisoner who had pleaded guilty to the attempted murder of a shop keeper by use of a hammer. However, even there, clear differences in circumstances can be established in that Jaafer was a heroin addict and had expressed some remorse for his conduct beyond that of his plea of guilty.

In *R v Joan Mary Walsh* [2005] VSC 233 the defendant had entered an early plea of guilty to attempted murder, arising from her inexplicable and unprovoked stabbing attack on a helpful security guard. In imposing a sentence of 11 years’ imprisonment with a non-parole period of 8 years, Teague J said at [8]-[9]:

“[8] The seriousness of the injuries suffered by [the victim] at your hands is a significant factor warranting stern punishment. The community expects that this kind of vicious and unprovoked attack on an innocent, even kindly victim, leaving the victim with permanent serious injuries, is to be denounced strongly. An element of attempted murder being an intention to kill, general deterrence is also a factor of considerable significance.

[9] On the other hand, there are many mitigating factors. They contribute to making more difficult the choice of the number of years of imprisonment for both the head sentence and the non-parole period. I have studied most, if not all, of the recent sentences for attempted murder imposed in this court. Some have been reviewed in the Court of Appeal. While one must allow for many variables, the broad picture is that many sentences imposed recently for attempted murder have not been very substantially below those fixed for murder itself.”

In *R v Hudson; DPP v Hudson* [2010] VSCA 332 having pleaded guilty the accused was sentenced to IMP 5y for using an unregistered firearm, to IMP8y for intentionally causing serious injury, to IMP for life for murder and to IMP12y on each of two counts of attempted murder. A non-parole period of 35y was fixed. Coghlan J declared that had the accused not pleaded guilty, he would have imposed a sentence if IMP for life and would not have fixed a non-parole period. Allowing a DPP appeal on the sentences imposed for attempted murder and increasing the sentences to IMP14y6m & IMP16y respectively but leaving the non-parole period unchanged, Ashley, Redlich & Harper JJA said at [71]:

“[W]e do observe that cases involving attempted murder have attracted sentences of 12y imprisonment {*R v Alipek* [2006] VSCA 66 (Unreported, Warren CJ, Buchanan and Vincent JJA, 6 April 2006); *R v Kumar* (2006) 165 A Crim R 48}, 14y imprisonment {*R v Boaza* [1999] VSCA 126 (Unreported, Winneke P, Phillips and Chernov JJA, 5 August 1999); *R v Goldman* [2007] VSCA 25 (Unreported, Maxwell P, Vincent JA and Bongiorno AJA, 1 March 2007)} and 16y imprisonment {*R v McIntosh* [2005] VSCA 106 (Unreported, Batt, Chernov and Vincent JJA, 15 April 2005)}. Relevantly, the latter two sentences were imposed in cases in which the accused pleaded guilty: In R v McIntosh [2005] VSCA 106, Batt JA rejected the suggestion that

‘there is a specific practical ceiling on the period of imprisonment that may be ordered for this crime. As [President Winneke] said in *R v Boaza ‘*There are no “benchmarks” setting binding limits for the crime of attempted murder ...’ This is unsurprising given that, as I have said, each case must be decided on its own facts and given the serious nature of the offence, in respect of ‘” which the maximum custodial sentence has been raised from 20 to 25 years.

The Court of Appeal also noted at [72] that the victim of the count on which the sentence was increased to IMP16y “was a good Samaritan who…was coming to the aid of a stranger who was in desperate need of assistance. He was shot by the [accused] because he was trying to help another human being when he was under no obligation to do so. This was an aggravating circumstance. One objective of punishment in this case must be to deter those who would injure persons who come to the aid of persons who are in desperate need of assistance.”

In *R v Hermogenes* [2011] VSC 299, categorized by Coghlan J as “a most serious example of attempted murder – one would have difficulty in conceiving a worse case”, the accused – who was a youth group leader from the victim’s church – had attempted to burn the unconscious body of his young rape victim. He was sentenced to 16 years’ imprisonment on the attempted murder charge and 8 years imprisonment on the rape charge, 3 years of which was cumulative.

In *DPP v Cigercioglu* [2023] VSC 772 the accused C was found guilty by a jury of attempted murder of his estranged wife by brutally stabbing her in a public street. C was in breach of an interim intervention order protecting the victim and her baby. The attempt to murder was unsuccessful due to the knife breaking. C left the scene in the victim’s car with the baby in the back seat. The victim sustained life-threatening injuries but had made a good recovery overall. C continues to deny offending and asserts that the victim stabbed herself in an effort to incriminate him and see other men. C is a Turkish citizen with limited English facing the prospect of deportation and with poor prospects of rehabilitation. In sentencing him to IMP15y/12y Fox J said at [50]:

“Serious violence continues to be committed by men against their female partners, or former partners. It is widespread, deeply shocking and cannot be tolerated. Through sentencing, the courts must endeavour to send a message to other would-be offenders that if you commit such crimes, you should expect to receive a substantial term of imprisonment. It is necessary to publicly denounce your crime, and punish you for attempting to murder Ms Kavci.”

In *Malovski v The King* [2025] VSCA 72 the applicant had been sentenced to IMP18y for attempted murder and IMP5y of which 2y was cumulative for being a prohibited person possessing a firearm, resulting in TES IMP20y/15y. The victim had grown close to the applicant’s former wife and children. The applicant pursued and repeatedly shot the victim at a roadside location in the presence of the victim’s former wife, son, niece and members of the public. The victim sustained grave injuries resulting in severe and permanent disability. In upholding the IMP18y sentence for attempted murder, the Court of Appeal (Priest, McLeish & Orr JJA) described the offending as being in the upper end range of seriousness and was callous and cowardly. There was a moderate risk of further violent offending. The sentence was the highest recorded sentence for attempted murder but was not inconsistent with current sentencing practices and the family violence context warranted a very substantial sentence of imprisonment. However, the Court of Appeal did consider the IMP5y sentence for possession of a firearm – also the highest recorded sentence for this offence – was manifestly excessive and substituted a sentence of IMP2y6m of which 1y was cumulative. The resultant TES was IMP19y/14y3m.

Other cases involving sentencing for attempted murder include *R v Nguyen* [2011] VSC 632 [stabbing of lover – adjustment disorder with depressed mood – 8y/5y]; *R v Tedford* [2018] VSC 476 [76YO offender stabbed estranged wife and then deliberately drove in front of train – TES 9y/6y (leave to appeal refused [2020] VSCA 71); see especially the cases on attempted murder detailed in footnote 5: *R v Kelly* [2000] VSCA 59; *R v Alipek* [2006] VSCA 66; *R v Soteriou* [2011] VSC 623; *R v Quail* [2013] VSC 190; *DPP v Saltmarsh* [2013] VSCA 290; *R v Nguyen* [2013] VSC 674; *R v Rapovski* [2015] VSC 359; *R v Darrington* [2016] VSC 60; *DPP v Boodhoo* [2016] VSC 458; *R v Sanghu* [2016] VSC 516; *R v Byrne* [2016] VSC 580; *DPP v Black* [2016] VSC 564; *R v Hannarong* [2017] VSC 264; *DPP v Nichol* [2017] VSC 809; *R v Guode* [2018] VSCA 205]; *DPP v Jensen* [2019] VSC 327; *DPP v Sugar* [2020] VSC 338 [88 year old no longer able to care for his elderly wife who suffered from severe Alzheimer’s and attempted to kill himself and wife with overdoses of insulin – 2y adjourned undertaking with conviction]; *R v Mikhail* [2020] VSC 681; *DPP v Vaisey* [2021] VSC 584; *DPP v Constantinou* [2022] VSC 513; *DPP v Malovski* [2023] VSC 748; *Constantinou v The King* [2024] VSCA 79; *DPP v Chambers* [2025] VSC 63 esp at [84]-[89].

### **11.2.22.4 Sentencing for murder**

In *R v Athuai* [2007] VSCA 2 the appellant, who was 17 years old at the time of the offence, had been found guilty of murder in circumstances where he had stabbed the deceased at least 3 times in the chest. He was sentenced to 22 years imprisonment with a non-parole period of 17 years. In allowing the appeal and reducing the sentence to 18 years imprisonment with a non-parole period of 14 years, Buchanan JA (with whom Vincent & Nettle JJA agreed) said at [12]-[13]:

“While the crime itself was serious indeed, attended by circumstances which were disturbing, the appellant was a teenager and the product of a culture of violence and deprivation. The appellant's youth should have rendered his rehabilitation a consideration of the first importance: see *R v Mills* [1998] 4 VR 235 at 241 per Batt JA. In fact, the sentencing judge did not find that the appellant was irredeemable. He said that he had been a diligent student, well thought of by those who conducted the learning programme upon which he was engaged before the offence, and had undertaken courses while on remand; so that his Honour was able to say that there were ‘some grounds for confidence for your rehabilitation’, although his Honour also expressed some reservations as to the appellant's prospects of rehabilitation.

In my opinion the sentence imposed upon the appellant failed to reflect the appellant's youth and its consequences. Those matters seem to have been swamped by the circumstances of the offence, and in my view that constituted error.”

In *R v Baker* [2008] VSC 390 the 20 year old accused, who was 18 years old at the time of the offence, was found guilty of murder in circumstances where he had violently attacked the deceased at a party and the deceased had subsequently fallen to his death through a window. In sentencing the accused to 17 years imprisonment with a non-parole period of 12 years, Whelan J said at [32]-[35]:

“Although you have committed a very grave crime indeed, I agree with the submission that it is not a murder at the apex of moral culpability. In finding you guilty of murder, the jury must have accepted the prosecution case that you intended to cause really serious injury to Mr Snowball. You did not intend to kill Mr Snowball. You did not intend for him to go through the window and you were not reckless as to him doing so. There was no pre-meditation involved. No weapon was used.

In *R v AB (No 2)* [2008] VSCA 39 at [15]-[16], the Court of Appeal agreed with the trial judge that the offence in that case was ‘a manslaughter of the gravest kind’ reaching to ‘the very confines of murder’. Conversely, although the offence in this case is one of murder, in my view it is one where the moral culpability involved approaches the confines of manslaughter.

Having said that, you have, by your violent acts, taken the life of an innocent young man who went to a party and became unwittingly involved in a violent confrontation which was not of his making. The tragedy of your personal situation must not obscure the tragedy of this young man’s life, brutally taken from him by you, and the awful sorrow and suffering visited upon his family by your violence.

Given your history, specific deterrence is a sentencing consideration I regard as significant. General deterrence is also important. Violence of this type amongst young men in social situations is disturbingly common. Denunciation and punishment are also important factors.”

In *DPP v AK (Sentence)* [2019] VSC 852 the 18 year old accused, who was 17 years old at the time of the offence, had entered a plea of guilty to manslaughter of a 19 year old female whom he had stabbed in the chest. However the jury returned a verdict of guilty to murder on the basis of the prosecution case that he had intended to cause the victim really serious injury. The offence occurred in the context of a dispute between the victim and the accused and his friends, the victim being outnumbered and defenceless. The accusd had a disadvantaged and dysfunctional upbringing and at the time of the offence was addicted to cannabis and Xanax. He had numerous prior convictions and previous periods of detention with long sessions of lockdown and isolation. In sentencing the accused to 20 years imprisonment with a non-parole period of 15 years, Kaye JA said:

[24] “[Your] previous convictions are relevant, for a number of purposes in the determination of your sentence. It is clear that your resort to violence, in the present case, was not an isolated incident out of character for you. Rather, it was an escalation of a pattern of offending, in which you had been involved, during the period of two years that preceded the offence. That consideration is relevant to an assessment of your subjective culpability. In addition, your previous convictions are also relevant to an assessment of your prospects of rehabilitation, and of the weight which needs to be placed on specific deterrence, that is, the need to impose a sentence which is of sufficient length to deter you from engaging in any further such acts of violence against another person.”

[49-50] “…there are a number of mitigating factors that are required to be taken into account in the determination of your sentence. First and foremost, are the circumstances of your childhood and early adolescence. Your difficult experiences during that important stage of your life, none of which were of your making, all played a relevant role in shaping your personality and your responses. As a result, your culpability — that is, the level of your moral guilt — for the offending, in which you engaged, could not be equated with that of a person who had had the advantage of a normal, stable and regular home environment and upbringing. As the High Court, and the Court of Appeal of this State, have recognised, such a consideration is a relevant mitigating circumstance in the assessment of the degree of your culpability for the offending in which you engaged. An additional mitigating factor is your young age.”

[51]-[52] “Ordinarily, and in particular in cases involving less serious offending, the law considers that the youth of an offender is an important, and at times pre-eminent, mitigating factor. An offender’s youth may have had an effect on his or her offending, by reason of the offender’s immaturity. In addition, the law regards the rehabilitation of young offenders to be in the best interests of society, so that priority is to be given to a sentencing disposition that places greater emphasis on rehabilitation. However, in your case, such considerations are given significantly less weight. The kind of violent offence, in which you engaged, is regrettably all too commonly committed by offenders of a young age. It is well established that as the level of seriousness of the offending increases, there will be a corresponding reduction in the weight which is to be given to an offender’s youth by way of mitigation. In the present case, in light of the serious crime that you committed, and the circumstances in which you committed it, the weight to be given to your young age must be substantially moderated. Nevertheless, your youth, at the time of the commission of the offence, and at the time of sentence, is a relevant mitigating factor.”

In *Jaymes Todd v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 46 the 19 year old offender, having pleaded guilty before Kaye JA, was sentenced to life imprisonment on a charge of murder, 11 years on rape, 7 years on attempted rape 7 years and 2 years on sexual assault. A non-parole period of 35 years was set. See [2019] VSC 585. The primary cause of the offending was the offender’s sexual sadism disorder for which the underlying paraphilic interest was not able to be treated at present. Leave to appeal was refused, the Court of Appeal holding that the sentence was not manifestly excessive and was proportionate notwithstanding multiple mitigating factors including youth, plea of guilty, no prior convictions and the dysfunctional circumstances of his home life. Youth was of diminished mitigating effect given the seriousness of the offending. Kaye JA had appropriately weighed the mitigating factors and other sentencing considerations, including the importance of general deterrence, denunciation, just punishment and community protection. The sentence was within range of available sentencing options. Community protection was not the only consideration in fixing a sentence of life imprisonment. The principle of parsimony was not infringed and the sentence was proportionate. *Veen v The Queen (No 2)* (1988) 164 CLR 465, *Azzopardi v The Queen* (2011) 35 VR 43 & *DPP v Lawrence* (2004) 10 VR 125 were applied and *Bugmy v The Queen* (1990) 169 CLR 525 & *R v Ryrie* (1993) 64 A Crim R 332 were distinguished.

In *DPP v DJ (a pseudonym)* [2022] VSC 358 the offender – who was aged 14 at the time of the offence and 16 at the time of sentence – pleaded guilty after a sentence indication to murdering a stranger whom he had encountered on a public road and whom he had spontaneously stabbed and beaten. The offender had a childhood characterised by exposure to poverty, homelessness, alcoholism, drug abuse and violence. In imposing a sentence of IMP14y/9y Lasry J said at [57] & [63]:

[57] “The courts have expressed the importance in sentencing of circumstances such as yours where you have begun to grow up in the disadvantaged environment you did. The law acknowledges that such background and social deprivation may leave its mark on you throughout your life and to a degree explain your conduct and this offending, in particular. It is a relevant factor to be taken into account in sentencing you and I will, as the law requires – *Bugmy v The Queen* (2013) 302 ALR 192 – give full weight to your prior background in determining the sentence that I should impose on you.”

[63] “The violent and random nature of your fatal attack is extremely concerning and would alarm the public consciousness as it did those who observed it, including those who have viewed the CCTV. Your youth and the need to prioritise your rehabilitation if at all possible are significant sentencing factors, but general and specific deterrence and, importantly, denunciation are likewise significant. Because of the high and sustained level of violence you used on the deceased man in a public place, there is a real tension between all those factors. However, the reality with someone as young as you are is that the public will be protected by advancing your rehabilitation.”

In *DPP v JA & Ors* [2023] VSC 531 a 14 year old offender AM had pleaded guilty to murder arising out of his involvement – as part of a large group of youths – in a frenzied attack with multiple knives on an unarmed youth [V], culminating in V’s death. The circumstances of the offending are detailed in **subsection 10.3.3.5B and section 11.1.3** above. Hollingworth J imposed a sentence of IMP15y/10y with a recommendation to the Adult Parole Board that he be transferred to the youth justice system until age 21 pursuant to s.471 CYFA. In *DPP v SA & Ors* [2024] VSC 28 four coffenders of AM pleaded not guilty to murder arising out of their alleged involvement in the killing of V. After a trial by judge alone, they were each found guilty of murder by Incerti J whose detailed reasons are summarised in **subsection 10.3.3.5B**. In *DPP v SA & Ors* *(No 2)* [2024] VSC 428 Incerti J noted that the four cooffenders’ ages at the date of sentencing were as follows: SA-19y7m, DM-17y4m, QM‑19y10m & SY-20y2m (the oldest of the 8 offenders). Her Honour imposed the following sentences for the offence of murder: SA: IMP19y/14y; DM: IMP17y6m/12y QM: IMP19y6m/14y6m; SY: IMP18y/12y. Her Honour also made a recommendation to the Adult Parole Board that each of the four offenders be transferred to the youth justice system until they were 21 years old, saying in particular to DM & SY that “a further period in Youth Justice would help to consolidate your treatment and education and path to rehabilitation”. At [18]-[19] & [21]-[31] her Honour made the following general comments that applied to the sentencing of each of the four offenders:

[18] “…First, each of you was a child at the time of the offence and therefore I am not required to take the standard sentence of 25 years’ imprisonment into account {*Crimes Act 1958* (Vic), ss.3(2)(b) & 3(1)} or to fix a minimum non-parole period {*Sentencing Act 1991* (Vic) ss.11A(3) & 5B(1)(a). The prosecution correctly pointed out that I am still required to set a non-parole period for SA, SY & QM pursuant to s.5(2J) of the *Sentencing Act*}. Murder is an inherently grave and serious offence, and I consider your offending to be a serious example of that offence. As such, a term of imprisonment with a non-parole period is the only appropriate sentence for each of you.

[19] Secondly, the youth of young offenders (and their rehabilitation) is a primary sentencing consideration: R v Mills [1998] 4 VR 235, 241 (Batt JA). For the purpose of determining whether you are considered ‘youthful’, your age is to be considered at the date of sentencing: Ibid.

[20] …

[21] It is accepted that each of you is significantly less blameworthy for your conduct than an adult who had behaved in the same way: see *CNK v The Queen* (2011) 32 VR 641, 661 [71]. Your youth is also significant to an assessment of your prospects of rehabilitation. I consider your youth at the time of the offending, and at the time of sentence, a relevant mitigating factor. At the same time, and considering the crime that you committed and the circumstances in which you committed it, the weight to be given to your age must be substantially moderated.

[22] It is also relevant in this case that there are gradations in your ages. For example, the case law recognises that the maturity and ability of a 13 year old to understand the consequences of their impulsive actions is likely to be very different to a 17 or 18 year old: *AP (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 278, [33]. I have considered each of your ages at the time of offending, along with the seriousness of the offending, when determining the appropriate sentence.

[23] Thirdly, each of you are alleged to have committed further offending whilst on remand. On the materials before me, there is no apparent explanation as to why you became involved in the relevant incidents. I emphasise that in determining your sentence in the present case, I do not take into account, by way of aggravation, your involvement in that further offending. However, those matters are relevant to an assessment of your prospects of rehabilitation.

[24] There are other factors that I am required by law to consider when imposing a sentence. It is well established when sentencing for the offence of murder that principles of general deterrence, just punishment and denunciation weigh heavily in the sentencing exercise: *R v Dupas* [2004] VSC 281, [3] (Kaye JA).

[25] General deterrence is an important sentencing consideration in this case. The offending was carried out in a group, late at night, with knives, and because of the tensions and perceived slights between groups of youths. It involved unprovoked and utterly brutal violence against an unarmed teenager who was trying to flee. As Hollingworth J noted in *DPP v JA & Ors* [2023] VSC 531 at [31] when she sentenced three of your group:

‘Unfortunately, violent knife crimes committed by young offenders have become far too common. The consequences that flow from such attacks can be devastating, for victims, their families and friends, and those who witness such incidents. It is also a real concern for the wider community, who need to be protected and to feel safe. There is a clear need for general deterrence (as well as denunciation and just punishment) in respect of such offending.’

[26] It is necessary that the sentence I impose upon you adequately expresses the condemnation by this Court, and the community, of your crime, and to vindicate the sanctity of each human life.

[27] Further, it is important that the sentence I impose on each of you is sufficient to ensure that you yourself are personally deterred from further acts of violence.

[28] Community protection is also a significant sentencing consideration, having regard to the nature of the offending, and it is tied firmly to rehabilitation. Your rehabilitation will require targeted support, and a willingness by you to engage and apply what you have learned. In each of your cases, I consider community protection can be achieved only if your rehabilitation continues. I will discuss each of your prospects of rehabilitation later in these reasons.

[29] I have had regard to current sentencing practices, and particularly the sentences imposed by Hollingworth J on three of your group: *DPP v JA & Ors* at [114]-[139]. AM is the only offender in the group who has been sentenced on a charge of murder for his role in this fatal attack.

[30] While the role of each of you in the offending has some similarities to AM, there are obvious differences justifying different sentences. Of particular significance is AM’s youth relative to the rest of the group and his positive progress in custody: *DPP v JA & Ors* at [41] & [58]. AM pleaded guilty to murder and therefore received a sentencing discount: *DPP v JA & Ors* at [57] & [119]. The prosecution also reminded me that the s 6AAA declaration made by Hollingworth J in relation to AM is not a sentence and should not, in the words of the Court of Appeal, be ‘some kind of benchmark to be adjusted by balancing out aggravating features of the [offender] and his co-offender’: The Queen v Waugh (2013) 38 VR 66, 73 [23]. I have therefore treated AM’s sentence and her Honour’s 6AAA indication as a relevant factor, but not a starting point, for your individual sentences.

[31] I have also had regard to s 5(3) of the *Sentencing Act 1991* (Vic), which provides that ‘a court must not impose a sentence that is more than that which is necessary to achieve the purpose or purposes for which the sentence is imposed’. This reflects the common law principle of parsimony, ‘a fundamental principle, sometimes forgotten’: R v Casley [2021] VSC 503, [117]. I have not imposed sentences that exceed the general and specific sentencing purposes.”

In *Evan Chey (a pseudonym) v The King* [2022] VSCA 262 the applicant – who was 15 years & 3 weeks old at the time of the offences and was subsequently diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder and a major depressive disorder – had pleaded guilty to the murder (by stabbing) of his mother and the attempted murder of his 66 year old grandmother and his 3 year old half-sister. The sentencing judge (Beale J) found that principles 1, 3, 4, 5 & 6 of *Verdins* were engaged, that a plea of guilty had been made at the first available opportunity and that the applicant – who had no criminal antecedents – had good prospects of rehabilitation. EC was sentenced to IMP16y on the murder charge and IMP8y on each attempted murder charge, 2y of each being cumulative on the 16y base sentence. The TES was IMP20y/14y: see *R v EC* [2021] VSC 843. The Court of Appeal (Priest & T Forrest JJA & Kidd AJA) granted leave to appeal and allowed the appeal, resentencing the applicant to IMP13y on the murder charge and IMP6y on each attempted murder charge, 18m of each being cumulative on the 13y. The TES was IMP16y/11y. Pursuant to s.471 CYFA the Court of Appeal recommended – as had the sentencing judge – that the “Adult Parole Board arrange for the applicant to serve his sentence at a Youth Justice Centre for as long as possible”. At [41]-[42] & [47]-[49] the Court of Appeal said:

[41] “On the charge of murder, an adult, in objectively the same position as the applicant, would be confronted by a standard sentence of 25 years. That standard sentence would be one of the many factors a sentencing judge would need to consider in the exercise of the instinctive synthesis. A child under the age of 18 is not subject to the standard sentence regime, presumably — as counsel for the respondent conceded — because its operation is considered too harsh to be part of the sentencing synthesis for child offenders.

[42] As a consequence of the gravity of the offending the applicant was sentenced under the Sentencing Act 1991 rather than the Children Youth and Families Act 2005, and thus is subject to the Sentencing Principles set out in Part 2 of the Sentencing Act 1991. In *DPP v JF* [2021] VSC 328Hollingworth J was dealing with a 15 year old child found guilty by a jury of murder. We respectfully endorse her Honour’s observation at [70]-[75] concerning child offenders:

‘Your age is another very relevant sentencing consideration. Because you were 15 at the time of this offending, you are to be sentenced as a child offender.

Very different sentencing principles apply to children, and very different sentences are imposed on children, in recognition of the fact that they are less mature, less able to form moral judgments or control their impulses, and less aware of the consequences of their actions.

The law says that the youth of an offender should be a primary consideration for a sentencing court, where the matter properly arises. In the case of such an offender, rehabilitation is usually more important than general deterrence; rehabilitation benefits the community as well as the offender.

However, those principles are not absolute; due regard must be had in each case to other relevant matters, including the seriousness of the offending, and whether there has been any prior offending. Generally speaking, the more serious the offending, the less the weight to be attached to youth. But the mitigatory effect of youth will be extinguished only in circumstances of the gravest criminal offending, and where there is no realistic prospect of rehabilitation.

The standard sentence scheme, which applies to adult offenders, does not apply to child offenders.

All of these considerations can and do lead to children receiving sentences which would be regarded as entirely inappropriate in the case of older individuals.’

[47] We have not needed to look beyond his Honour’s conscientious reasons for sentence to understand that, in this case, there were very substantial factors weighing in the applicant’s favour. In summary:

(a) The interaction of undiagnosed autism spectrum disorder and an undiagnosed major depressive disorder over an extended period of time substantially contributed to the tragic outburst of violence.

(b) As a consequence the applicant’s moral culpability on all charges is reduced.

(c) The need for general deterrence must be sensibly moderated.

(d) The need for specific deterrence must be sensibly moderated.

(e) Incarceration will be harder for the applicant when he is transferred to adult prison, than for others not affected by autism.

(f) There is a serious risk of incarceration having a significant adverse effect on the applicant’s mental health when he is transferred to an adult prison.

(g) The applicant is genuinely remorseful.

(h) The applicant pleaded guilty at an early stage, during the pandemic. His plea bespeaks remorse and carries with it significant utilitarian benefit.

(i) The applicant was 15 years and 3 weeks at the time of offending. He is immature although the seriousness of the offending requires this to be given less weight than it would carry in lesser offending.

(j) The applicant has good prospects for rehabilitation.

[48] The judge’s finding that the applicant’s major depressive disorder and autism spectrum disorder substantially contributed to this violence is of particular importance. The effect of a mental state on moral culpability is informed by the extent to which the impairment contributed to the offending. In this case, the judge found the applicant’s disorders contributed to the offending in a substantial way. This results in a corresponding reduction in the level of his moral culpability for this offending, and consequently calls for significant moderation of the sentence.

[49] In our view the potent combination of these factors is not adequately reflected in the total effective sentence of 20 years imprisonment. After anxious consideration, we are satisfied that the sentence of 16 years imprisonment for murder, and the cumulation ordered on that base sentence are wholly outside the range of sentences available to his Honour in the sound exercise of his sentencing discretion.”

In *DPP v XQ* [2025] VSC 188 the offender – who was 15y3m old at the time of the offence and who had an autism spectrum disorder and an induced rare delusional disorder known as known as *folie à deux* – had pleaded guilty to the shocking murder of his mother in the “truly exceptional circumstances” summarised by Elliott J at [3]-[29]. He was sentenced to IMP15y/10y. At [72] Elliott J said:

“Although I am announcing the reasons for your sentence today [11 April 2025], your sentence will not be imposed until the Adult Parole Board has considered my reasons for sentence, which is expected to have occurred by next Tuesday, 15 April 2025. Unless the court is advised that the Adult Parole Board has not been able to consider the matter in that timeframe and to schedule a meeting for 16 April 2025, I will then impose the sentence upon you on the morning of Wednesday, 16 April 2025 and the Adult Parole Board may convene that same day to make its decision. This is to ensure that you will not be required to be transferred to adult prison and will instead remain at a youth justice centre until that decision is made.”

In *R v ST* [2025] VSC 227 the 17-year old offender (now aged 19) had pleaded guilty to murder and intentionally causing injury after a sentence indication in the following circumstances. ST was one of a group of four Year 12 students who – armed with machetes and knives – confronted a second group of schoolboys in a street near a busy suburban bus interchange at Sunshine. This was a planned confrontation in company in disguise with weapons and in full view of the public. ST chased VC (aged 16) and stabbed him in the elbow with a knife, causing injury. Partly for reasons of parity with co‑offenders ST was placed on a good behaviour bond under s.367 of the CYFA on the charge of intentionally causing injury. ST then chased PL (aged 16) and stabbed him twice in the back causing death. VC & PL had been unarmed. There was a profound victim impact statement from PL’s loved ones. ST fled the scene but handed himself in 12 days later. ST had been on remand in a YJC since then. He has strong support from his family, former school teachers and teachers in YJC. He has no prior convictions, positively good character aside from some of his conduct in custody, genuine remorse and excellent prospects of rehabilitation. On the charge of murder he was sentenced to IMP13y/8y.

ST had pleaded guilty to murder after the sentence indication despite there being a triable issue on murderous intent. It was accepted by the prosecution that ST intended only to cause really serious injury to PL, not to kill him. At [58]-[62] Croucher J said of this:

[58] “...It is sometimes said that this distinction may not matter, as each case must turn on its own facts: see, e.g., *Walters v The Queen* [2013] VSCA 164 at [5]-[10] & [25]-[27]. Thus, as Priest JA remarked at [26]:

‘[T]he deliberate killing by a person of [his or her] beloved, suffering and terminally ill spouse, motivated by considerations of mercy, might — all other things being equal — be regarded as morally less culpable than a protracted and savage assault where the intention is to cause really serious injury.’

[59] While I respectfully accept, as I must, that each case turns on its own facts, and that Priest JA’s illustration is entirely apt, nevertheless, in my opinion, the distinction at issue matters in this particular case. All else being equal, to kill another with the specific intention of ending that person’s life involves greater moral culpability than to kill another not intending death but only with an intention to cause really serious bodily injury, as here. I consider it axiomatic that, had all relevant facts been the same, except that ST intended to kill Pasawm when he stabbed him fatally, his crime would have been graver precisely because his moral culpability necessarily involved in intending such an outcome would have been much the higher. It follows that ST’s offence is less serious because his intention was only to cause really serious injury, and not to kill.

[60] Second, while a group confrontation with weapons was planned, I am also satisfied that ST did not form any intention to cause really serious injury to Pasawm until the moment he stabbed him. Rather, as I shall explain later, in part by reference to psychological opinion about ST, I am satisfied that his formation of that intention was impulsive.

[61] Third, even then, it was only a fleeting intent. After the stabbing, ST did not seek to inflict any further violence on Pasawm, as sometimes occurs in homicides. Rather, as quickly as he stabbed him, he turned and ran away.

[62] Overall, while, for the reasons I have given, the murder is necessarily a serious offence with incalculable victim impact, it is not as serious as many other murders commonly encountered in practice. Indeed, in the circumstances of this case, and particularly because of ST’s impulsive and fleeting intent, and that that intent was only to cause really serious injury, the offence barely crosses the threshold between manslaughter and the lower reaches of the elements of murder at common law — but murder it is.”

In relation to ST’s youth, Croucher J said at [125]:

[125] “One of the great aims of the criminal law is to rehabilitate younger offenders. The young are usually treated more leniently in recognition of the fact that they are less mature, less able to form moral judgments or control their impulses, and less aware of the seriousness and consequences of their actions. This is especially so in the case of offences committed impulsively, as here. See e.g. *DPP v JA & Ors* [2023] VSC 531 at [26]-[27]. ST’s offending is, at least in part, a product of youthful limitations of those kinds.”

And finally at [159]-[163] Croucher J discussed current sentencing practices for murder under headings “**Sentencing statistics for murder**” and “**Case comparisons: Murder by children under 18**”, including at [161]/footnote 41 a table of 14 Victorian cases between 2006 & 2024 where young offenders had been sentenced for murder committed when they were under 18 years of age.

Other cases involving sentencing of young offenders for **murder** include:

* *R v Strain* [2008] VSC 411 [20YO: 17y/13y6m – “A bit of pretty silly name-calling has caused a man to lose his life”];
* *DPP v Zaim* [2008] VSC 543 [20YO: 17y/14y6m – Taxi driver crushed between taxi door and tree];
* *R v Acuna* [2008] VSC 351 [23YO: 22y/17y – Drug addled deft stabbed stranger on train];
* *R v McKenzie* [2008] VSC 394 [20YO: 20y/15y – Senseless murder of close friend];
* *R v Hargreaves* [2009] VSC 629 [21YO: 20y/16y – Unprovoked attack on developmentally delayed youth];
* *R v Canham* [2011] VSC 296 [20YO: 14y/9y – Crown concession that offender did not intend to kill victim or cause really serious injury when he struck him with a tyre level in the course of a robbery];
* *R v JLE* [2011] VSC 669 [15½ YO: 13y/8y – Offender pleaded guilty to constructive murder in the course of an attempted armed robbery];
* *R v Sengoz* [2011] VSC 652 [20YO: 18y6m/15y – Pleaded guilty after stabbing 62YO gay friend 123 times];
* *R v ZN* [2012] VSC 616 [17YO: 14y/10y – Youthful offender with a psychological & psychiatric history and a history of alcohol abuse stabbed a friend a number of times to the upper body with a broken glass bottle];
* *Smith v The Queen* [2012] VSCA 5 [18YO: 18y/17y – Offender was armed with 2 knives and was a willing participant in a carefully planned, orchestrated and extremely violent attack by a gang of youths];
* *R v Grant* [2013] VSC 53 [22YO: 20y/16y – Offender who was alcoholic attacked 54 year old friend after sex with “unremitting ferocity and savagery”];
* *R v West* [2013] VSC 737 [20YO; 20y/16y – Victim unknown to offender was friends with offender’s exgirlfriend and received a single stab wound to the back with a knife; offender had longstanding history of mental health issues and substance abuse];
* *R v Giles* [2014] VSC 210 [24YO: 26y/21y – motiveless murder of 50y old friend – murder plan found on computer – descration of body – lacing in empathy and exceedingly limited remorse];
* *R v Hemming* [2014] VSC 521 [21YO: 32y/27y – offender with Asperger’s Syndrome entered early plea to inexplicable ‘thrill killing’ of 2 neighbours – limited remorse – lack of empathy];
* *R v Lowe* [2014] VSC 543 [22YO: 21y8m/16y – accused, an ‘ICE’ addict and a member of a drug syndicate, was found guilty of murder comiitted in a joint criminal enterprise but was not necessarily present at killing – also pleaded to trafficking in large commercial quantity of methylamphetamine and ephedrine at numerous locations];
* *R v Hague* [2018] VSC 323 [21YO at time of offence, 44YO at time of sentencing: 26y/20y – 16 year old deceased stabbed to death in shopping centre – motive of retribution – prior & subsequent offending – delay – accused found guilty at trial where the issue was identity];
* *R v Hayden Wentworth (pseudonym)* [2020] VSC 435 [16YO: 16y/11y – accused stabbed his grandfather 24 times];
* *DPP v JF* [2021] VSC 328 [15YO: 14y/9y; offender & 17YO cooffender invaded a house under mistaken belief that occupant had sexually abused a female friend – JF kicked and punched the occupant and stomped on and kicked his head – JF was diagnosed in custody with PTSD, depression and schizophrenia – good prospects of rehabilitation];
* *R v Pan* [2021] VSC 703 [19YO at time of offence, 22YO at time of sentencing: 24y/16y – offender having consumed alcohol, ‘ice’ and Xanax shot the deceased at point blank range in a car park – Taylor J said: “The circumstances of this case, particularly your youth, your plea of guilty and the length of the head sentence, have led me to conclude that it is in the interests of justice to fix a lower non-parole period.” – see also *DPP v Pan* [2022] VSCA 98];
* *DPP v Elliott & Fares (Sentence)* [2022] VSC 554 [E-18¼YO at time of offence, F-21¾YO at time of offence – found guilty of ‘drive by’ shooting at the ‘Love Machine’ night club in Prahran in which 4 shots were fired with intention to kill – F was the driver and E was the shooter – two persons were killed and three suffered serious injury – extremely grave offending with the murders described as being “in the worst category” – on the 2 charges of murder E&F were each sentenced to IMP for life – on the 2 charges of attempted murder E&F were sentenced to IMP14y & IMP12y respectively – on 1 charge of intentionally cause serious injury E&F were sentenced to IMP6y & IMP5y respectively – non-parole periods set for E 29y and for F 27y].

F’s application for leave to appeal was refused: see *Fares v The King* [2024] VSCA 108 esp at [200]-[227].

* *DPP v Ledlin* [2022] VSC 826 [19YO at time of offence, 21YO at time of sentencing: 22y/16y – cowardly attack on the deceased by 3 males in offender’s group who were the initial provokers and attackers – deceased was unarmed and was struck by offender in the chest with a sharp object – offender had deprived and dysfunctional childhood with 8 reports to DFFH from the age of 2 noting his parents’ ongoing substance abuse, environmental neglect and violence from his grandfather – offender had unstable accommodation and education throughout his childhood and extensive substance abuse history – weight given to *Bugmy* principles].
* *R v Minhinnick* [2023] VSC 736 [20YO at time of offence, 22YO at time of sentencing: 21y/15y – violent attack on his mother who suffered from a degenerative medical condition – importance of rehabilitation – departure from sentence indication based on new material].

In *DPP v Dunne* [2010] VSC 220 in the course of sentencing a 22 year old man with several relevant prior convictions to 17y imprisonment with a 13½ year non-parole period on a count of murder, Lasry J said: “This is yet another tragic case where the impetuous use of a knife has created tragic circumstances for several families.”

In *R v Jie Zhu* [2013] VSCA 102 the Court of Appeal dismissed an appeal against a sentence of IMP19y/15y imposed on the 25 year old appellant [aged 21 at the time of the offence] who had been found guilty of the murder of a 17 year old boy. At [71] Redlich JA & Kaye AJA said:

“This was a crime of wanton and unprovoked viciousness by a youthful offender who resorted to the use of a knife to inflict lethal injuries. The victim was an innocent bystander. Violence of this nature by youthful offenders in public places is so prevalent that general deterrence and denunciation of the conduct must be emphasised: See for example *Azzopardi v The Queen; Baltatzis v The Queen; Gabriel v The Queen* [2011] VSCA 372, [39]–[41] and the cases therein referred to. The sentencing judge was obliged to impose a sentence which gave due recognition to not only the sanctity of human life, but which also served to demonstrate that such violence was intolerable in a civilised society and gave emphasis to these sentencing principles.”

In *DPP v Noori* [2019] VSC 172 Hollingworth J had imposed a sentence of life imprisonment on one charge of murder and concurrent individual terms of imprisonment on 11 charges of recklessly causing serious injury and 5 charges of reckless conduct endangering life. A non-parole period of 30y was fixed. The 35 year old offender – who pleaded guilty to the charges – had driven a motor vehicle into the interection of Flinders & Elizabeth Streets Melbourne against a red light and had deliberately run down a number of pedestrians who were crossing. In *Noori v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 46 the Court of Appeal refused leave to appeal. At [49]-[50] Priest, Niall & T Forrest JJA said [emphasis added]:

[49] **“We reject the contention that the applicant’s crime was less serious because it was characterised as reckless, rather than intentional, murder. In our view, no mitigation flowed from that fact.**

[50] A similar conclusion was reached by Phillips CJ, Crockett & Vincent JJ in *R v Aiton* (1993) A Crim R 578, a case in which the Court of Criminal Appeal made it clear that reckless murder was not necessarily less serious. The adult male applicant in that case had killed a little boy by repeatedly punching him, the punches being the culmination of a protracted period of physical abuse. Seeking leave to appeal against sentence, the applicant contended that the sentencing judge had erred by ‘equating for sentencing purposes a reckless murder with an intentional murder’. Rejecting that contention, the Court said at 598:

‘There is no basis, of which we are aware, in the practice of the Court for the acceptance of the view that any such distinction exists, and none in principle why it should. As earlier pointed out, the High Court in *R v Crabbe* (1985) 156 CLR 464, 469 (Gibbs CJ, Wilson, Brennan, Deane, Dawson JJ), made it clear that no assessment can be made of the level of moral culpability attached to a person who commits the crime of murder by reference simply to the category of malice involved. Obviously each case must be considered in the light of its own particular relevant facts.’

See also *Barrett v The Queen* (2010) 27 VR 522, 528-9 [24]–[30].”

In *Felicite v The Queen* [2011] VSCA 274 at [15] Redlich JA (with whom Harper JA & Robson AJA agreed) held that “a domestic murder is not to be treated as comprising a less heinous category of the offence merely because such a relationship is present”. At [16] his Honour referred to and concurred with the following observations of King J in *R v Azizi* [2010] VSC 112 at [24]:

“Every woman and man in this country is entitled to the protection of the law. Marriage does not sanction or give permission to any husband to treat his wife in a manner that is inconsistent with her rights as a fellow human being. No man has the right to order or direct a woman to behave in a certain way, merely because he is her husband. And of course the same applies in reverse. Both women and men, have a right to be protected within a marriage. Matters such as this used to be referred to many years ago as a domestic murders. It makes it no less significant or painful in terms of consequences, than any other type of murder. The punishment for a so-called domestic murder is not one that is reduced because of that fact. In the pantheon of murders, a domestic murder does not occupy a lowly position because of its nature. The protection of persons within a marriage is, and should be, a high and proper priority of the criminal justice system. Accordingly, it must be recognised that the courts take a most serious view of the protection of persons in an abusive and/or violent domestic situation.”

In *Felicite v The Queen* at [20] Redlich JA said:

“The taking of a domestic partner’s life undermines the foundations of personal relationships and family trust, upon which our society rests. The sentence must reflect both the sanctity of human life and society’s abhorrence of violence towards vulnerable and trusting partners, who could legitimately have expected the offender to be the protector from, not the perpetrator of violent abuse. An outburst of homicidal rage in such contexts is totally unacceptable. The community expectation is that the punishment assigned to such conduct must be condign so as to denounce in the strongest terms the abhorrent nature of domestic murder and to deter others from taking a similar course. Accordingly, the principles of general deterrence, denunciation and just punishment will ordinarily be given primacy in sentencing for the murder of a partner in a domestic setting even where there are present, circumstances of provocation or great emotional stress.”

In *R v Shaptafaj* [2022] VSC 71 – in sentencing a 55 year old father to IMP life/35y for the intentional killing of his daughter and her husband motivated by anger and resentment – Tinney J cited with approval at [99] the above dicta of Redlich JA in *Felicite v The Queen* and at [68] said to the offender that “each of the murders you carried out was a particularly grave example of the crime of murder. Your moral culpability is exceedingly high.”

In *R v Penglase* [2011] VSC 356 the accused pleaded guilty to the murder of his wife. He had initially kicked her repeatedly in the head while she was lying on the ground and then repeatedly hit her with a hammer about the head and face. Their children aged 11 & 9 were witnesses to the latter part of the attack. The older child rang her maternal grandmother and said: “Dad’s hurting mum and I think she is dead now. Come quick.” In sentencing the accused to 22y/18y, Coghlan J said at [54]-[56]:

“The single most important matter of aggravation, and indeed of the whole case, is the fact that you murdered the mother of your children whilst in their presence and when they were at a most impressionable age.

Their mother was their principal carer and your actions were sustained and brutal. Your blows were direct almost entirely to the head and face. That factor, or these factors, makes this one of the most serious examples of the crime of murder. I have not been able to find any examples of cases where the children of the marriage of this age have been actually present while their mother was murdered. There are cases of children present in the house but they did not witness the murder: see *R v Baxter* [2009] VSC 180; *R v Karageorges* [2006] VSCA 49.

The most similar cases although by no means identical is *R v Nguyen* [2010] VSCA 31 and *R v Hettiarachchi* [2009] VSCA 270.”

In *R v Meade* [2013] VSC 682 the accused pleaded not guilty to the murder of his ex-wife. He was found guilty after a trial in which the evidence against him was largely circumstantial. His ex-wife had been struck to the head at least twice with a blunt object. The motive was said to be to prevent his children from being relocated overseas. In sentencing him to IMP 23y/19y, Weinberg JA said at [74]: “[I]t is impossible to overstate the gravity of what you did. You deliberately, with premeditation, and without a shadow of justification, took the life of your former wife, the mother of your children, and a woman who, by all accounts, was greatly loved and admired. Your conduct was brutal, callous, and cowardly.”

In *DPP v Borg* [2013] VSCA 181 the Court of Appeal allowed a Director’s appeal against a sentence of 23y/19y on a count of murder and increased the sentence to 28y/24y9m. The 29 year old respondent had established marijuana crops in a house in Craigieburn and at other locations for the purpose of trafficking in the harvest. Police learned of the Craigieburn crop. The respondent believed that the victim, who had known the respondent for a number of years, had informed the police. Buchanan JA (with whom Nettle & Osborn JJA agreed) said at [22]:

“Unfortunately, it seems to me that the sentence itself fails to reflect the seriousness of the crime and its attendant circumstances. A planned execution carried out for the sole purpose of protecting a criminal enterprise at least approached the worst case of an offence for which the maximum penalty is life imprisonment.”

In *Xypolitos v The Queen* [2014] VSCA 339 the accused pleaded not guilty to murder of his defacto stepson. The victim was killed with a hammer. Post-offence conduct involved dismemberment and concealment of the victim’s body and continued debial over a very protracted period of any knowledge of the circumstances surrounding the victim’s disappearance. No remose. Substantial sentence [IMP 27y/24y] justified by lack of guilty plea and by post-offence conduct.

In *DPP v Browning* [2016] VSCA 152 the 54-year old accused pleaded not guilty to murder of his wife who had suffered multiple stab wounds to her upper body while she was asleep in her own home. The accused had consumed sleeping tablets containing doxylamine that could have had adverse side effects but a very experienced forensic psychiatrist gave evidence that he had never seen a doxylamine-induced psychosis. The accused was found guilty and sentenced to IMP18y/14y. Allowing a DPP appeal, the Court of Appeal characterized this as “a serious example of the offence of murder” and re-sentenced the accused to IMP21y/16y.

In *R v Kelson* [2018] VSC 442 the 25 year old accused had pleaded guilty to the murder of a 17 year old friend by striking the deceased to the head with knuckledusters and disposing of the body in a disused mineshaft. There were various factual matters in dispute and a co-offender gave evidence in a contested plea. Categorized as a serious instance of murder. IMP24y/19y.

In *DPP v Freeburn* [2018] VSC 616 the 29 year old accused had been found guilty after a lengthy trial of the murder of his girlfriend after “a sustained and violent assault on a vulnerable woman, who was in a drug-affected state, restrained at the wrists, and unable to defend herself”. IMP25y/20y. At [25] Hollingworth J said:

“Courts have repeatedly spoken of the primary importance of general deterrence, denuniciation and just punishment in cases of domestic violence. The taking of a domestic partner’s life undermines the foundations of personal relationships and family trust upon which our society rests. Although your relationship with Elizabeth had not been a long one, she was (as you well knew) in a more vulnerable position than many partners might have been; by reason of her intellectual disability, she was less able to protect herself from exploitation and abuse.”

In *R v Davsanoglu* [2019] VSC 332 the 44 year old accused had initially claimed that the victim – with whom he had had a very long-standing relationship – had died as a result of a suicide pact. The accused subsequently pleaded guilty following a confession made during cross-examination. IMP23y/18y. At [5] Lasry J said:

“This is yet another case of a man inflicting his will on a woman by the use of fatal violence in her home. Whilst the circumstances of this case are unusual to a degree, in other respects, they are all too familiar. Violence by men against women remains of epidemic proportions, and it simply must be stemmed.”

In *DPP v Fairhall (sentence)* [2022] VSC 444 – after a trial run on a confined basis on the sole issue of the offender’s intent – the 47-year-old offender was sentenced to IMP25y/18y6m on a charge of murdering his former partner by a single stab wound to her neck. The offending – described by the sentencing judge as “a serious example of intimate partner family violence murder” – was in breach of an intervention order and occurred in the presence of the couple’s three teenage children. The offender had made some efforts to assist with CPR following the stabbing. *Verdins* & *Bugmy* considerations were enlivened. At [34]-[37] Jane Dixon J said:

“Your younger daughter experiences ongoing sadness, anger and frustration. Life is hard for her without her mother. She is upset in the knowledge that her parents will not be there for big occasions in her life such as birthdays, her first job, marriage and children. Your actions will continue to rebound on your three children in the years to come. There is an enormous hole left in their lives by the loss of their mother. Three young lives forever changed by your despicable violence. [The deceased’s] brother Malcolm, and his wife…have taken on the role of caring for the two younger children, despite the sacrifices involved in doing so at their stage of life.”

In *Stone v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 186 the Court of Appeal (Maxwell P, Beach & T Forrest JJA) upheld the “undoubtedly very stern” sentence of IMP34y/28y imposed by Taylor J in *R v Stone* [2019] VSC 452 on a 39 year woman who was convicted of murdering her husband by setting him on fire. At [87]-[88] the Court concluded:

“We can discern no error in the heavy sentence imposed in this case. The judge was entirely justified in her use of adjectives such as ‘vicious’, ‘barbarous’, ‘merciless’, ‘malicious’, ‘wicked’, ‘abhorrent’ to describe the applicant’s conduct. There was no challenge to her Honour’s finding that both the objective gravity of her conduct and her moral culpability were extremely high.

Given the multiple aggravating features, the absence of remorse or contrition in any form, and the absence of any psychiatric or psychological explanation for this appalling crime, her Honour had little alternative but to impose a very stern sentence. As her Honour said, domestic murder is the ultimate act of family violence and must be strongly condemned.”

In *DPP v Deng* [2022] VSC 790 the accused had indicated a plea of guilty to manslaughter but a jury verdict of murder had been entered. The accused had arranged to meet with and confront the deceased, a former friend of his, over a minor grievance. A fight had ensued not involving the use of weapons. The fight had ended and the deceased had retreated. The accused had then pursued the deceased armed with a knife and had inflicted a single stab wound with mild to moderate force. The accused, who was 22 years old at the time of offending, had relevant but very limited criminal history and had been sentenced in the County Court between the jury verdict and the plea for unrelated earlier offending. In sentencing him to IMP 19y/14y Fox J said at [39]:

“Murder is the most serious crime in our legal system. You have taken the life of Machar Kot, who was just 21 years old and had his whole life ahead of him. His mother and sister, and no doubt all his family and friends, have been devastated by his death. The sentence I impose must adequately punish you for your crime, and publicly denounce your conduct on this night. General deterrence – that is, the need to send a message to other would-be offenders – is a very important sentencing principle in these circumstances. **As this case tragically shows, a single stab wound is all it takes to kill another person and commit the crime of murder. All people, but particularly young people, need to understand that if you use a knife to kill another human being, then you should expect to spend a very lengthy portion of your own life in gaol.**”

In *DPP v Payne* [2023] VSC 286 the accused was found guilty by a jury of murdering her husband by giving him a biscuit laced with a quantity of temazepam tablets, wrapping his body in a blanket and placing it in a disused chest freezer. The cause of death was unascertainable but was either suffocation or overdose. The accused had In imposed a sentence of IMP16y/10y, Incerti J held-

* at [72] that Ms Payne’s exposure to family violence from a very young age and the circumstances of her offending make her less morally culpable than an offender whose formative years were not marred in that way. Her traumatic childhood experiences contributed to her entrapment in an abusive relationship with Mr Payne and most likely impacted upon her consequential decision-making; and
* at [32]-[33] that extensive family violence perpetrated against the accused and other members of the household by the deceased resulted in Ms Payne’s moral culpability being at the lower end:

[32] “The prosecution submits that Mr Payne’s behaviour towards you is relevant to your moral culpability and his behaviour over the course of your relationship ‘goes some way towards ameliorating the aggravating factor of a breach of trust’. However, the prosecution also submits that these considerations can only go so far given the lack of any legal justification for killing Mr Payne and given the sanctity of each and every human life. Further, the prosecution submits that you had the option to leave and that your conduct, including putting Mr Payne’s body in the freezer, reflects your determination to kill him.

[33] You were living in intolerable and inescapable circumstances. I reject the prosecution’s submission that you had options and could have left. You did not feel under threat of death from Mr Payne at the time you killed him. However, given his controlling and coercive behaviours, the existing court orders stopping you from taking the children, your limited financial means, and the fact you were residing in a remote and isolated part of Victoria during COVID-19 lockdowns, you had no realistic option to leave. This does not provide a legal excuse for murdering Mr Payne. However, it provides a necessary explanation as to why your moral culpability is at the lower end.”

Leave to appeal against conviction was refused but the sentence was reduced to IMP12y7y. In *Payne v The King* [2024] VSCA 273 McLeish, Kaye & T Forrest JJA said at [134]-[137]:

[134] “The judge...appropriately acknowledged that the case was one calling for mercy. At the same time, the sentence needed to denounce the deliberate taking of human life, and to act as a general deterrent, lest it be mistakenly perceived that the law encourages others to act as this offender did. And the applicant did not have the sentencing benefit that a plea of guilty would have conferred. It is significant, however, that when the applicant was arraigned at the commencement of the trial, she did plead guilty to manslaughter, and, to that extent, she admitted to, and took responsibility for, causing the death of Noel Payne by an unlawful and dangerous act.

[135] It is important not to understate the significance of the judge’s finding as to the applicant’s reduced moral culpability. In that respect, it is noted that the defence of provocation, which formerly supported a verdict of manslaughter in cases like this one, where the accused caused death while provoked in a manner capable of causing an ordinary person to lose self-control and act as the accused did, was abolished in 2005; the successor offence of defensive homicide was itself abolished in 2014. Although the law as to criminal responsibility has changed in this way, however, the circumstances which underlay the former defence of provocation remain relevant to sentencing generally, and to an assessment of an accused’s moral culpability, in particular: see *Tyne v Tasmania* (2005) 15 Tas R 221, 227 [18]; *Kourpanidis v The Queen* [2022] ACTCA 11 [27]; *R v Freeman* [2015] VSC 506 [34]–[38], [42]; Victoria, Hansard, Legislative Assembly, 6 October 2005, 1349 (the Honourable Rob Hulls, Attorney-General); *Kelly v The Queen* [2000] VSCA 164 [13]–[15], [26] & [27].

[136] Taking all these matters together, along with the other factors canvassed in the judge’s comprehensive and thoughtful sentencing remarks, we have come to the view that this sentence, despite the acknowledged role that mercy played in the judge’s instinctive synthesis, was manifestly excessive.

[137] The applicant was 41 years old at the time of the offending. She had endured upwards of ten years of intolerable and seemingly escalating emotional and physical torment at the hands of the deceased. Her situation was, the judge found, inescapable. Having lost her thirties in this way, she now stands to lose her forties and more as a result of the offence she committed. That is no small thing, especially given that she will be separated from her children. These exceptional circumstances are a sure foundation for a proper exercise of mercy, and for an assessment of the applicant’s reduced moral culpability for her offending.”

In *DPP v Sako* [2024] VSC 77 the offender (35 years old at the time of the offending and 39 years old at the time of sentence) had pleaded guilty to the stabbing murder of a 23 year old victim following breaking into the victim’s home in the context of an obsessive fixation on the victim who was the offender’s team leader at his previous workplace. At [59] Jane Dixon J described the offending as “a very grave example of the already grave crime of murder”. The offender had an extreme personality disorder and a major depressive disorder at the time of offending and had limited prospects of rehabilitation. Holding that “*Verdins* factors do reduce [the offender’s] moral culpability and act to moderate, but not remove, the importance of general and specific deterrence”, Jane Dixon J imposed a sentence of IMP36y/30y. At [102]-[107] her Honour said:

[102] “Along with *Todd v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 46 and *DPP v Herrmann* [2021] VSCA 160, I have considered other sentences imposed for serious examples of murder, including those contained in tables provided by the parties since the standard sentencing regime was put in place per s.5B(2)(b) of the *Sentencing Act 1991* (Vic). Some of these cases engaged *Verdins* principles, whilst others did not. In *R v Robertson* [2019] VSC 145 {IMP24y/19y} the offender became jealous over his partner and engaged in surveillance of her via social media and other means. After being told she wished to separate, he used an iron dumbbell to savagely attack her while she was lying on the bed talking on the phone. The couple’s daughter was asleep in another room at the time. The offence was described by the sentencing judge as a grave example of the offence of murder falling above the middle range of seriousness. Tables produced by the parties at the hearing of your plea included several other cases of intimate partner violence where the victims had rejected the offender in some way or had sought intervention orders to keep the offender away.

*R v Cameron* [2020] VSC 334 – guilty plea to a ‘very serious example of murder’, offender inflicted multiple stab wounds on victim while she was lying on the bed: 29 years’ imprisonment, non-parole period (‘NPP’) 23 years; *DPP v Coman* [2023] VSC 159 – early guilty plea, the offender was suffering psychotic depression when he stabbed his pregnant partner to death, described as falling above the mid-range of seriousness: 25 years’ imprisonment, NPP 20 years; *DPP v Gonzalez* [2022] VSC 331 – guilty plea to planned murder of ex-girlfriend by trespass into her home and shooting her twice at close range, previous rejection by victim: 24 years’ imprisonment, NPP 17 years; *R v Margolis* [2021] VSC 341 – conviction following trial, the offender choked his 26 year-old girlfriend to death during an argument, the pair had been in a brief relationship, offender’s moral culpability reduced by his severe PD and PTSD, guarded prospects for rehabilitation: 23 years’ imprisonment, NPP 17 years; *DPP v Bell* [2020] VSC 664 – guilty plea, the offender strangled his partner in breach of family violence intervention order (‘FVIO’), *Verdins* applicable but rehabilitative prospects guarded: 21 years’ imprisonment, NPP 15 years; *DPP v Fairhall* [2022] VSC 444 – conviction after trial, stabbing of intimate partner in breach of FVIO, *Verdins* and *Bugmy* factors applied: 25 years’ imprisonment, NPP 18 years and 6 months; *R v Basham* [2023] VSC 79 – conviction following trial, planned murder by trespass into garage of home of estranged wife in breach of FVIO and infliction of 41 blunt force injuries, motivated to prevent her giving evidence on charges of raping her, victim’s body placed in a noose to appear as it suicide, offending described as ‘far exceed[ing] the middle of the range of seriousness’ and ‘at the highest end of that scale’: life imprisonment, NPP 30 years.

A distinguishing feature in this case is the absence of any pre-existing intimate relationship. Refer, eg, Defence Submissions on Sentence, [88]: ‘Sentences that are comparable to the instant offending are difficult to identify. … Many of the cases involve offending against former partners; this is an inelegant fit for the offending before the Court’.

[103] Two cases worthy of mention did not involve intimate partner violence. In *DPP v Bednar* [2023] VSC 67 {29 years’ imprisonment, NPP 23 years reduced on appeal in [2024] VSCA 180 to 25 years’ imprisonment, NPP 20 years}, the offender targeted his elderly mother with a campaign of intimidation and harassment leading up to a planned murder. He broke into her home in breach of an intervention order and inflicted a ferocious beating and then returned two days later to take steps to conceal his involvement. There was no remorse and moral culpability was described as ‘exceedingly high’, with the offence falling comfortably in the upper range of seriousness. *R v Leigh* [2019] VSC 378 {28 years’ imprisonment, NPP 22 years} involved a guilty plea where the offender committed a pre-planned, brutal and callous murder of the disabled victim whilst visiting him on the pretext of discussing an unpaid debt. He lured the victim into the bathroom and stabbed him 34 times. The murder was described as falling above the mid-range of the spectrum of seriousness.

[104] I have considered current sentencing practice as I am required to do, but previous sentences do not create a precedent which must be followed unless capable of being distinguished: see e.g. *Todd v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 46, [54]; *Likiardopoulos v R* (2010) 30 VR 654, 690 [172].

[105] I have had regard to the maximum sentence as well as the standard sentence for murder: see *Sentencing Act 1991* (Vic), ss 5(2)(a), (ab), 5B(2)(a). Consideration of the standard sentence does not impact the accepted ‘instinctive synthesis’ approach to sentencing and is to be treated as a ’legislative guidepost’ only, having the same function as the maximum penalty: *Brown v The Queen* (2019) 59 VR 462, 464 [4]. As noted by Hollingworth J in *Herrmann*, a standard sentence looks at the objective factors affecting the relative seriousness of the offence and excludes any matters personal to the offender: *Sentencing Act 1991* (Vic) ss.5A(1)(b), (3). Justice Hollingworth said at [104]:

‘A standard sentence is not the same thing as a mandatory sentence. Nor is a standard sentence the primary sentencing consideration, or the starting point from which to add or subtract time. It is just one of the many matters to be taken into account by a court in performing the instinctive synthesis method of sentencing.’

[106] In my view, the objective factors attaching to your offence place it well above the ‘middle of the range’ of seriousness. However, in sentencing you, I am required to synthesise all of the matters I have discussed, including matters personal to you.

[107] In *Herrmann*, the Crown cited *Todd* to argue in favour of the imposition of life imprisonment. Justice Hollingworth found that while there were some similar features there were also important points of difference, notwithstanding that *Todd*, like *Herrmann*, concerned a murder in the context of a rape. In the present case, Mr Bourke also cited *Todd* and argued in favour of life imprisonment. However, as discussed above, I am also persuaded that there are important points of difference between this case and *Todd*. Having regard to all of the matters I have discussed, despite the objective gravity of the offence, I consider that your offending does not warrant life imprisonment, although it does warrant a very stern sentence: see e.g. *R v Kilic* (2016) 259 CLR 256 at [17]-[20].”

In *DPP v Kurera* [2024] VSC 809 the accused had pleaded not guilty to murder of his estranged wife and common law assault of his son but was found guilty by a jury. He had attended the family home late at night in breach of an intervention order and in possession of a hatchet, a tin of petrol and a lighter. He ambushed the deceased on the rear patio. His teenage children tried to intervene. He struck his son twice with the hatchet in the course of fleeing the house. He then killed his wife in the kitchen using the hatchet and a knife. His daughter A was present during the fatal attack on her mother and pleaded with him to stop. The murder was not premeditated but the confrontation was planned. The offender had no prior convictions but some history of domestic violence. He had poor prospects of rehabilitation. He was sentenced to IMP36y for murder and IMP4y for assault of which 1y was cumulative leading to TES IMP37y/30y. At [59] Fox J said:

“One of the most aggravating features of your offending is that it occurred in the presence of your children. It was a shocking breach of trust as both a husband and a father. It is hard to comprehend how you were not moved to lay down your weapon and leave once your children arrived downstairs. It is even harder to comprehend how you could ignore the pleas of [your daughter A] and brutally kill her mother in front of her. You displayed a callousness and cruel disregard for your own children and you still maintain that they are not telling the truth when they most certainly are.”

In *Director of Public Prosecutions v Wal* [2025] VSC 111 the 40 year old offender – who had used a knife and hammer to kill a friend who lived in a neighbouring room in an accommodation home – pleaded guilty to murder after a sentence indication. At the time of the offending Mr Wal was suffering from:

1. Schizophrenia, which by that time had been untreated for approximately 5 months, with active auditory hallucinations, pathological suspiciousness and persecutory delusions regarding people in your environment.
2. A mixed substance use disorder with ongoing usage of alcohol, cannabis and methamphetamine; and related to this, at the actual time of offending he was severely intoxicated with alcohol.
3. The longstanding cognitive effects of a major neurocognitive disorder.

The offender appeared to have held the belief that the victim was deliberately not paying back a debt but there was no clear evidence that this belief was delusional or that it related to the offender’s cognitive deficits. There was expert evidence that the offender’s various mental disorders did significantly contribute causally to his offending. The offender had had a traumatic childhood in South Sudan where he was exposed to conflict and violence. He had a prior criminal history and the prospect of deportation. Consistent with the principles in *R v Verdins*, the offender’s moral culpability must be sensibly reduced. Prison was likely to be more burdensome than for the average prisoner. IMP22y/16y.

In *DPP v Lee* [2025] VSC 376 the 65 year old accused had poured petrol over a man working on the property next door and set him alight, intending to cause really serious injury. Death resulted. The actions of the accused – who suffered from a personality disorder of moderate severity – were motivated by anger, not by fear. His moral culpability was reduced but still high. Categorising the offending as “towards the upper end range of seriousness”, Tinney J imposed a sentence of IMP35y/27y. At [118]-[119] Tinney J said:

[118] “The sentence must communicate in clear terms this Court’s condemnation and disapproval of your violent and extreme conduct. As was said by the Court of Appeal in *Fares v The King*:[2024] VSCA 108 at [222]:

[I]t was of primary importance that the sentence imposed by the judge constitute an unambiguous condemnation, by the Court, and as such by our society, of the total and utter disregard displayed by the applicant…for the sanctity of human life, which is the most fundamental value of our community.

[119] In respect of general deterrence, the sentence I pass must bring it clearly home to any person who might be minded to carry out a murderous attack upon another person, through the most malevolent means of the use of an accelerant and a flame source, that such conduct will be met with very strong punishment.”

In *DPP v Ene, Kakato & Taumoefolau* [2025] VSC 281 the three accused – aged respectively 24, 26 & 28 at the time of the offence and now aged 30, 32 & 34 – had “been found guilty by a jury, following a lengthy trial, of the murder of [X], an entirely blameless and innocent person whose violent death [by shooting] was so callous, cruel and unwarranted as to almost defy belief.” The accused were all members of the Comanchero, an outlaw motorcycle gang. In a planned attack for the purpose of protecting and enhancing the reputation of the Comanchero, X was shot multiple times while driving home at night time. The accused were all awarded a special patch as a reward for their conduct. The accused had taken steps to avoid apprehension after their crime. This was extremely grave offending with a high degree of planning and involved an extremely high degree of moral culpability. At [149] Tinney J said:

“As I have already indicated, the murder of which you have all been found guilty is exceedingly grave, and at the upper end of the spectrum of seriousness. Set against the background of your membership of the Comanchero, the efforts of that organisation, with no justification at all, in seeking the recovery of a debt not even owed to it, and anger apparently felt within the organisation about the perceived affront to the reputation of the Comanchero as a result of the actions of Witness L and in rebuffing the demands of the Comanchero, the three of you along with your cooffender, embarked upon a plan to murder an innocent man, [X], who was seen, as the Crown put it, as ‘a convenient, accessible and sufficient vehicle’, in your eyes, to send the desired message. Yours was a truly terrible crime, carried out with shocking and brutal efficiency, following a high level of planning. Your crime showed a complete disregard for the law, a distinct lack of human decency and humanity, and a callous disregard for the sanctity of human life. Your crime was an affront to normal, decent society.”

For reasons discussed at [166]-[169] Tinney J held that a head sentence of life imprisonment was the appropriate and necessary sentence in the circumstances for each of the 3 accused. However, for reasons discussed at [173]-[177] Tinney J held that that “it is in the interests of justice that non-parole periods lower than the 30 year period specified in s 11A(4)(a) [of the *Sentencing Act 1991*] be fixed in each of your cases”. His Honour fixed non-parole periods of 28y for Ene & Kakato and 26y for Taumoefolau.

In *R v Patterson (Sentence)* [2025] VSC 557, a jury had found the offender (who was 48 years old at the time of offending and 50 years old at the time of sentencing) guilty of murder of her estranged husband’s parents and his aunt and attempted murder of her estranged husband’s uncle. The offender had falsely represented to the victims and her husband that she had serious medical issues which she needed to discuss with them in the absence of her children and she had invited them to lunch. The night before the lunch, the husband told the offender he would not be attending. The offender served the four lunch guests Beef Wellingtons deliberately laced with death cap mushrooms. Only the husband’s uncle survived. The motive was unknown. There was substantial premeditation and pitiless conduct post-offending, including an elaborate cover-up. This betrayal of trust amounted to worst category offending with no evidence of remorse. The deceased suffered significantly pre-mortem and the sole survivor suffered similarly and has ongoing health problems. There were many indirect victims. The offender had no relevant criminal history and had become notorious given unprecedented media attention. For her own safety, the offender had been held in continuous solitary confinement for the previous 15 months and the harsher than normal prison conditions were likely to continue for the foreseeable future, making imprisonment significantly more burdensome for the offender than for mainstream prisoners. Beale J was satisfied that life imprisonment was appropriate and imposed a sentence of IMP25y for the attempted murder charge and a sentence of life imprisonment on each of the 3 murder charges. The prosecution had submitted than no non-parole period should be ordered. However, for the reasons detailed at [107]-[108] Beale J imposed a non-parole period of 33 years.

See also *R v Goodall* [2000] VSCA 106 at [21] per Batt JA (with whom Winneke P & Buchanan JA agreed); *DPP v Jones* [2018] VSC 329; *DPP v Kamalasanan & Sam* [2018] VSC 340; *R v Pavlis* [2018] VSC 440; *R v Tang* [2018] VSC 460; *DPP v Lyons & Lyons* [2018] VSC 488; *R v Smith* [2018] VSC 656; *R v Missen* [2019] VSC 32; *DPP v Gargasoulas* [2019] VSC 87; *DPP v Clover* [2019] VSC 123; *R v Robertson* [2019] VSC 145; *R v Eustace* [2019] VSC 189; *R v Pyliotis* [2019] VSC 231; *DPP v Stone* [2019] VSC 322; *R v Considine and anor* [2019] VSC 386 at [106]; *R v Solmaz* [2019] VSC 530; *R v Pozzebon* [2019] VSC 631; *DPP v Mean* [2019] VSC 675; *R v Eckersley* [2020] VSC 22 esp. at [110]-[114]; *R v Wardlaw* [2020] VSC 83; *Eustace v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 142; *R v Margolis* [2021] VSC 341; *DPP v Moore* [2021] VSC 532; *DPP v Heddergott* [2021] VSC 793; *DPP v Kingdon* [2021] VSC 858; *R v Wilio* [2022] VSC 86 – leave to appeal refused *Wilio v The King* [2023] VSCA 88; *DPP v Marrogi* [2022] VSC 210; *DPP v Fairhall* [2022] VSC 444; *DPP v Taylor* [2022] VSC 598; *DPP v Cross (No 2)* [2023] VSC 40; *DPP v Bednar* [2023] VSC 67 sentence appeal allowed in *Bednar v The King* [2024] VSCA 180; *R v Basham (Sentence)* [2023] VSC 79; *DPP v Coman* [2023] VSC 159; *DPP v McCartin & Anor (Sentence)* [2023] VSC 193; *Shaptafaj v The King* [2023] VSCA 93; *DPP v Brown* [2023] VSC 311; *DPP v Rider & Ong* [2023] VSC 466; *DPP v Holt (Sentence)* [2023] VSC 515; *DPP v Pandilovsky* [2023] VSC 514; *R v Heron* [2023] VSC 539; *DPP v Edmunds* [2023] VSC 581; *DPP v Whyte* [2023] VSC 645; *DPP v Charlton (No 2)* [2023] VSC 707; *DPP v El Nasher* [2023] VSC 694; *R v Rozynski (No 2)* [2023] VSC 773; *DPP v Hillman* [2024] VSC 100; *DPP v Stiler* [2024] VSC 314; *DPP v Anderson (Sentence)* [2024] VSC 565; *R v Cohrs* [2024] VSC 617; *R v Nguyen & Curham* [2024] VSC 616; *R v Lynn* [2024] VSC 635; *DPP v Pualic* [2024] VSC 817 [see summary in **section 11.2.36** and dismissal of appeal in [2025] VSCA 178 discussed in **Part 11.19**]; *R v Loughnane* [2025] VSC 41; *R v Gebregiorgis; R v Kassa* [2025] VSC 86; *R v Birchall* [2025] VSC 170*; R v Petrov* [2025] VSC 200; *DPP v Milhuisen* [2025] VSC 269; *Rozynski v The King* [2025] VSCA 199; *DPP v Mehdi & Ors (Sentence)* [2025] VSC 532.

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### **11.2.22.5 Sentencing for statutory murder**

In *DPP v Gavin Perry; Gavin Perry v The Queen* (2016) 50 VR 686; [2016] VSCA 152 the Court of Appeal dismissed both appeals against a sentence of 20 years imprisonment imposed on the offender on a charge of statutory murder committed when he was on parole. The offender had stabbed and killed the victim in the course of an armed robbery. He had initially been charged with murder but the DPP agreed to accept a plea to statutory murder under s.3A of the *Crimes Act 1958* given difficulties in proving “murderous intent”. At [24]-[41] Maxwell ACJ and Redlich & Whelan JJA discussed the history of the former common law ‘felony murder’ rule and its relationship with statutory murder, an offence which the Court described as “a statutory fiction..[t]hat is, a person who *unintentionally* causes the death of another person in the course of a crime of violence is liable to be convicted of murder *as though* he/she had killed the victim *intentionally*”. What constitutes “an act of violence for this purpose was explained by the Full Court in *R v Butcher* [1986] VR 43 as including acts of intimidation and menaces as well as physical force. At [50]-[80] the Court discussed and illustrated the divergent approaches to statutory murder in Victoria and New South Wales and concluded at [81] that the position enunciated in the NSW authorities was correct, namely that “Murder under s.3A is not inherently less serious than common law murder: *Mills* (Unreported, New South Wales Court of Criminal Appeal, Gleeson CJ, Cole JA and Sperling J, 3 April 1995) 3–4; *JB* [1999] NSWCCA 93 [33]; *R v Teck Lee Lew* [2004] NSWCCA 320 [19]; *Jacobs* (2004) 151 A Crim R 452, 512 [332]. See also *R v Garve* (1995) 65 SASR 483, 486.” The Full Court went on to say at [84]-[85]:

“The persistence of the incorrect view — that statutory murder is an inherently less serious form of murder — has resulted in sentences being unduly confined in length. Markedly lower sentences have been imposed than would ordinarily be imposed for common law murder in the same category of seriousness. Sentencing practice for this offence should be altered to reflect the objective gravity of statutory murder.

*R v Kelly* appears to be the only Victorian case where a finding might have been made that the act causing death was accompanied by an intention to cause — at least — really serious injury*.* The offending in the present case was more serious, however. The CCTV evidence showed very clearly the forceful manner in which Perry stabbed Mr O’Toole, twice, in the upper chest region. On the view of the law set out in these reasons, the question of Perry’s intent was a matter which could, and should, have been investigated, as going to the gravity of the offence and Perry’s moral culpability. As explained below, however, the sentencing judge proceeded on the understandable assumption that she was precluded from raising that issue.”

In *R v Duca* [2019] VSC 371 the accused was convicted after trial of statutory murder. The deceased had been killed in furtherance of an armed robbery and it was the accused who fired the fatal shots. In imposing a sentence of IMP20y/16y Taylor J said at [42]:

“Statutory murder is not inherently less serious than murder: *DPP v Perry* (2016) 50 VR 686. Nonetheless, in assessing the objective gravity of the offence and your moral culpability for it, I must assess your state of mind with respect to the act causing death. That calls for an assessment of whether, in being party to the act of violence that caused the death of Mr Vuong in furtherance of the foundational offence of armed robbery, you intended to cause him harm.”

See also *R v Considine and anor* [2019] VSC 386; *R v Ramos* [2019] VSC 79.

### **11.2.22.6 Sentencing for incitement to murder**

In *R v Assaad* [2022] VSC 800 Croucher J imposed a sentence of IMP 5y/2y6m on a 50 year old man who had pleaded guilty following a sentence indication to a charge of incitement to murder. The intended victim was a pastor at a church attended by the accused’s family whom the accused believed had improperly intervened in his marriage 6 years earlier over allegations of family violence. The accused met an undercover operative pretending to be a hitman twice and provided a cash deposit and a dossier on the pastor. The accused had a limited criminal history and otherwise a strong history of good character and good prospects of rehabilitation.

At [51]-[60] Croucher J explained why – contrary to a view he had expressed in an earlier case – s.207 of the *Criminal Procedure Act 2009* empowered him – or at least did not prevent him – from indicating a maximum head sentence of imprisonment together with a non-parole period, saying at [51]: “After all, in order to make an informed decision, an accused will want to know of the non-parole period indicated as much as he or she will want to know of the head or total effective sentence indicated.”

At [62]-[63] Croucher J said:

[62] “Incitement to murder contrary to s.321G of the *Crimes Act 1958* is, by definition, a very serious offence. It carries a maximum penalty of imprisonment for life. To be guilty of the offence, the accused must intend that the offence the subject of the incitement — in this case, murder — be committed. It has been said that, as murder is a crime of the utmost gravity, incitement to murder is an extremely serious example of the crime of incitement: *Kalala v The Queen* [2017] VSCA 223 at [23] per Maxwell P and Redlich JA.

[63] Mr Assaad’s particular offence was a serious instance of incitement to murder, albeit not at the upper end of the spectrum of gravity for this offence. Factors contributing to the seriousness of the offence include the following. First, it is plain that Mr Assaad persisted in the encouragement of Zac to follow through with his instruction to kill Mr Issa. Second, I accept Mr Rochford’s submission that it is troubling that Mr Assaad’s motivation for the offence appears to have been his lingering *animus* towards Mr Issa because of his involvement in assisting GH in a time of perceived need for support when dealing with a complaint of family violence. Third, Mr Assaad diligently persisted in sourcing the information requested by the undercover operative, and kept him updated on the progress of his task. Fourth, he used public phones to avoid detection when contacting the covert operative. In those circumstances, I accept Mr Rochford’s submission that Mr Assaad’s moral culpability was high.”

At [120]-[122] Croucher J said:

[120] “…I considered every sentence I could find on Austlii imposed in this Court or in the Court of Appeal for incitement to murder over the last twenty years or so.

[121] Those sentences ranged from the imposition of a community correction order in a wholly unique case [*The Queen v Pratley* [2013] VSC 298 (*per* Priest JA)] to a sentence of 9 years’ imprisonment with a non-parole period of 6 years at the other end of the spectrum: *Kalala v The Queen* [2017] VSCA 223 (*per* Maxwell P, Redlich and Osborn JJA) (the appeal against sentence imposed by Warren CJ in *The Queen v Kalala* [2015] VSC 713 was dismissed). Each of those matters involved a plea of guilty.

[122] Other sentences at the higher end of the sentencing spectrum were two sentences of 8 years’ imprisonment, one of which was imposed following a plea of not guilty: *The Queen v Najibi* [2015] VSC 260 (*per* Emerton J). The other involved a very serious example of the offence that followed a plea of guilty but which was connected with a murder so grave as to attract a life sentence: *The Queen v Cardamone* [2017] VSC 493 (*per* Lasry J). Most of the sentences ranged between 3 and 7 years’ imprisonment. Four of the 7-year sentences involved pleas of not guilty [*Withers v The Queen [No 2]* [2010] VSCA 411 (*per* Buchanan, Ashley and Weinberg JJA) (resentencing on appeal from *DPP v Withers* [2007] VSC 411 (*per* Harper J); *The Queen v Wilson* [2015] VSC 394 (*per* King J)] and two followed pleas of guilty [*Natale v The Queen; Stallone v The Queen* [2011] VSCA 28 (*per* Maxwell P, Ashley and Bongiorno JJA)]. Those attracting sentences of 6 years’ imprisonment also followed a mixture of pleas of guilty [*R v Maccia* [2003] VSC 384 (*per* Gillard J); *R v Leak & Cherry* [2011] VSC 212 (*per* Curtain J)] and not guilty [*R v Zhong* [2001] VSC 523 (*per* Flatman J); *DPP v LW* [2009] VSC 227 (*per* Hollingworth J); *R v Skura* [2004] VSCA 53 (*per* Buchanan and Eames JJA & Smith AJA).] Two concurrent sentences of 5½ years’ imprisonment (together with a concurrent sentence of 3½ years’ imprisonment for inciting serious injury), with a non-parole period of 2 years, were imposed on one offender [*R v Gazdovic* [2002] VSC 485 (*per* Coldrey J).] In another matter, on pleas of guilty, sentences of 5½ and-a-half years and 5 years’ imprisonment were imposed on separate counts [*R v Traycevska* [2010] VSC 270 (*per* Coghlan J) (with cumulation, his Honour fixed a total effective sentence of 7 years’ imprisonment with a non-parole period of 4 years)]. The sentences of 3 years’ imprisonment tended to involve lower levels of gravity of offending than the present case (or lesser roles therein) accompanied by pleas of guilty [*R v K-B* [2011] VSC 124 (*per* King J); *R v Leak & Cherry* [2011] VSC 212 (*per* Curtain J)].”

In footnote 22 in [127] Croucher J noted:

“In *Kalala v The Queen* [2017] VSCA 223, the Court included as an annexure a table of sentences imposed in Victoria in cases of incitement to murder. Helpfully, in each case, the table summarised the sentence imposed, the plea, whether there were prior convictions, the intended victim/s, the offender’s motive, mitigating factors, aggravating factors and other relevant factors. The table refers to some of the cases I have mentioned above, but also two older cases (namely, *R v Massie* [1999] 1 VR 542; *R v Shoukan* (unreported, Victorian CCA, 15 February 1996)), which I have considered as well.”

At [128]-[131] Croucher J discussed the judgments of the Court of Appeal in *Kalala v The Queen* and distinguished *Kalala*, saying at [131]: “As I apprehend it, the present case would not fall into the category of cases which, on the views expressed by Maxwell P and Redlich JA, should more closely align to sentences for conspiracy to murder.”

It is noteworthy that Croucher J sentenced Mr Assaad on the day of the plea, instead of reserving in the more usual way, given that Mr Assaad had been in custody on remand for 908 days and the non-parole period his Honour proposed to fix was due to expire in the next few days if it had not expired already. Accordingly, sentencing him on the day of the plea “would allow him immediately to take the steps necessary to apply to the Adult Parole Board for release on parole, which is a process that can take some time”. His Honour followed up with a more detailed 30-page judgment six days later.

### **11.2.22.7 Sentencing for being accessory to murder**

In *R v MRN* [2010] VSC 671 the offender, aged 15y8m at the time of the offence and 16y at the time of sentence, pleaded guilty to being an accessory to murder. Coghlan J described his involvement as a “reasonably serious example of the offence”. The offender provided substantial assistance to police with their investigations and provided an undertaking to give evidence against the principal offender. Having regard to the matters in ss.360, 361 & 362 of the CYFA – which s.586 of that Act authorises – his Honour convicted the offender and placed him on probation for a period of 18 months.

In *DPP v Hamka* [2022] VSC 609 the offender was found guilty after a trial on the charge of assisting an offender following a murder by secreting for a significant period of time a handgun used in a double murder outside the Love Machine nightclub in Prahran: see *DPP v Elliott & Fares (Sentence)* [2022] VSC 554. Mr Hamka had a limited prior criminal history but significant subsequent conviction for crimes of violence. He also had a supportive family background and reasonable prospects of rehabilitation. Describing the offending as “extremely serious” and involving “high moral culpability”, Tinney J sentenced him to IMP5½y on the assisting charge and IMP2½y on a charge of being a prohibited person in charge of a firearm to which he had pleaded guilty. With partial concurrency the TES was IMP6y/4y.

### **11.2.22.8 Sentencing for homicide by firearm**

Inserted in 2020, s.5B of the *Crimes Act 1958* defines the offence of homicide by firearm as follows: “A person who, by discharging a firearm, causes the death of another person in circumstances that constitute manslaughter is guilty of homicide by firearm and liable to level 2 imprisonment (25 years maximum).”

Section 5C of the *Crimes Act 1958* provides that nothing in s.5A or 5B is to be taken to provide that conduct that constitutes any one of the following offences is, because it constitutes that offence, incapable of constituting another of those offences—

(a) manslaughter;

(b) child homicide;

(c) homicide by firearm.

In *DPP v Bell* [2024] VSC 576 the 31 year old Aboriginal offender had pleaded guilty to a charge of homicide by firearm. It was accepted by the prosecution that the offender did not possess the firearm at any time. By his plea, the offender accepted that he entered into an agreement, arrangement or understanding with a cooffender to confront and threaten the victim with a loaded firearm. The cooffender had pleaded guilty to manslaughter and had been sentenced to IMP9y6m/5y6m. Noting that the standard sentence for homicide by firearm was IMP13y, Incerti J imposed a reduced sentence of IMP7y6m/4y6m applying at [59]-[65] parity principles and at [44]-[48] the principles in *Bugmy v The Queen* (2013) 249 CLR 571 [see **section 11.2.12** above] and because the offender had entered an early guilty plea and had genuine remorse.

In *R v Alhassan* [2025] VSC 201 the 18 year old offender had pleaded guilty – in a late plea – to homicide by firearm and handling stolen property. The deceased was shot in the chest by the offender in the course of an aggravated home invasion by multiple masked and armed offenders. The offender later sold a stolen firearm to covert operatives. The offender (who was aged 21 at the time of sentencing) had no criminal antecedents and reasonable prospects of rehabilitation. Beale J imposed a sentence of IMP12y on the homicide charge and IMP2y of which 1y was cumulative on the handling charge, resulting in a TES IMP13y/8y. At [65]-[67] Beale J explained why he had imposed a substantially longer sentence than was imposed on 18 & 19 year old co-offenders who had pleaded guilty much earlier to manslaughter on a complicity basis: see *DPP v Mohamed* [2024] VSC 318; *DPP v Sisal* [2024] VSC 589 summarized in **section 11.2.22.1** above. Mr Mohamed was the driver of the getaway car and did not actually enter the deceased’s home was sentenced to 4y YJC (presentence incarceration not counted as time served). Mr Sisal had entered the house but was not the shooter.

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### **11.2.23 Sentencing for culpable driving / dangerous driving causing death/serious injury**

### **A CULPABLE DRIVING**

In *R v* *Wooden* [2006] VSCA 97 at [1] Callaway JA, with whom Chernov & Vincent JJA agreed, said of **culpable driving**:

“There are few crimes that cause such suffering as culpable driving causing death. In the majority of cases young people are involved. The deceased is cut off in the prime of life. The victims are not limited to the deceased but include family and close friends. The offender is often a person of otherwise blameless character who behaves irresponsibly on one occasion with terrible consequences. In most cases factors personal to the offender have to be moderated in the sentencing process in the interests of general deterrence, even where specific deterrence is of little moment. Parliament has increased the maximum penalty on several occasions, the community is increasingly intolerant of drunken and dangerous driving and the courts have rightly responded to those concerns. Ten years ago a penalty of six or seven years’ imprisonment would have been regarded as very severe, if not excessive, but that was before Parliament increased the maximum penalty again, from 15 years’ to 20 years’ imprisonment, and the courts began to liken the offence to manslaughter.”

In *DPP v Clarke* [2005] VSCA 2 the Court of Appeal allowed a Director’s appeal against a sentence of 5 years imprisonment with a non-parole period of 2¾ years on a 22 year old man who had pleaded guilty to a count of culpable driving (causing the death of his girl-friend) and 2 counts of negligently causing serious injury (to his cousin and a friend). The respective sentences were 4½ years, 12 months & 6 months and 6 months of the 2nd sentence was ordered to be cumulative on the first. The offences arose from a single-vehicle collision shortly prior to which the offender had a blood alcohol concentration of at least 0.15% and was driving at a speed of 158kph in a 60kph zone. In holding that the sentence was manifestly inadequate, Nettle JA (with whom Vincent JA & Cummins AJA agreed) said at [12]-[14]:

“[12] First, the starting point in this case, as in every case of culpable driving, is that the offence is a species of involuntary manslaughter, and it must be treated as such: *R v O’Connor* [1999] VSCA 55 at [19] per Winneke P. The community will not tolerate the taking of human life by acts of gross negligence of the sort that occurred in this case and it expects that those who commit such offences will be sternly punished.

Secondly, and whatever be the reasons for the respondent’s conduct, his culpability was high. To drive while intoxicated would have been bad enough, but to drive at more than three times the legal blood alcohol concentration limit and at a speed of almost 160 kph (which is to say at a speed of almost 100 miles per hour) in a 60 kph zone was to make death and serious injury odds on probabilities.

Thirdly, despite that culpable driving is a tragedy for all concerned, including the parents and loved ones of victims and offenders alike, and despite that no amount of imprisonment or other punishment can turn the clock back to the way things might have been, the frightful consequences of culpable driving and the propensity of young people - particularly young men of otherwise good character - to commit the offence, demand that denunciation and general deterrence be at the forefront of the sentencing synthesis: *R v Cody* (1997) 25 MVR 325, BC9703006 at 10; *R v McGrath* [1999] VSCA 197 at [18]; *DPP v Caldarera* [2003] VSCA 140 at [9] – [13]; *DPP v Scott* (2003) 6 VR 217 at 223; cf. *R v Scholes* [1999] 1 VR 337 at 346[18].

Fourthly, and for those reasons, it must be recognised that youth, an absence of prior offences, general good character and other mitigating considerations, cannot play the same role in sentencing for culpable driving as they may in other cases.

Judged according to those principles, a sentence of only four and a half years’ imprisonment, for the sort culpable driving that was committed by the respondent, presents as grossly inadequate.

[13] In this case there is then the further consideration that the offence of culpable driving and the offences of causing serious injury were separate offences, albeit arising out of the same substratum of facts, and thus that the sentences imposed on the counts of causing serious injury should have reflected the seriousness of those offences, standing alone…

[14] There is as well the question of cumulation. While a judge is not bound in every case of culpable driving to order cumulation of the sentences imposed in respect of multiple counts – as has been said, in the long run the question will often be whether the total effective sentence is manifestly inadequate to the circumstances of the case (*DPP v Whittaker* (2002) 5 VR 508 at 515 [31]) – in this case the total effective sentence of only five years is indicative of a need for a greater degree of cumulation.”

The Court of Appeal increased the sentences to 6 years, 2 years and 1 year and ordered that 9 months of the 2nd sentence and 3 months of the 3rd sentence be cumulative on the 1st, giving a total effective sentence of 7 years. A non-parole period of 4 years was fixed.

In allowing a Director’s appeal in *DPP v Church* [2005] VSCA 8, Vincent JA (with whom Nettle JA & Cummins AJA agreed) said at [26]-[28]:

“[26] Culpable driving causing death is now viewed by the courts as a species of involuntary manslaughter and carries the same maximum penalty as the offence of manslaughter. It did not always do so, but the maximum applicable penalty has been raised on several occasions, as the terrible and irreversible consequences of its commission have become the subject of increasing concern and public awareness in this society.

[27] There have been continuing endeavours made through highly publicised campaigns to ensure that motorists remain conscious of the need to exercise proper care on the roads, and to pay due regard to the safety of others. The risks involved in driving at excessive speeds or whilst affected by alcohol or drugs have been emphasised time and time again. Few, if any, I believe could claim to be unaware of these constantly repeated messages. The assumption can be safely made that the respondent was not one of that tiny group. As Tadgell JA pointed out in *R v. Scholes* [1999] 2 VR 337 at 346, the offence of culpable driving created by s.318 of the *Crimes Act 1958* is essentially one against public safety and its purpose is to deter, by criminal sanction, the unnecessary and avoidable killing by motor vehicle drivers.

[28] Deterrence being its principal objective, it follows that general deterrence and, where appropriate, specific deterrence must assume great significance as sentencing considerations in such cases, even to the extent of substantially reducing the weight that can be given to factors that would otherwise operate powerfully in mitigation.”

In *R v Campbell* [2005] VSCA 225 at [18] per Eames JA said:

“The seriousness of the offence of culpable driving causing death has been emphasised in many decisions of this Court. See for example, *R v O’Connor* [1999] VSCA 55; *DPP v Solomon* [2002] VSCA 106; *DPP v Walden* [2003] VSCA 139. Nonetheless, in *R v Leesley* [2001] VSCA 90 at [14], Winneke P observed that in culpable driving cases involving allegations of speed and inadvertence, sentences not exceeding five years had not infrequently been imposed by courts in this State [the maximum penalty increased to 20 years imprisonment in September 1997]. In more recent years, too, there are instances of sentences of five years or less, in some of which there were additional features of aggravation apart from speed and inadvertence. See for example *R v Menzies* [2001] VSCA 22; *DPP v Miller* [2005] VSCA 7; *R v Satalich* [2004] VSCA 132; *R v McLachlan* [2004] VSCA 87; *DPP v Caldarera* [2003] VSCA 140; *DPP v Scott* (2003) 6 VR 217; (2002) 4 VR 457; *DPP v Whittaker* (2002) 5 V.R. 508. Statistics published recently by the Sentencing Advisory Council [“*Sentencing Trends for Culpable Driving Causing Death in Victoria*”, September 2005, No.6] indicate that in the period from 1998-1999 to 2003-2004 the average length of sentences of imprisonment for this offence was 4.9 years, but the Council also noted that there had been a steady increase in the average length of sentences in that time. Thus, in 1999-2000 sentences were on average 4.1 years but by 2002-2003 the average length was 5.7 years. Of course, those statistics include all cases of culpable driving causing death, embracing the whole range of criminal conduct which might constitute the offence.”

And at [38] Nettle JA said in reference to *R v Scott* [2003] 141 A. Crim. R. 323:

“[T]he relevance of Scott for present purposes, like the earlier authorities upon which it was based, is that it makes plain that a sentencing judge is to proceed in any case of culpable driving upon the basis that the community will not tolerate the taking of human life by acts of gross negligence and that it expects that those who commit such offences will be sternly punished: *R v O’Connor* [1999] VSCA 55 at [19] per Winneke P. In the circumstances of this case, the judge was plainly right to conclude that the requirements of general deterrence dictated a substantial gaol sentence.”

See also *R v Rees* [2005] VSCA 25 at [13]; *R v Kennedy* [2006] VSCA 77 at [11]; *R v Smith* [2006] VSCA 92 at [37]-[38]; *R v Clark* [2010] VSCA 64; *DPP v Chaplin* [2010] VSCA 145; *McGrath v R* [2018] VSCA 134.

In *R v Audino* [2007] VSCA 318 at [43] Maxwell ACJ, with whom Ashley & Neave JJA agreed, said:

“General deterrence is a very powerful consideration in sentencing for culpable driving. See eg *The Queen v Stockdale* [2002] VSCA 202 [37], [42] (Charles JA); *DPP v Di Nunzio* [2004] VSCA 78, [23] (Batt JA), [32] (Vincent JA). In relation to the count of culpable driving causing death, I would impose a sentence of six years’ imprisonment. Sentences for this offence vary widely, according to the circumstances. See *DPP v Johnstone* (2006) 16 VR 75, 86-88 [35] (Warren CJ). I treat as of particular relevance the instances (set out in the recent judgment of this Court in *The Queen v Martin* [2007] VSCA 291, [55]-[56]) of sentencing for culpable driving where the driver had a high blood alcohol reading and one or more prior convictions for driving with excess alcohol in the blood. I refer also to *DPP v Wareham* (2002) 5 VR 439, where the driver had a blood alcohol concentration of 0.161 and two prior convictions (10 and 14 years earlier, respectively) for driving with a blood alcohol concentration exceeding 0.05%, each reading being more than double the statutory minimum. The driver was convicted of one count of culpable driving and sentenced to five years’ imprisonment with a minimum of two years and six months. On the Crown’s appeal, and with a discount for double jeopardy, the sentence was increased to six years with a minimum of four.”

However, in *Erik Fuller (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2013] VSCA 186 [2013] VSCA 186 the Court of Appeal (Ashley & Hansen JJA) said at [35] & [82]:

[35] “By reason of the appellant’s age at time of offending, his level of intellectual and psychological disability at that time, and the injuries which he sustained, general deterrence cannot be regarded as a factor of any significance in the sentencing synthesis.”

[82] “[L]ack of restraint in consequence of the combination of the appellant’s premorbid state and the effects of his head injury provide an explanation, though not an excuse, for his offending before, at the time ofl, and subsequent to the instant offending. Specific deterrence can have only a limited role to play in the sentencing synthesis.”

The unusual circumstances which gave rise to the above comments involved a young boy who had received a sentence of IMP 5y10m/3y on one charge of cuplable driving causing death, one charge of negligently causing serious injury, one charge of theft of a motor vehicle and 2 charges of theft of petrol on a boy aged 14 years 10 months at the time of the offending. He had low level intellectual functioning and psychological problems and had sustained a severe head injury in the accident giving rise to a permanently increased intellectual deficit. After the appellant had engaged in ‘fishtailing’, he lost control of the vehicle and it rolled over a number of times. Two occupants were thrown out. A 16 year old boy was killed and a 16 year old girl suffered injuries including fractures of the pelvis and spine. Ashley JA (with whom Hansen JA agreed) said at [24]:

“The appellant's driving which brought about the death and injury was evidently negligent to the requisite degree; and as well alcohol played some part in the happening of the accident. The appellant's manner of driving exhibited the hallmarks of an immature, irresponsible and thrill seeking young man, somewhat alcohol‑affected, showing off to a group of his peers. Although the vehicle was not overloaded – it was a seven seater vehicle – the two passengers who were ejected were not wearing seat restraints. The entirety of the circumstances were a recipe for the disaster which in fact occurred. By that time there were seven young people in the vehicle. They ranged in age from 14, which was the applicant's age, to 17.”

The Court of Appeal allowed the appeal and imposed sentences of IMP3y on the charge of culpable driving, IMP18m on the charge of negligently causing serious injury and IMP6m on the charge of theft of motor vehicle. 8m of the sentence of negligently causing serious injury and 1m of the sentence of theft of motor vehicle was cumulated on the 3y sentence for cuplable driving. The total effective sentence was 3y9m/1y9m. The Court recommended that the Adult Parole Board make an order under s.471(1) of the CYFA directing that the applicant be transferred to serve all of part of his sentence in a Youth Justice Centre.

In *DPP v Miller* [2005] VSCA 7 the Court of Appeal dismissed a Director’s appeal against a sentence of 3 years & 3 months imprisonment with a non-parole period of 1 year 7 months imposed on a 41 year old U.S. citizen who had been on a short visit to Australia. Driving on the Great Ocean Road at 87kph in a 100kph zone and with a blood alcohol concentration of 0.10%, he had proceeded across double lines on to the wrong side of the road and had hit and killed a motorcyclist. The factors which had affected the offender’s driving were alcohol {*Cowan* (1997) 25 MVR 12; *Toombs* [2001] VSCA 144; *Wareham* (2002) 5 VR 439 and *Calwell* [2004] VSCA 40}, fatigue {*Rudebeck* [1999] VSCA 155; *Scott* (2003) 6 VR 217 and *Satalich* [2004] VSCA 132} and counter-intuitive driving requirements {*Guariglia* [2001] VSCA 27; *Toombs* [2001] VSCA 144 and *Stockdale* [2002] VSCA 202}. Vincent & Nettle JJA considered that the sentence was manifestly inadequate but declined to interfere in the exercise of their residual discretion, Nettle JA basing this on the “very exceptional circumstances of the case”. Cummins AJA disagreed, saying at [34]: “The sentence imposed, and the minimum term, are at the bottom of the range; but in my view in all the circumstances are justifiably so.”

In *R v Tran* (2002) 4 VR 457 [2002] VSCA 52 the offender, while driving a stolen car at speed under the influence of heroin, caused a collision with another car, killing two of its occupants, seriously injuring the other three and seriously injuring the passenger in her car. The passenger had encouraged the offender to drive faster to elude a police car that was chasing them. Following *R v Wright* [1999] 3 VR 355 & *R v McGrath* [1999] VSCA 17 and commenting on *R v Howarth* (2000) 1 VR 593, the Court of Appeal said at [34]:

“[T]he complicity of a victim constitutes the absence of a circumstance of aggravation, albeit a circumstance of aggravation that is commonly present…It is a matter for the judge, within the limits of a sound discretion, to decide what weight (if any) to attribute to the victim’s complicity…Similarly, not too much should be read into the labelling of innocence as a circumstance of aggravation. Conceptually it is so, but its significance depends on the facts of the particular case. For example, a young mother who had killed her ‘innocent’ child would not ordinarily attract the same denunciation as a drunken driver who had killed a pedestrian.”

In *Guseli v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 29 at [5] Kyrou & Weinberg JJA and Taylor AJA said:

“The elements of the offence of culpable driving causing death are: first, the accused was driving a motor vehicle; secondly, the driving was culpable; and thirdly, the culpable driving caused the death of another person. The second element can be established either by proving that the accused drove the vehicle recklessly or negligently. Negligence means a failure unjustifiably and to a gross degree to observe the standard of care which a reasonable person would have observed in all the circumstances of the case. The third element requires that the accused’s driving must have been ‘a substantial and operative cause’ of the victim’s death: *R v Rudebeck* [1999] VSCA 155 [2], [47], [66], [87]. The accused’s acts do not need to be the sole cause of the death; a person can be criminally liable for a death that has multiple causes even if he or she is not responsible for all of them: *Royall v The Queen* (1991) 172 CLR 378, 398; *R v Lee* (2005) 12 VR 249, 252 [14].

A primary issue in this case was the weight to be attached to the deceased’s failure to wear a seat belt. At [40]-[41] & [44] their Honours said:

“The parties made extensive submissions on the applicability in this case of the principles set out in *Spanjol v The Queen* (2016) 55 VR 350 concerning the relevance of a victim’s conduct to the exercise of the sentencing discretion…Prior to *Spanjol*, there were two inconsistent lines of authority on the relevance of a victim’s conduct to the sentencing synthesis in relation to motor vehicle offences. The leading cases for each of the lines of authority were *Howarth v The Queen* (2000) 1 VR 593 and *Tran v The Queen* (2002) 4 VR 457… *Spanjol* involved a charge of negligently causing seriosus injury. The victim, who was a passenger in the offender’s vehicle, was not wearing a seatbelt. The offender was significantly intoxicated and drove at between 79 and 85 kilometres per hour in a 70‑kilometre zone. The Court stated that the unresolved conflict between *Howarth* and *Tran* enabled the Court to decide the question whether a victim’s conduct is relevant to sentencing for ‘offences such as these … afresh, starting from first principles’: (2016) 55 VR 350, 360 [37]. The Court summarised its conclusions as follows:

1. In a case of negligently causing serious injury by driving, the finding of guilt (or plea of guilty) establishes that the offender’s driving was criminally negligent and that the negligent driving caused the victim’s serious injury.
   * + - 1. The sentencing court will treat as its starting point that the offender was solely responsible for the manner of his driving and that the manner of his driving was the sole cause of the serious injury. But the evidence may support a qualification of one or both of these propositions.
         2. As to responsibility for the negligent driving, the offender may be able to establish that some other person (whether or not the victim) and/or some external circumstance was partly responsible for the manner of the driving.
         3. As to the causal link with the serious injury, the offender may be able to establish that there was an additional factor, outside the offender’s control, which was also a material cause of the serious injury.
         4. The language of ‘complicity’ should be avoided in this context. ‘Complicity’ is a technical term, with a well-defined meaning. It connotes the attribution of criminal responsibility to a co-offender. No such question arises in either of the circumstances under consideration.
         5. Instead, the language of ‘reduced responsibility’ should be used to describe the first kind of qualification and the language of ‘other contributing causes’ to describe the second kind of qualification: (2016) 55 VR 350, 352–3 [5].”

Ultimately the Court of Appeal reduced the appellant’s sentence for culpable driving from IMP11y/7y to IMP9y/6y, holding at [76] that the weight to be given to the deceased’s “failure to wear a seatbelt must be relatively modest”.

See also *R v Cowden* [2006] VSCA 220 at [18]-[32]; *Shields v The Queen* [2011] VSCA 386 at [14]-[18] & Annexure; *George v The Queen* (2017) 80 MVR 436; *DPP v Hennessy* [2022] VSC 244.

In *Paszynk v The Queen* [2014] VSCA 87 at [43]-[59] Priest JA (with whom Redlich JA expressly agreed), after an extensive review of the authorities, held that culpable driving by driving recklessly is not necessarily a more serious form of the offence than the other three forms.

In *DPP v Ciantar* [2006] VSCA 263 the respondent driver was said to have had a blood alcohol concentration of between 0.128% & 0.166 at the time he hit and killed a pedestrian. A Full Bench of the Court of Appeal, while holding that a sentence of 4 years imprisonment with a non-parole period of 19 months was “very light”, declined to interfere bearing in mind the principle of double jeopardy. At [168] the Full Bench (Warren CJ, Chernov, Nettle, Neave & Redlich JJA) approved and applied the sentencing principles for culpable driving which Redlich JA had shortly before restated in *DPP v Gany* [2006] VSCA 148 at [35]:

“Serious driving offences frequently involve offenders who are of generally good character and who have excellent prospects for reformation. No-one likes sending such people to gaol but there has been much publicity about the consequences for those who choose to drive their motor vehicles in a criminally negligent or reckless manner causing serious injury or endangering other members of the public. This Court has said on numerous occasions, frequently when dealing with offences of culpable driving and negligently causing injury, that those who put lives at risk through grossly negligent driving can expect to receive heavy penalties influenced by the sentencing principle of general deterrence. In such circumstances, sound prospects of rehabilitation will not lead to any significant amelioration of the prominence of general deterrence in the sentencing process. Denunciation and general deterrence must be at the forefront of the sentencing synthesis.”

In *DPP v Hill* [2012] VSCA 144 the respondent had been convicted of two charges of culpable driving causing death, one charge of reckless conduct endangering life and two charges of reckless conduct placing persons in danger of serious injury and had been sentenced to three years detention in a youth justice centre. He was 18 years old when the offences were committed and 19 years old when he was sentenced. In a 50kph zone he had been driving at 97-102kph and had failed to give way at an intersection, causing the deaths of two persons in the other car as well as injuries to three others. The respondent had also admitted that he had been driving fast, “cutting laps” and “sort of showing off” prior to the collision. A DPP appeal against sentence was allowed and the respondent was re-sentenced to IMP 6y/3y6m with a recommendation that the respondent be transferred to serve part or all of his sentence in a youth justice centre. At [44]-[45] Neave & Osborne JJA & King AJA said:

“Numerous appellate decisions have considered sentences imposed on young offenders with a good family background, unblemished work records and no prior convictions, who have been convicted of culpable driving: see, eg, *DPP v Rongonui* (2007) 17 VR 571; *R v Cody* (1997) 25 MVR 325; *R v Williamson* (2009) 21 VR 330. Such cases have emphasised that mitigatory factors of this kind do not ordinarily outweigh the important emphasis which must be placed on deterrence and denunciation in sentences for offending of this nature.

As this Court recognised in *DPP v Neethling* (2009) 22 VR 466, 475 [43] (Maxwell P, Vincent JA and Hargrave AJA), driving is an ‘adult responsibility’. That responsibility involves the necessity to make adult decisions and choices, and an awareness that a failure to do so will result in the same consequences that apply to mature adults. Those who have the privilege of holding a drivers licence must ensure that they make decisions carefully and responsibly, because the failure to do so may have catastrophic consequences, including the death of others.”

In *Dale Cairns (a Pseudonym) v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 333 the Court of Appeal (Priest, Beach & Weinberg JJA) allowed an appeal against a sentence of IMP8y/5y imposed on the appellant on charges of culpable driving causing death and 9 associated offences in circumstances where the appellant was driving at high speed to evade police and was drug affected. The appellant was aged 17 at the time of the offences and 18 at the time of sentence. He had a mild intellectual disability evidenced by an IQ of 63 and what the Court described as an “unfortunate upbringing”. He had, “since the age of 11 years, been regularly before the Children’s Court and his record demonstrates that his conduct has, over a number of years, been remarkably anti-social”. At [38] the Court of Appeal concluded that the sentencing discretion had miscarried in this case:

“[T]he judge purported to sentence on all of the charges apart from [the culpable driving] charge 5 as if — because of the operation of s 362 — general deterrence was not a relevant sentencing consideration, yet a number of the individual sentences are at odds with that expressed intention. As we have noted, imprisonment is not an option available to the Children’s Court. And we acknowledge that detention in a youth justice centre cannot readily be compared to confinement in an adult prison. But we consider the conclusion inescapable that, had the applicant been sentenced in the Children’s Court on those charges otherwise within that Court’s jurisdiction, he would not have attracted sentences of detention of anything like the same length as the sentences of imprisonment imposed on him by the sentencing judge. In particular, we consider it to be unlikely that the three charges of theft (charges 1, 2 and 7), and the charge of failing to stop and render assistance (charge 6) would have attracted sentences of detention as long as the periods of imprisonment imposed. We also note that the judge imposed the maximum sentence of imprisonment available on the summary charge of unlicenced driving, in circumstances where there appears to be no justification for having done so.”

The sentencing discretion having miscarried, it fell to the Court of Appeal to re-sentence the appellant. At [42]-[43] the Court of Appeal said:

“In resentencing the applicant, the fact that this was a very bad case of culpable driving cannot be ignored. The victim impact statements speak eloquently of the effect that the applicant’s outrageous conduct has had. Further, we acknowledge that for the purposes of sentencing a youthful offender, generally speaking, the greater the seriousness of the crime, the more the mitigating influence of youth is diminished (although not completely eliminated). In imposing sentence on the applicant, we principally take into account in mitigation that he was a child when he offended; his cognitive disability; his unfortunate upbringing; and his early pleas of guilty.”

A total effective sentence of IMP6y/4y was imposed in lieu, including a sentence of IMP6y on the culpable driving charge, the sentences on all other charges being concurrent.

In *DPP v Huby* [2019] VSCA 106, in dismissing the Director’s appeal against a sentence of IMP5y/1y on a charge of culpable driving in which the victim was the respondent’s 4 year old daughter, the Court of Appeal said at [67]-[68]:

“It would be hard to imagine an offence of culpable driving which could be viewed as being very much lower on the scale of objective gravity than this case. On the findings made by the sentencing judge, the respondent dozed off while driving within the speed limit, unaffected by alcohol or drugs, and with no prior warnings of his excessive fatigue alerting him to the need to pull over to the side of the road. In truth, this was a case of little more than ‘momentary inattention’ brought about by sleep deprivation.

The mitigating factors that were present made this a wholly extraordinary case. It called for a significant measure of leniency, even putting to one side the relevance of mercy in the exercise of this sentencing discretion. It would be hard to imagine a more powerful case for mercy than presented itself here.”

In *Walsh v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 146 the Court of Appeal allowed an appeal against sentence by an interstate truck driver who had pleaded guilty to one charge of culpable driving causing death and three charges of negligently causing serious injury. The victims were the driver and 3 passengers in a Firefly coach which had run into one of the truck’s trailers which had overturned across the highway after the truck driver had oversteered when his truck drifted to the left off the highway. Subsequent analysis of the blood sample taken from the applicant revealed it to contain 0.52 milligrams per litre of methylamphetamine (“a ‘high’ level”) and 0.12 milligrams per litre of amphetamine. The applicant subsequently made admissions that he should not have been driving, he was fatigued, his senses were dull and that he handled the truck in a way it should not have been handled. The Court held that the base sentences of 8y6m, 2y10m & 3y2m were not manifestly excessive but that TES IMP14y/8y6m was. The TES was reduced to IMP11y/7y by reducing the level of cumulation.

In *Mohinder Singh v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 178 the 49 year old truck driver had pleaded guilty to a number of charges including 4 counts of culpable driving on which he had been sentenced to IMP12y with 3y part cumulation on charges 2-4. In allowing his appeal on the ground of the Crown’s belated acceptance of the appellant’s offer to give evidence against a coaccused, the Court of Appeal resentenced him on each culpable driving count to IMP10y with 2y6m part cumulation on charges 2-4. The TES on the 10 charges the subject of the plea was reduced from IMP22y/18y6m to 18y6m/14y6m. At [51]-[55] & [58]‑[59] the Court of Appeal said:

[51] “We agree with the sentencing judge that these are serious examples of the serious offence of culpable driving causing death, itself a species of the offence of manslaughter: *R v O’Connor* [1999] VSCA 55, [19] (Winneke P, Brooking and Phillips JJA agreeing).

[52] This Court, as his Honour did, has viewed the CCTV footage of the appellant’s driving in the kilometres leading up to its tragic culmination. We endorse his Honour’s observation that ‘[i]t is chilling.’ The driving is different to other serious examples of this offence where speed, or recklessness, or intoxication of some sort, or some combination of these factors, produce truly dreadful offending. We consider that, whilst different to many other examples that can be readily brought to mind, the appellant’s offending in this case can also be appropriately described as truly dreadful offending. He had not slept for days; he had used ice repeatedly; he was hallucinating and knew that he was and he knew that the driving required of him involved navigating a twenty-tonne prime mover and trailer through greater metropolitan Melbourne over a round trip of about 150 kilometres. The appellant’s driving recorded from Eastlink onwards was simply egregious. He veered between lanes; he drifted into the emergency lane repeatedly; he caused another motorist to accurately predict that he would kill. And he did.

[53] In resentencing the appellant, we take into account all factors that were before the sentencing judge, including the principle of totality. We agree with the sentencing judge, essentially for the same reasons, that there was no causal connexion between the appellant’s mental state and the offending. Further, even if such a connexion were made out, it would make little, if any, difference to the ultimate sentence, because of the nature of the offence, which involved both gross negligence and driving under the influence of drugs. We agree that Verdins35 principles one to four are not engaged, but that principle five is engaged as we consider the sentence we impose will weigh more heavily on the appellant than it would on a prisoner without his mental health issues.

[54] We accept the factors in mitigation that were accepted by his Honour — instant repentance, early plea of guilty indicative of remorse and carrying a high utilitarian value, cooperation with the investigation, and some guarded rehabilitation prospects.

[55] It will be recalled that the sentencing judge accepted as a mitigating factor, albeit one of limited practical value, that the appellant offered to give evidence as to relevant events. As we have explained, the belated acceptance of that offer has placed it into a different mitigatory category carrying with it significantly more practical value and thus weight, than at the time of sentence…

[58] We also take into account that the appellant remains the principal offender and that he is proposing to give evidence against an alleged accomplice. We must bear steadily in mind that any ‘cooperation discount’ must not frustrate the principle of adequate punishment for the offender: *Mejia* [2020] VSCA 141.

[59] Adequate punishment for the driving offending requires us also to keep steadily in mind the moral culpability of the appellant, the appalling consequences of that offending to the victims and their loved ones, the need for deterrence, both specific and general, and the need for denunciation. We also must consider the maximum penalties for the offending conduct, and the standard sentence of eight years for the culpable driving charges.”

See also *DPP v King* [2008] VSCA 151 at [34]-[36]; *R v Harris* [2009] VSCA 287 at [12]; *DPP v Reid* [2020] VSCA 247; *Victorsen v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 248; *R v Singh* [2021] VSC 182; *Singh v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 161; *DPP v Currie* [2021] VSCA 272; *R v McStay* [2022] VSC 268; *DPP v Tulloch* [2022] VSC 352; *Peter Buckley v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 152; *Hennessey v The King* [2024] VSCA 2.

### **B DANGEROUS DRIVING CAUSING DEATH/SERIOUS INJURY**

In *DPP v Oates* [2007] VSCA 59 the Court of Appeal upheld a sentence of a community based order imposed on a truck driver who had pleaded guilty to one count of **dangerous driving causing death** and 3 counts of **dangerous driving causing serious injury**. At [22]-[23] Neave JA, with whom Warren CJ & Nettle JA agreed, said:

“In this case her Honour was faced with a difficult sentencing task. I accept [the prosecution] submission that general deterrence must be given considerable weight in *sentencing an offender for dangerous driving causing death or serious injury. Members of* the public must recognise that a person who kills or injures another while driving dangerously is likely to receive a significant term of imprisonment. As the New South Wales Court of Criminal Appeal said in *R v Whyte* (2002) 55 NSWLR 252 at 286 at [214] per Spigelman CJ, a custodial sentence will usually be appropriate for an offence of this kind, except in cases where the offender’s level of moral culpability is low.

However, as her Honour recognised in her reasons, there is no suggestion here that the respondent deliberately engaged in conduct which endangered others. Nor was there any suggestion that he was grossly negligent or reckless or that he decided to go on driving having become aware of that he might kill or injure others. He was not affected by alcohol or drugs and he was driving within the speed limit. [The prosecutor below] acknowledged that the cause of the accident was ‘in all probability…a momentary sleep, or perhaps a moment of inattention. And that’s the dangerousness, rather than a fatigue that justifies a higher charge’.”

In *Bradley Nicholson v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 146 the Court of Appeal upheld a sentence of IMP2y9m on a charge of dangerous driving causing death and IMP1y9m on two charges of dangerous driving causing serious injury – resulting in a TES of IMP 3y9m/1y9m – imposed on a 22 year old driver who had a mild intellectual disability with severe receptive and expressive language impairment as well as auditory processing deficiencies who had proved – as predicted by a psychologist – to be extremely vulnerable to exploitation and manipulation within the prison system. At [30]-[32] Whelan & McLeish JJA – referring to the cases of *DPP v Whittaker* (2002) 5 VR 508 & *DPP v Neethling* (2009) 11 VR 466 – said:

[30] “As the judge observed, these cases indicate that a youthful driver is subject to the same obligations as a driver as an adult. But neither of those decisions supports a conclusion that youth is not a mitigating factor in respect of driving offences. In *Whittaker*, as the judge set out, O’Bryan AJA stated at 514 that a young person must accept adult responsibility for their actions behind the wheel of a motor vehicle, but he then repeated with approval the following observation of Callaway JA in *R v Sherpa* (2001) 34 MVR 345, 348 regarding youth and culpable driving:

‘General deterrence must usually be emphasised in the punishment of this offence and there is correspondingly less scope than in the case of some other crimes for leniency on account of an offender’s youth. That does not mean that there is no scope for youth and concomitant prospects of rehabilitation to influence the disposition.’

[31] In *Neethling*, the Court stated at 475 that driving was an adult responsibility which must be discharged accordingly. The offender, who was in year 12 and had held his licence for 12 days, had abandoned that responsibility and so his culpability was to be viewed as high. However, the Court went on to consider the relevance of the offender’s youth at greater length, concluding as follows at 477:

‘It is precisely because of the tendency of young drivers to drive dangerously that general deterrence must be regarded as of great importance, and youth must be given relatively less weight. In the present case, the victims were themselves young people. The importance of general deterrence is to try and prevent the very kind of damage which occurred here.’

[32] This passage illustrates two things. First, youth remains relevant to an assessment of moral culpability in driving cases but is given relatively less weight. Secondly, the reason why that is so is that there is a well-known tendency for young drivers to drive dangerously, such that general deterrence is of great importance. In other words, the rationale for the different treatment of youth is referable to the need to discourage young people from driving dangerously. Both points indicate that, if the sentencing judge regarded youth as being irrelevant to moral culpability, and applied that reasoning to the applicant’s intellectual disability, he fell into error.”

In *Woldesilassie v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 285 the Court of Appeal upheld – though categorizing it as “stern” – a sentence of IMP3y6m on a charge of dangerous driving causing death and IMP2y on a charge of dangerous driving causing serious injury – resulting in a TES of IMP 4y6m/3y – imposed on a 40 year old driver whose moral culpability was assessed as “higher end of low range” and who ran down two pedestrians after a prolonged period of 13½ seconds of inattention to his driving.

In *DPP v Armstrong* [2022] VSC 827 the accused – aged 74 at the time of the offence and 78 at the time of sentence – had been operating an unseaworthy boat at Portland and his 61 year old friend was killed when the boat capsized and he was trapped beneath the hull and drowned. Noting the accused’s low moral culpability, plea of guilty, remorse, lack of prior convictions, history of service to the community and poor mental health, Champion J imposed a 2y CCO and a $5,000 fine on a plea of guilty to one count of dangerous driving causing death.

In *DPP v Christopher Browne* [2023] VSCA 13 the respondent’s two year old son, who was an unrestrained passenger in a buggy the respondent was driving on a rural paddock, was thrown and killed when the buggy rolled over. The respondent’s sister, who was also a passenger, received minor injuries. Initially, the respondent was charged with culpable driving causing death. He applied for a sentence indication pursuant to s 208 CPA in the event that he pleaded guilty to a charge of dangerous driving causing death and a charge of reckless conduct placing a person in danger of serious injury. A judge of the County Court gave a sentence indication that, if the respondent were to plead guilty to the two proposed charges, a custodial sentence would not be imposed. On the same day, a new indictment was filed over and the respondent pleaded guilty to a charge of dangerous driving causing death and a charge of reckless conduct placing a person in danger of serious injury. The judge sentenced the respondent to an aggregate sentence of a 3 year CCO with a condition that he complete 250 hours of unpaid community work. The judge also cancelled the respondent’s driver’s licence and disqualified him from obtaining a further licence for 18 months.

On appeal by the DPP, the Court of Appeal allowed an appeal by the DPP. Refusing to exercise its residual discretion, the Court resentenced the respondent to an aggregate sentence of 15 months’ imprisonment for both charges and fixed a non-parole period of 6 months, albeit noting at [103] that “the present case has unique features which limit the extent, if any, to which the sentence we will impose is capable of providing assistance in future cases”.

At [40]-[47] Kyrou, T Forrest & Kennedy JJA summarised the principles relevant to the offence of dangerous driving causing death as follows:

[40] “In *Stephens v The Queen* (2016) 50 VR 740, 745 [21], this Court stated that, although the offence of dangerous driving causing death encompasses a very wide range of conduct, it ‘is likely to receive a significant term of imprisonment’. The Court went on to say that, where an offender’s level of moral culpability is low, it may be appropriate for the sentencing court to depart from the usual disposition of a custodial sentence.

[41] In *Stephens*, the offender was driving an off-road buggy, similar to the buggy in the present case and with similar warnings, on a rural property. The offender’s 11 year old stepson was sitting in the passenger seat and his 9 year old daughter was sitting between his stepson’s legs. The offender and his stepson engaged their seatbelts but his daughter was unrestrained. When the offender attempted a ‘burnout’, the buggy rolled and his daughter was killed. His stepson was not seriously injured. The offender had not driven the buggy previously. A collision reconstructionist estimated that the buggy’s speed at the time it rolled over was 34 kilometres per hour.

[42] The sentencing judge in *Stephens* assessed the gravity of the offending as ‘serious examples of serious offences’ and found that the offender’s moral culpability was ‘at … a very high’ level and his prospects of rehabilitation were ‘excellent’: DPP v Stephens [2015] VCC 1847, [55], [57], [71]. The offender did not have a criminal history, conducted two businesses, was involved in community pursuits, and was deeply remorseful. He was ‘grief-stricken’ as a result of the accident and had symptoms consistent with PTSD but they were not sufficient to meet the diagnostic criteria for PTSD. The sentencing judge found that the principles in *R v Verdins* (2007) 16 VR 269 were not strictly engaged.

[43] The offender in *Stephens* pleaded guilty and was sentenced to 3y3m imprisonment for the offence of dangerous driving causing death and to 18m imprisonment for the offence of reckless conduct endangering life, with cumulation of 6m for the latter sentence. A non-parole period of 2y3m imprisonment was fixed in respect of the total effective sentence of 3y9m. This Court dismissed the offender’s appeal against sentence, in which he sought to impugn the sentencing judge’s finding about his moral culpability. The Court rejected at [31] the offender’s contention that a CCO would have been an appropriate disposition in the circumstances of that case.

[44] The inappropriateness of a CCO as a sentencing disposition for the offence of dangerous driving causing death in the vast majority of cases was emphasised by this Court more recently in *Peers v The Queen* (2021) 97 MVR 379; [2021] VSCA 264. That case involved a relatively youthful female offender who attempted to overtake a truck on a two-lane road which narrowed to a single lane road. The speed of the vehicle was estimated at 128.7 kilometres per hour, well above the speed limit of 100 kilometres per hour. When the offender realised that she did not have sufficient time to overtake the truck, she applied the brakes suddenly and lost control of her car, resulting in it going off the road, impacting a large tree and rolling over. Her front seat passenger died as a result of the collision. She pleaded guilty to a single charge of dangerous driving causing death. The offender suffered from a number of mental conditions, including PTSD.

[45] The sentencing judge in *Peers* assessed the gravity of the offending as neither at the high nor at the low end and sentenced the offender to 30m imprisonment with a non-parole period of 12m. This Court allowed the offender’s appeal against sentence on the basis that the sentencing judge erred in finding that the requirements of s 5(2H)(c)(ii) of the *Sentencing Act* were not satisfied. The Court resentenced the offender to 20m imprisonment with a non-parole period of 8m.

[46] This Court in *Peers* made the following pertinent observations at [72]-[73]:

‘This Court has previously noted that the offence of dangerous driving causing death is a serious one, and ‘it is difficult to see how any sentence other than one of immediate imprisonment could possibly meet the needs of general deterrence, adequate punishment, and denunciation’. This Court has previously upheld sentences of imprisonment comparable to that received by the applicant, and found in the case of *Borg*, that the imposition of a five-year CCO without any period of incarceration was a wholly inadequate sentence.

[E]ach case must be considered having regard to its own facts. In our view, a term of imprisonment is required. The speed at which the applicant drove and the overtaking manoeuvre plainly rendered the driving dangerous and general deterrence is important … It is the necessary reality for offending of this kind that people with unblemished records, undoubted remorse, and with little or no prospect of re-offending, will receive an immediate term of imprisonment.’

[47] These observations are consistent with the earlier authority of *Director of Public Prosecutions v Neethling* (2009) 22 VR 466. In that case, this Court stated at [38] that a non-custodial sentence for the offence of dangerous driving causing death should be seen as exceptional and that the degree of the offender’s moral culpability will be ‘a key factor’ in determining whether such a sentence is available as a sentencing option. That statement was endorsed in the more recent case of *Director of Public Prosecutions v Lombardo* (2022) MVR 19,43 [100]; [2022] VSCA 204, where this Court stated that, whilst non-custodial sentences are exceptional for the offence of dangerous driving causing death, the exception applies where the offender’s moral culpability is low, such as where there has been momentary inattention or misjudgement.”

At [61]-[62] their Honours concluded:

[61] “There are two main differences between *Stephens* and the present case. Firstly, unlike the respondent, the offender in Stephens was not diagnosed with the array of mental illnesses — including PTSD — that the respondent suffers. Secondly, the respondent pleaded guilty during the COVID-19 pandemic whereas the offender in *Stephens* pleaded guilty and was sentenced prior to the pandemic. Even though these differences are significant, they cannot provide a basis for the stark dissimilarity between the sentence of a 3 year CCO with a condition of 250 hours of unpaid community work in the present case and the sentence of 3y3m imprisonment in *Stephens*. That is particularly so having regard to the fact that the sentence in *Stephens* is consistent with the principles summarised at [40] to [47] above — which emphasise that, other than cases involving low moral culpability, an immediate term of imprisonment is ordinarily required — whereas the sentence in the present case is inconsistent with those principles.

[62] We do not regard the fact that the respondent had driven his buggy previously, whereas the offender in Stephens had not done so, as material. That is because they were both aware of the dangers involved in embarking on their inherently dangerous conduct. We emphasise that we are not treating the sentence in Stephens as a precedent. However, it is a closely comparable case and is of assistance in determining the appropriate range of sentences available to the judge in the present case.”

In *DPP v Harvey* [2023] VSCA 234 the respondent truck driver had pleaded guilty to one charge of dangerous driving causing death and had been sentenced to IMP2y6m/12m. Being driven while the respondent was fatigued and under the influence of methylamphetamine, the truck had collided with a cyclist when the entire truck was over the fog line at the edge of the road. There had been a delay of over 4 years before the plea hearing which was not attributable to the respondent. Holding that the offending was not at or toward a low level of seriousness and that the respondent’s culpability was not low, the Court of Appeal allowed the Crown appeal, holding that the sentence and non-parole period were manifestly inadequate. Refusing to exercise a residual discretion, the respondent was resentenced to IMP3y6m/21m. At [46]-[48] & [55]‑[58] McLeish, Kennedy & Taylor JJA said:

[46] “In *DPP v Neethling* (2009) 22 VR 466, 472 [30], this Court approved the following propositions in relation to sentencing for dangerous driving causing death, enunciated by Neave JA in *Director of Public Prosecutions v Oates* (2007) 47 MVR 483; [2007] VSCA 59 at [21]-[22]:

1. General deterrence must be given considerable weight in sentencing an offender for dangerous driving causing death or serious injury.

2. A person who kills or injures another while driving dangerously is likely to receive a significant term of imprisonment.

3. The sentence which is imposed must take account of variations in the moral culpability of the person responsible.

[47] A fourth principle, namely that a custodial sentence will usually be appropriate except where the offender’s level of moral culpability is low {*Neethling* at [30] citing *DPP v Oates* at [22]} has, since the offending in this case, been made the subject of specific statutory provision {Sentencing Act, s.5(2H) and para (eb) of the definition of ‘category 2 offence’ in s.3(1)}.

[48] The Court in *Neethling* at [31] further approved a non-exhaustive list of aggravating factors identified by the New South Wales Court of Criminal Appeal in *R v Whyte* (2002) 55 NSWLR 252, 286 and *R v Jurisic* (1998) 45 NSWLR 209, 231 as follows:

i. Extent and nature of the injuries inflicted.

ii. Number of people put at risk.

iii. Degree of speed.

iv. Degree of intoxication or of substance abuse.

v. Erratic [or aggressive] driving.

vi. Competitive driving or showing off.

vii. Length of the journey during which others were exposed to risk.

viii. Ignoring of warnings.

ix. Escaping police pursuit.

x. Degree of sleep deprivation.

xi. Failing to stop.”

…

[55] “There is…no arithmetical yardstick that can be derived from *Stafford v The King* [2022] VSCA 229 [28] for determining the effect on sentence of inordinate delay. Nor is there any reason to think that the sentencing judge in this case thought otherwise. Delay, whether described as significant, inordinate or otherwise, is only one factor that will bear on the overall sentence identified as the result of the judge’s instinctive synthesis of all relevant factors.

[56] The respondent was found to have good prospects of rehabilitation, and he was entitled to the benefit of Verdins principles 5 and 6. We have referred earlier to the other matters in mitigation to which the judge had regard.

[57] “Taking all these matters into account, however, we are driven to conclude that the sentence imposed in this case did not reflect the degree of objective seriousness of the offending (not at or toward the lower end), or the moral culpability of the respondent (not low). General deterrence was a very important sentencing consideration in this case, in which other users of the road were placed in the gravest danger by the respondent’s decision to continue driving the truck in the state he knew himself to be in. We are persuaded that the sentence was outside the range of available sentences for this offence, notwithstanding the mitigating considerations to which the respondent could point.

[58] In reaching this conclusion, the sentences imposed in other cases of dangerous driving causing death, to which we were referred, have not proved especially helpful. The key cases to which the appellant drew specific attention did not involve a truck. *Stocker* [2017] VCC 770 [59], [70] was a case of illicit drugs and fatigue (4 years’ imprisonment after a guilty plea). *Braithwaite-Deegan* [2018] VCC 882 [25], [46] was a fatigue case where illicit drugs were present but not found to have affected the driving (3 years and 8 months’ imprisonment, also after a plea). Of themselves these cases do not establish any relevant current sentencing practice, but they sit comfortably with our conclusion regarding the present sentence. The facts of both *DPP v Janson* (2011) 31 VR 222 and *Papagelou v The King* (2022) 99 MVR 232; [2022] VSCA 53 are so different from the present case that we have not found them of assistance.”

In *DPP v Perry* [2023] VSC 761 the 58 year old offender – psychologically vulnerable due to childhood rejection and abuse and having suffered severe psychological sequelae following the fatal collision – was found guilty by a jury of dangerous driving causing death and dangerous driving causing serious injury. He was placed on a CCO for 3y, his driver licence was cancelled and he was disqualified for 2y. At [26]-[27] Jane Dixon J said (emphasis added):

[26] “It was plainly open to the jury to be satisfied beyond reasonable doubt that your manner of driving did involve a serious breach of the proper management or control of your vehicle, based on your decision to turn through lanes of potentially fastmoving oncoming traffic at a time when your view was obscured by the SsangYong Musso.

[27] However, I accept that the objective gravity of your offending falls very much at the lower end of the scale of seriousness for each charge, and that your moral culpability for the offending is also low. **The seriousness of each offence is not determined by the level of injury or hurt suffered by each victim. Rather, it is the driving itself which is the key matter when compared to other cases of dangerous driving causing death or serious injury.** The sentences I impose must take account of variations in the moral culpability that attaches to persons charged with these offences.”

See also *DPP v Martinez* [2008] VSCA 165; *DPP v Pesa* [2012] VSCA 109; *DPP v Gangur* [2012] VSCA 139; *DPP v Janson* (2011) 31 VR 222; *Board v The Queen* [2013] VSCA 91; *Rowe v The Queen* [2013] VSCA 140; *DPP v Weybury* [2018] VSCA 120; *Yadong Pan v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 42; *Lee v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 156; *Peers v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 264; *R v Hackett* [2021] VSC 773; *Papagelou v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 53; *R v Lu* [2022] VSC 258; *R v Al-Anwiya* [2022] VSC 428 {leave to appeal refused [2022] VSCA 181}; *DPP v Moloney* [2022] VSC 393; *DPP v Lombardo* [2022] VSCA 204; *DPP v Harvey* [2023] VSC 80; *DPP v Sheather* [2023] VSC 219; *Gardezi v The King* [2023] VSCA 297 at [30]-[45]; *DPP v Kenneison* [2023] VSCA 321; *Younis v The King* [2024] VSCA 64; *Camin v The King* [2024] VSCA 124; *Paulson v The King* [2024] VSCA 188; *DPP v Waterhouse* [2024] VSC 585; [2025] VSC 67; *Holmes v The King* [2025] VSCA 136; *Ritchie v The King* [2025] VSCA 154; *Andrews v The King* [2025] VSCA 197; *Pershouse v The King* [2025] VSCA 189.

### **11.2.24 Sentencing for inflicting injury / endangerment / affray / violent disorder etc**

In the following paragraphs a number of cases are discussed or cited which illustrate various aspects of sentencing for causing serious injury or injury, affray/riot/violent disorder and reckless endangerment.

In analysing the injury cases it is important to note that on 01/07/2013 very significant changes were made to the definitions of “injury” and “serious injury” in s.15 of the *Crimes Act 1958* which have the effect that many of the injuries that previously fell within the definition of “serious injury” now fall within the definition of “injury”.

Prior to 01/07/2013 these terms were defined in s.15 as follows: “**injury** includes unconsciousness, hysteria, pain, and any substantial impairment of bodily function”; “**serious injury** includes (a) a combination of injuries; and (b) the destruction, other than in the course of a medical procedure, of the foetus of a pregnant woman, whether or not the woman suffers any other harm”.

As and from 01/07/2013 these terms have been redefined in s.15 as follows:

“**injury** means–

(a) physical injury; or

(b) harm to mental health–

whether temporary or permanent”.

“**physical injury** includes unconsciousness, disfigurement, substantial pain, infection with a disease and an impairment of bodily function”.

“**harm to mental health** includes psychological harm but does not include an emotional reaction such as distress, grief, fear or anger unless it results in psychological harm”.

“**serious injury** means–

1. an injury (including the cumulative effect of more than one injury) that–
2. endangers life; or
3. is substantial and protracted; or
4. the destruction, other than in the course of a medical procedure, of the foetus of a pregnant woman, whether or not the woman suffers any other harm”.

In *Kumar v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 103 at [43]-[50] the Court of Appeal discussed the issue of assessing whether an injury was “substantial and protracted”. Cases involving discussion of the range of “substantial and protracted” serious injuries include *Avder v The Queen* [2015] VSCA 154, esp. at [2] & [7]; *Scammel v The Queen* [2015] VSCA 206, esp. at [8] & [13]*; Mashayamombe v The Queen* [2023] VSCA 60, esp. at [19] & [67].

In *R v Marino* [2011] VSCA 133 at [53] the Court of Appeal held – distinguishing *Towle v The Queen* (2009) 54 MVR 543 – that there is no principle that where offending results in any injury to more than one victim, a sentencing judge must provide for some cumulation in respect of the offences relating to each victim.

In *Karam v The King* [2025] VSCA 194 the applicant had been sentenced to TES IMP6y3m/4y9m on charges including intentionally causing injury [IMP4y8m] and conduct endangering persons x 2 [IMP1y8m & IMP2y of which 8m of each was cumulative on the injury sentence]. The first victim was of African appearance and the applicant had shouted racist abuse at him. The applicant had used his vehicle to run over the second victim who was of Indian appearance. The sentencing judge had found that racist motivation underlay the offending against both victims. Leave to appeal was refused. At [53] Priest & McLeish JJA said:

[53] “At first blush the sentence of 4 years and 8 months’ imprisonment imposed on the charge of intentionally causing injury is at least stern, being just under half the maximum sentence, after a plea of guilty. But this was a very serious example of the offence. To drive a motor vehicle directly at a randomly selected pedestrian on a crowded public footpath, mounting the curb, hitting the pedestrian and then driving 10 metres with the injured man on the bonnet, is abhorrent conduct that strikes at the entitlement of the public to feel secure from physical harm while going about their daily lives. Mr Singh was concussed and has significant ongoing effects from this wholly unprovoked attack. The seriousness of the conduct is exacerbated, albeit in a moderated way in the present case as the judge recognised, by the fact that the ‘random’ victim was chosen because of the colour of his skin. The judge rightly emphasised the need for the sentence to reflect significant weight to denunciation of this conduct, protection of the community and both general and specific deterrence.”

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### **11.2.24.1 Sentencing for intentionally causing serious injury / intentionally or recklessly causing serious injury in circumstances of gross violence**

### **A INTENTIONALLY CAUSING SERIOUS INJURY**

In *R v El-Haouli* [2014] VSCA 5 Priest JA said at [25] that “the offence of intentionally causing serious injury varies in seriousness and does not automatically result in a term of imprisonment”. However, it is fair to say that in the superior courts it usually does.

In two decisions handed down on 19/08/2004, the Court of Appeal emphasised the seriousness of the offence of **intentionally causing serious injury** and the significance of the substantial maximum term of imprisonment – 20 years – which Parliament has provided in s.16 of the *Crimes Act 1958*.

In *DPP v Lawrence* [2004] VSCA 154 at [23] Batt JA (with whom Winneke P & Nettle JA agreed) said:

“In *Thompson* [Court of Appeal, unreported, 21/04/1998] at pp.7-8 Tadgell JA said, ‘The courts must do what they can to send to the community a message of crystal clarity that conduct of this kind is intolerable in a civilised society.’ The two decisions being given today by this Court on appeals by the Director of Public Prosecutions in relation to the offence of intentionally causing serious injury should, it is to be hoped, make clear to sentencing judges and would-be offenders how seriously this offence is to be regarded.”

At [21] the Court said:

“The maximum penalty fixed by Parliament shows how intrinsically serious the offence is considered to be on behalf of the community. Although it is to state the obvious, it should not be overlooked that in this most serious of the non-homicidal injury offences there is the concurrence of *serious* injury with the *intention* to cause *it*. To move from the general to the particular, the offending here was grave indeed and the results of it life-threatening for the victim. The offending was aggravated by the fact that it was committed under the influence of alcohol and drugs. Moreover, the respondent's antecedent history showed that the instant offence was not an uncharacteristic aberration but rather that in its commission he manifested a continuing attitude of disobedience of the law, so that, whilst the antecedent criminal history could not be given such weight as to lead to the imposition of a penalty disproportionate to the gravity of the instant offence, retribution, deterrence and protection of society indicated that a more severe penalty was warranted than would otherwise be the case. Moreover, that antecedent criminal history showed the respondent's dangerous propensity and a need to impose condign punishment to deter him and other offenders from committing further offences of a like kind: *Veen v. The Queen* [No.2] (1988) 164 CLR 465 at 477.

After referring to the cases of *R v Thompson* (unreported, Court of Appeal, 21/04/1998] at pp.7-8; *R v Wright* [1998] VSCA 84 at [1], [5] & [6]; *R v Teichelman* [2000] VSCA 224 at [20]; *R v Howarth* (2000) 112 A Crim R 244 at [51]; and *R v Hennen* [2004] VSCA 42 at [24] and cautioning that regard must be had to the maximum penalty available at their respective relevant dates and to the fact that they were appeals by offenders, the Court said at [22]:

“Further, as the cases make clear, with an offence as serious as intentionally causing serious injury and particularly with an instance of it as grave as this one, the offender's youthfulness and rehabilitation, achieved and prospective, whilst not irrelevant in the instinctive synthesis which the sentencing judge must make, were of much less significance than they would have been with a less serious offence. As has been said, youth and rehabilitation must be subjugated to other considerations. They must, as the President said in *Wright* at [6], take a ‘back seat’ to specific and general deterrence where crimes of wanton and unprovoked viciousness (of which the present is an example) are involved, particularly where (again as here) the perpetrator has been given previous chances to control his aggressive habits. This is because the offending is of such a nature and so prevalent that general deterrence, specific deterrence and denunciation of the conduct must be emphasised. There is a particular reason why, with this offence, youthfulness of an offender cannot be of much significance. This is that, as this very case exemplifies, the persons who commit the offence and wreak appalling injuries, very often by kicking and stomping upon their prone or supine victims, are predominantly youths and young men acting under the influence of alcohol or drugs or both. Here, the respondent was in any event only on the borderline of youthfulness and moreover was not by any means a first offender. For these reasons I agree with [the DPP’s] submission that her Honour did err in her statement that the respondent's rehabilitation was required to be foremost in the mind of a sentencing court.”

In *DPP v Zullo* [2004] VSCA 153 the Court of Appeal did not accept that a sentence for causing serious injury intentionally could never exceed the sorts of sentences that are imposed for less serious forms of manslaughter. At [10]-[13] Nettle JA (with whom Winneke P & Batt JA agreed) said:

“[10] The maximum sentence for causing serious injury intentionally is 20 years' imprisonment. A sentence of only 3½ years, with a non-parole period of 2½ years, implies that this offence was at or towards the lower end of the scale. But this offence was anything but towards the lower end of the scale. It was a cowardly, unprovoked and vicious attack on a member of the public who was minding his own business and who was doing nothing to warrant any interference with him at all - let alone being beaten senseless - and it has left the man with lasting injuries. It was therefore a serious case of causing serious injury intentionally, with serious aggravating circumstances.

[11] This Court has said repeatedly that those who when disinhibited by alcohol engage in unbridled violence in public places must expect condign punishment in which the principles of general and, on many occasions, specific deterrence will play major roles: *R v Stevenson* [2000] VSCA 161 at [27]. Given the age and antecedents of the respondent, there can be no doubt that it should be so in this case. This offence calls for a substantial sentence in order to mark the Court's denunciation of the offence and to provide the sort of specific and general deterrence that is needed. A sentence of only 3½ years' imprisonment with a non-parole period of only 2½ years is for those purposes so inadequate as to reflect an error of principle: *DPP v. Scott* (2003) 6 VR 217 at 222.

[12] It is said that the longest sentence ever imposed in this State for an offence of causing serious injury intentionally is 10 years' imprisonment, and it has been said that it is only the most serious cases of the offence that have attracted a sentence within what is described as ‘the very top of the range’ of between 6 and 10 years: Fox & Freiberg, *Sentencing, State and Federal Law in Victoria*, 2nd Ed. at [12.303], but see *R v Mallinder* (1986) 23 A Crim R 179. In the past that may have been so. When it was the case, a sentence for this offence of 3½ years' imprisonment with a non-parole period of 2½ years might have been within the range. But it is no longer the case. The so-called ‘very top of the range’ of 6 to 10 years was established when the maximum penalty for causing serious injury intentionally was only 12½ years’ imprisonment. The maximum penalty is now almost double that amount. Now the ‘very top of the range’ is upwards of 15 years.

[13] It has also been said that the sentence to be imposed for an offence of causing serious injury intentionally should be considered in the context of what might be appropriate for a case of manslaughter: *R v Meizys* 01/10/1990; *R v Pratt* 28/04/1995; *R v Lee* 19/08/1997, BC 9703974 at p.7; Fox & Freiberg, *supra* at [12.303]. With respect, I would agree with that sort of approach, provided all that is meant is that a particular case of causing serious injury intentionally may be so grave and productive of consequences so serious as to warrant a penalty similar to the penalty for manslaughter. But I do not accept that a sentence for causing serious injury intentionally may not ever exceed the sorts of sentences that are imposed for less serious forms of manslaughter. A head sentence of 6 or so years may be imposed for some forms of manslaughter at the lower end of the range, although of course much will depend upon the age and antecedents of the offender and the prospects of rehabilitation. But where a sentence of that order is given for manslaughter, the offence is more often than not a case of accidental homicide. It does not often involve an intention to inflict serious injury. Contrastingly, an intention to cause serious injury is of the essence of the offence of causing serious injury intentionally and in that respect the latter is a graver offence than unintentional homicide. Depending upon the circumstances…a sentence for a serious case of causing serious injury intentionally may well exceed a sentence for manslaughter at the lower end of the scale.”

In *R v Staples* [2005] VSCA 130 the Court of Appeal affirmed a sentence of 6½ years imprisonment, with 4½ years non-parole period, for an offence of intentionally causing serious injury – described by the Court as “shocking” and “horrific” - to his daughter aged 3.

In *R v Xe Van Pham* [2005] VSCA 57 the Court of Appeal affirmed a sentence of 10 years’ imprisonment with a non-parole period of 7 years on two counts of intentionally causing serious injury. The victims were the appellant’s former de facto and her 6 year old son who saw the attack on his mother and bravely ran to protect her, raising his arm to shield her. The appellant struck the boy on the arm with the knife, inflicting 3 cuts and almost severing the child's hand, leaving him with a severe disability that he will carry for the rest of his life. Vincent JA, with whom Nettle JA & Cummins AJA agreed, referred at [21] to the aggravating circumstance that the appellant’s offences were in breach of an intervention order:

“[A]lthough his Honour specifically adverted to this feature when considering the seriousness of the appellant's conduct and the degree of criminality involved, it is particularly significant that the appellant acted in the flagrant breach of an intervention order that Thu Tran had obtained in order to protect herself and her children against the very kind of behaviour in which the appellant engaged on this occasion. She had availed herself of a process designed by parliament to provide the protection of the law to vulnerable individuals, usually, as in this case, women and children, who legitimately fear for their safety. **Offenders who disregard such orders and occasion injury to persons whose personal security is intended to be guaranteed through this means must anticipate that an extremely stern view will be adopted by the courts of their conduct and, save in the most unusual circumstances, will be subject to condign punishment.**”

In *R v Marshall* [2012] VSC 587 King J imposed a total sentence of 10y6m/8y on a 34 year old man who had pleaded guilty to offences including intentionally causing serious injury, aggravated burglary and criminal damage. The victim, the accused’s ex-partner, had sustained a very high level of injury when assaulted with a sledgehammer. The offences had occurred in front of the victim’s young son. King J said:

[21] “Our community has expressed through the Parliament and the legislation enacted that it will not tolerate behaviour of this nature. The fact that you were in a domestic relationship with Ms Gagliardi at one stage does not, in any way, reduce your culpability for the infliction of such terrible physical and psychological injuries upon her, not to mention her son. A strong message must be sent that the courts will not accept behaviour of this kind and that people in domestic situations are entitled to feel safe from the rage of their ex-partners, because clearly this is rage. Your comments as you punched and hit this woman with a sledgehammer, that she had ruined your life can only be expressions of rage fury and anger.”

[31] “The court condemns your action on both occasions. Your wanton disregard of the intervention orders, your deception of your family and those caring for you and your enraged attacks upon Ms Gagliardi are all serious matters that require severe condemnation. **The fact that the child was present on both occasions is an aggravating feature of the offending**.”

In *DPP v Caine Michael Snell* [2005] VSCA 131 the 22 year old respondent had been sentenced to 7 months’ imprisonment, of which months was suspended, on charges of aggravated burglary and intentionally causing serious injury. The aggravated burglary was characterized as a “home invasion” and the offences were committed while the respondent was on parole. The respondent had a significant history of both offending and dependence. However, there was evidence before the trial judge and the Court of Appeal that he had genuine prospects of rehabilitation. A Director’s appeal was allowed, the Court of Appeal holding that 5 months for aggravated burglary and 4 months for intentionally causing serious injury was manifestly inadequate and re-sentenced the respondent to 3 years’ imprisonment. However, in light of “the steps taken by the respondent on the path of rehabilitation and reform”, this sentence was wholly suspended for a period of 2 years.

In *DPP v Nagi* [2005] VSCA 14 the Court of Appeal declined to interfere with a sentence of 12 months’ imprisonment to be served by way of an ICO on a 27 year old man who had pleaded guilty to one count of intentionally causing serious injury to a man whom he had “king hit” at a hotel. Winneke P (with whom Charles & Buchanan JJA agreed) said at [10]:

“The Director does not submit, and no doubt for the reasons advanced by the trial judge, that a non-custodial sentence was beyond the range available to her in the circumstances of this case. Rather, it was submitted that she had adopted the wrong option to achieve that end. I agree with the Director's submission that the sentence of one year's imprisonment in the circumstances of this offending was too low; and, indeed, such a sentence should rarely be imposed for an offence of this magnitude. Nevertheless, I would not be prepared to interfere with it on a Director's appeal for the purpose simply of substituting some other form of non-custodial sentence.”

In *R v Speedie* [2005] VSC 194 an 18 year old offender had pleaded guilty to two counts of intentionally inflicting serious injury, one count of common assault and two counts of intentionally damaging property, the offences arising out of a dispute at a private party. In sentencing him to 4½ years’ imprisonment with a 2 year non-parole period, Coldrey J said at [20]:

“The use of knives to inflict physical harm is abhorrent to this community. The courts, by the sanctions they impose, must seek to deter persons from carrying and using such weapons.”

In *DPP v Gebremeskel* [2005] VSCA 171 the Court of Appeal dismissed a Director’s appeal against a wholly suspended sentence of 12 months imprisonment imposed on a 30 year old man of Eritrean background who had pleaded guilty shortly before trial to one count of intentionally causing serious injury - by throwing a cup of steaming liquid over the victim – in circumstances of significant mitigation.

In *DPP v Taylor* [2005] VSCA 222 the Court of Appeal dismissed a Director’s appeal against a sentence of 2 years imprisonment with a non-parole period of 6 months imposed on an Aboriginal man who, 9 years prior to his sentencing hearing, had caused serious injury to the young child of his then partner by shaking her. Nettle JA, with whom Eames JA & Hollingworth AJA agreed, said at [17]:

“I agree that assaults by males on children of their de facto partners are all too frequent, and that the phenomenon of shaking babies needs to be denounced and condemned by means of stern punishment. Men who engage in the intentional infliction of serious injury on children should expect that there will be no leniency. They will be sternly punished. But I am not persuaded of the need for general deterrence in the particular circumstances of this case.”

In *R v Consedine* [2007] VSCA 253 Curtain AJA (Vincent & Neave JJA concurring) said at [14]:

“The intentional infliction of injury is understandably regarded very gravely by the courts. I need refer only to the sentencing remarks made by Vincent J (as he then was) in the matter of *R v Cansino* [unreported, Supreme Court of Victoria, 11/04/1994] at pp.42-43 where his Honour stated:

‘The too too frequent resort to violence by persons who have encountered problems in their personal relationships has produced strong senses of apprehension and outrage in a society which is not prepared to accept that women and children, in particular, are to be subject to such behaviour.

Through the sentences that they impose, the courts must reflect their recognition of the seriousness of such conduct. The law must be heard to say with crystal clarity that it will not be tolerated. Consistent with the application of other sentencing principles, judges must endeavour through the sentences which they hand down to deter those who would be like minded or may be prepared to release their feelings of frustration and aggression in this manner from engaging in acts of violence of the type which you perpetrated.’

See also the judgments of this Court in *R v Lacey* [2006] VSCA 4, [18], [19] (Vincent JA) and *DPP v Ross* [2006] VSCA 223, [23] (Maxwell P).

Whatever may be the intended extent of the injury to be sustained by the victim of an unlawful assault, the potential for even more serious consequences, including permanent incapacity or the possible death of the victim is very commonly present. More broadly, with respect to violence generally, no properly functioning community can accept the employment of physical force as a tolerable method of the expression of frustration or anger, whether justified or not, as a means of resolving personal disputes. Insofar as they are able to do so and consistent with the application of other sentencing principles, the courts must vindicate the rights of the victim and endeavour to protect the community through sentences designed to deter both generally and specifically.”

In *DPP v RSP* [2010] VSC 128 Curtain J imposed sentences totalling 5y3m with a non-parole period of 3y on one count of intentionally causing serious injury and 3 counts of intentionally causing injury. The accused was an 18 year old male who, with a friend, had “gatecrashed” a party and while dancing had been bumped. His “aggressive and excessive” response was to arm himself with a screwdriver and stab three people, one seriously, and also to strike another person with a bottle to the head. One of the victims was left “permanently and significantly visually impaired”. In answer to a submission that the accused should be given a sentence of detention in a YJC, her Honour said at [27]:

“I am not satisfied that a sentence of three years’ detention would adequately address the nature and gravity of the offences here committed and the weight to be given to specific and general deterrence, although I accept that the principles of *Mills’ case* are here relevant and applicable.”

In *DPP v Richard Ross* [2006] VSCA 223 the respondent had pleaded guilty to intentionally causing serious injury to the new partner of his estranged partner and recklessly causing injury to her. The Court of Appeal upheld a Director’s appeal against a sentence of 12m/6m and ordered in lieu a sentence of 2½y/1½y. In his judgment (with which Warren CJ & Buchanan JA substantially agreed), Maxwell P discussed at [27] & [29]-[30] a number of recent decisions of the Court of Appeal on sentencing for intentionally causing serious injury. At [20] & [28] his Honour said:

[20] “As the daily business of the Family Court demonstrates, these are absolutely fundamental relationships, with a partner and with a child. I would readily accept that any threat to either of those relationships can have the most profound impact on the person concerned. A father threatened with the loss of contact with his son is likely to be extraordinarily upset at the prospect. That is of the very nature of these important relationships. In my opinion, the inevitable pain occasioned by a threat to those relationships can never – repeat, never – justify violence against any other person. The existence of that recognisable and understandable emotional upset and anguish is not, and can never be, an excuse for violence.”

[28] “In my opinion this Court needs to make very clear to sentencing judges, and through them to the community, that resorting to violence of this kind to resolve emotional disputes or personal antipathies will be treated very, very seriously by the courts.”

In *DPP v Kosmidis* [2008] VSCA 66 the Court of Appeal upheld a Director’s appeal against a sentence of 6 months imprisonment suspended for 1 year imposed on a 20 year old offender on a charge of intentionally causing serious injury and ordered in lieu a sentence of 2 years’ imprisonment suspended for 2 years. Forrest AJA, with whom Buchanan & Ashley JJA agreed, said at [26]:

“In my view, the sentence passed by the sentencing judge on the count of intentionally causing serious injury was patently inadequate and would, if not varied, undermine public confidence in the courts in dealing with serious criminal offences. Whilst her Honour was entitled to take into account a number of the favourable matters pointing towards a somewhat lenient sentence she failed to have adequate regard to the circumstances surrounding the offence. As I have endeavoured to set out, it was a violent and unprovoked attack upon a defenceless individual, accompanied by racist taunts which left the victim with significant injuries.”

However, in *DPP v Fevaleaki* (2006) 165 A Crim R 524; [2006] VSCA 212 the Court of Appeal dismissed a Director’s appeal against a 12m intensive corrections order imposed in a case in which an assault had produced serious unintended consequences and there were strong mitigating circumstances. And in *DPP v Mitchell* [2006] VSCA 108 the Court of Appeal dismissed a Director’s appeal against a sentence of 4m youth training centre imposed on a 19 year old offender on charges of intentionally causing serious injury, affray and handling stolen goods in circumstances where there was evidence of rehabilitation after conviction.

In *R v Kane* [2010] VSCA 213 the accused had pleaded guilty to charges of intentionally causing serious injury, intentionally causing injury, assault, criminal damage and breach of intervention order, all of which were committed on his ex-partner after she had told him that she was ending their relationship. He received a total effective sentence 10y/7y, including 8y on the charge of intentionally causing serious injury. In allowing his appeal, Nettle JA (with whom Harper & Hansen JJA agreed) said:

* At [17]: “In her sentencing remarks, the sentencing judge observed, correctly, that it is incumbent on a sentencing judge to impose condign punishment in a case like this in order to send a clear message to likeminded people that a civilised society does not condone people using physical violence to take the law in their own hands to settle disputes and deal with domestic partners in a violent way. Her Honour also observed, correctly, that inasmuch as these attacks were cowardly, unprovoked and unexpected attacks, there was a particular need for specific deterrence.”
* At [23]:”Although a sentence of eight years' imprisonment imposed is high for a count of intentionally causing serious injury not involving the use of weapons [cf. *R v Heary* (2002) 22 VR 164, 202 [150] (9y imprisonment)] or resulting in the total and permanent incapacity of the victim [cf. *DPP v Terrick, Marks and Stewart* (2009) VSCA 220, [17] (8y imprisonment); *Ashe v R* [2010] VSCA 119 (recklessly causing serious injury, 10y imprisonment)], the nature and gravity of this offence was formidable and the effects on the victim were painful and lasting. It called for a sentence which reflected that.
* At [24]: “The Crown, however, concedes that the sentence is excessive. It draws attention to the decision of this Court in *R v Harvey* [2007] VSCA 127 where the majority held that a sentence of nine years' imprisonment imposed on a serious violent offender on a count of intentionally causing serious injury was manifestly excessive, and varied the sentence to six years. Although I dissented in that case, I am bound to heed it. The Crown also makes mention of *R v Pennell and Rankin* [2007] VSCA 225 in which I joined, where the nature and gravity of the offending was more serious than here, albeit that the offenders were younger, and the sentence imposed was only six years' imprisonment.”
* At [25]: “Sentencing cases are without precedential value. Each case is unique and dependent on its own circumstances. The most that can be derived from previous decisions is their exposition of sentencing principles. But in view of the Crown’s concession, and given the similarities and dissimilarities between this case and the cases to which the Crown has drawn attention, I am persuaded that a sentence of eight years’ imprisonment was, in this case, beyond the sentencing range. It may be that there is a need to revisit current sentencing practices in relation to offences of intentionally causing injury. But this is not the case in which to do that; if only because of the sentencing range of five to seven years’ imprisonment which was put by the Crown to the sentencing judge on the plea.”

The accused was re-sentenced to 6y imp on intentionally causing serious injury. The other sentences and cumulation were confirmed, resulting in 8y/6y.

The cases of *DPP v Bogtstra, Kontoklotsis & Karazisis* [2010] VSCA 350 involved Crown appeals against sentences imposed on joint offenders who were off-duty security officers who had pleaded guilty to charges of affray, recklessly cause serious injury and intentionally cause serious injury related to an unprovoked attack on restaurant patrons. In the County Court B & Ko had been sentenced to terms of imprisonment of 9m & 12m respectively to be served by way of Intensive Correction Order. Ka was sentenced to IMP 2y4m/12m. Appeals against sentence in the cases of Bogtstra & Kontoklotsis were dismissed. Appeal against sentence in the case of Karazisis was allowed and he was re-sentenced to IMP 3y8m/1y10m. At [192] Ashley, Redlich & Weinberg JJA (with whom Warren CJ & Maxwell P agreed on this point) said:

“It can readily be accepted that Karazisis did not foresee the full extent of the serious injuries suffered by Adams. Of course, those consequences should not be permitted to swamp other sentencing considerations: *DPP v Fevaleaki* (2006) 165 A Crim R 524, 527‑8. In a case such as this, the Court’s assessment of the gravity of the offending will involve a consideration of both the degree of probability that serious injury would result, and the seriousness of the injury thus foreseen: *Ashe v The Queen* [2010] VSCA 119, [23]–[27]. Karazisis’ plea of guilty to the offence of recklessly causing serious injury amounted to an acknowledgement on his part that he was aware, when he applied the choke hold to Adams, and thereby rendered him unconscious, that his conduct would probably cause serious injury: *Ignatova v The Queen* [2010] VSCA 263. Prior to the decision in *Ignatova*, there was a body of case law suggesting that it was an element of recklessly causing serious injury that the offender be ‘indifferent’ to that foreseen consequence. *Ignatova* held that ‘indifference’ was not an element of this offence. Accordingly, Karazisis’ plea of guilty did not, of itself, amount to an acknowledgement that he was ‘indifferent’ to the likelihood that Adams would sustain serious injury. Nonetheless, on the facts of this case, it would have been well open to the sentencing judge to reach that conclusion. The fact that the injury turned out to be more serious than that originally foreseen is, to some degree, mitigatory, but does not absolve him from responsibility for his actions.”

In *Jawahiri v The Queen*; *Eser v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 287 the 20 year old accused men had planned to assault the victim. Eser pushed the victim towards an unknown male and Jawahiri attacked the victim with a meat cleaver causing life-threatening injuries resulting in him being admitted to the intensive care unit at Royal Melbourne Hospital in a critical condition. Only timely and expert intervention saved his life. Jawahiri pleaded guilty to intentionally causing serious injury and was sentenced to IMP8y6m/5y6m. Eser pleaded guilty to recklessly causing serious injury and was sentenced to IMP7y/5y. In dismissing Jawahiri’s appeal, Priest & T Forrest JJA held-

* The mitigating weight of youth was counterbalanced by the objective gravity of the offending: “The sentence imposed of 8y6m is certainly stern for a 20-year-old man with no criminal history, however, the objective gravity of the offending was very grave indeed. This was no alcohol- or ice-fueled moment of madness. We agree with the sentencing judge that this was a ruthless, planned attack, in which Jawahiri (at least) intended to and did use a vicious, murderous weapon.”
* Current sentencing practices are only one factor to be considered in the complicated sentencing calculus: *DPP v Dalgliesh (a pseudonym)* (2017) 262 CLR 428, 450 [68] (Kiefel CJ, Bell and Keane JJ).
* But in any event, the sentence was not inconsistent with current sentencing practices given comparable cases.

In allowing Eser’s appeal and substituting a sentence of IMP4y6m/2y6m Priest & T Forrest JJA held-

* It was not open to the sentencing judge to conclude that Eser knew of Jawahiri’s weapon before the attack commenced. However, it was open to the judge to conclude that very shortly after the attack commenced, Eser must have been aware of the presence and use of the weapon, and yet he continued in the assault until its conclusion. This is serious offending.
* “This was not that rare case in which the sentencing judge was entitled to reject the agreed factual basis for the plea: see *Perry* (2016) 50 VR 686, 711 [92]–[93] (Maxwell ACJ, Redlich and Whelan JJA); *Lowe* [2009] VSCA 268; *Mielicki* (1994) 73 A Crim R 72, 78–9 (Southwell, Ormiston and Coldrey JJ); *Ristevski* (2011) 35 VR 193, 195 [10] (Maxwell P).”
* “The sentencing judge was required to consider the applicant’s childhood disadvantage as more than a mere matter of ‘historical significance to the administration of justice’: *Marrah v The Queen* [2014] VSCA 119, [16] (Redlich and Tate JJA). It was relevant to an appropriate evaluation of his moral culpability: *Drake* [2019] VSCA 293, [32] (Maxwell P, Priest, Kaye, T Forrest and Emerton JJA). Further, the sentencing judge was obliged to give the applicant’s very significant intellectual disability individual attention.”

In *McLean v The King* [2023] VSCA 6 the applicant had been sentenced to IMP5y on a plea of guilty to recklessly causing serious injury. Although describing at [46] the IMP5y sentence as “very stern”, the Court of Appeal refused leave to appeal. The circumstances of the “serious injury” were that the applicant punched the victim with a full force blow to the right side of his jaw causing the victim to fall backwards, striking the top of his head on the concrete footpath and resulting in the victim being unconscious for 8-9 minutes, suffering broken teeth, damage to his nose, pain, headaches and some ongoing consequences. In rejecting the applicant’s submission that it was not open to find the injury was other than at the lower end of the spectrum of serious injury, Niall & T Forrest JJA said at [31]-[37] [emphasis added]:

[31] “In *Sarjeant v The Queen; Garratt v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 45 this Court held at [43] that the time for assessment of seriousness is the time the injury is sustained. The focus of the relevant limb of the definition is on an injury that, at the time it is inflicted, places the life of the victim at risk. Such an injury does not cease to be a serious injury because some intervention such as medical assistance prevents the risk materialising even where there is little or no ongoing damage. As explained by this Court in *Sarjeant*, the time of assessment of seriousness is not postponed to await the unfolding of the consequences of the particular injury for the particular victim, and the determination of seriousness does not depend on contingencies such as the timeliness of medical intervention in the particular case.

[32] This construction of the provision is supported both by the language and extrinsic material. The Explanatory Memorandum for the amending bill said:

The new definition of serious injury is an injury (including the cumulative effect of more than one injury) that endangers life or is substantial and protracted. This replaces the current reference to a serious injury including ‘a combination of injuries’. The new definition raises the threshold for ‘serious injury’. Under the new definition, an injury need not be permanent to be considered ‘serious’. A broken jaw or a broken leg may constitute a ‘serious injury’ under this definition. A very short-term life-endangering injury would also constitute a ‘serious injury’.

[33] There is no doubt that the seriousness of the injury can be an important matter in sentencing. Yet it must be accepted that the concept of ‘serious injury’, even in its current form which was intended to narrow the scope of what constituted a serious injury when compared to earlier forms of the legislation, covers a potentially wide range of injury. To place a particular example within the spectrum of potential injuries is by no means an easy task. It entails an evaluative judgment that is not based on a fixed sliding scale. For example, it is difficult to compare a compound fracture of a leg that is serious but not life threatening to an injury that gives rise to a high risk of death.

[34] In sentencing the applicant, the judge accepted the medical evidence that the injury presented a ‘high risk of death’. Although it may be accepted that one mechanism by which a blow to the head may cause significant injury is bleeding on or around the brain, the evidence established that this is not the only pathway to such an injury and that occlusion of the airways and consequent loss of oxygen to the brain is another.

[35] We do not take her Honour to have proceeded on the basis that every instance of injury endangering life is, for that reason alone, necessarily above the lower end of serious injuries. We accept that there may be gradations of injuries that endanger life, having regard to the nature of the injury and the level of risk it entails. **The judge considered that the high risk of death was a serious matter and placed the injury above the ‘lower end of the spectrum of serious injuries’. That was an evaluative judgment on a matter on which there is no exact measure. In our opinion, in light of the evidence, the finding was unremarkable.**

[36] It is also important to bear in mind that, although the assessment of the nature and extent of the injury is a relevant matter in sentencing an offender for recklessly causing serious injury, the objective gravity of the offending is not solely tied to that feature. Here, as the judge observed there were a number of factors that objectively made the applicant’s conduct serious. The assault was unprovoked and the victim had no opportunity to evade contact or even brace for the punch which was executed with considerable force. The incident occurred on a public street and the applicant was affected by alcohol.

[37] In our view, it is not arguable to contend that the judge’s assessment of the seriousness of the injury or the gravity of the offending was not open.”

In *DPP v Talbot* [2023] VSCA 95 the 29 year old respondent – who had a number of relevant prior convictions – had pleaded guilty to charges of intentionally causing serious injury and home invasion. He had entered residential premises with others and had shot the victim in the knee with a sawn-off shotgun. He had been sentenced to TES IMP8y/5y6m of which IMP7y6m was imposed on the serious injury charge and IMP5y (6m cumulative) was imposed on the home invasion charge. The Court of Appeal allowed the appeal and substituted a TES IMP11y6m/9y of which IMP10y was imposed on the serious injury charge and IMP7y (18m cumulative) was imposed on the home invasion charge. At [22] Priest, Niall & T Forrest JJA said:

“Both of the offences are serious examples of the relevant offence. The respondent’s moral culpability was high. And the objective gravity of his offending was very high. He went to the York Street premises with a loaded sawn-off shotgun, which was both easily concealable and highly dangerous. Although the elements of the crime of home invasion include entry in the company of others whilst armed with a firearm, and intending to commit an offence involving an assault to a person in the home, the fact that the firearm was loaded indicates that the respondent contemplated terrorising those present; the use of extreme violence; and the imposition of very severe injury to the occupants. Indeed, having invaded the premises, not only did he terrorise Mr Veenings — who was a completely innocent bystander — by holding the shotgun to his head, but he fired it into Mr Veenings’ knee, causing terrible injuries. So much was a gratuitous, spiteful and cruel act of violence, which, as we have said, caused Mr Veenings to suffer very severe, life-changing injuries. And as the judge remarked, the respondent had had the opportunity to ‘pause, consider and desist’ before he did so. It was a very serious example of the offence of intentionally causing serious injury.”

For other examples of sentencing for **intentionally causing serious injury**, see:

* *R v Chand* [2005] VSC 448 per Warren CJ [throwing live hair dryer into victim’s bath];
* *R v Bookham* [2005] VSC 483 per Williams J [stabbing of former girl friend’s sister in presence of her 6 year old son; attempted murder of former girl friend];
* *DPP v Galea* [2005] VSC 508 per Cummins J [road rage];
* *R v Davis* [2006] VSCA 8 [applicant’s spouse in relationship with victim];
* *R v Brock & Green* [2006] VSC 13 per Hollingworth J [drunken attack involving kicking and hitting with wooden hammer handle];
* *R v Catania* [2006] VSC 189 per Bell J [victim set on fire – 9y/6y];
* *DPP v Hooker* [2006] VSCA 95 per Buchanan, Vincent & Nettle JJA [fight in street – 8m suspended increased to 2½y suspended];
* *DPP v Douglas* [2006] VSCA 160 per Maxwell P, Buchanan & Vincent JJA [home invasion – 12m suspended did not reflect gravity of offending but not increased in exercise of discretion];
* *R v Watson* [2006] VSC 375 per Kellam J [21 year old defendant involved in alcohol fuelled violence against partner – 6y/4y];
* *R v Britt* [2006] VSC 378 per Kellam J [shooting – 8y/5y];
* *DPP v Lothian* [2006] VSCA 217 per Warren CJ, Maxwell P & Buchanan JA [road rage – 18m/6m increased to 3y/18m];
* *R v Dooley* [2006] VSCA 269 per Callaway & Redlich JJA & Coldrey AJA [stabbing – 4½y/2½y];
* *DPP v Pantazopoulos* [2006] VSC 331 per Teague J [3y YTC];
* *R v Sita* [2006] VSC 323 per Bongiorno J [knifing - young offender mental deficiency – 4y/1y8m];
* *DPP v Evans; DPP v Hickinbotham* [2007] VSCA 15 per Buchanan & Eames JJA & Kellam AJA [assault with spanner and jack hammer – sentences manifestly inadequate – Evans re-sentenced to 4y/1y9m – Hickinbotham re-sentenced to 3y7m/1y4m].
* *DPP v TT* [2007] VSC 23 per Bell J [3y YTC for 15 year old offender who had entered a neighbour’s house at night and stabbed her multiple times without any explanation for his actions but said to have excellent prospects of rehabilitation – 2y on injury count, 2y/1y cumulative on aggravated burglary count];
* *DPP v Bulert & Terzi* [2007] VSCA 69 per Vincent JA (with whom Buchanan & Eames JJA agreed) [each respondent cowardly and viciously kicked the head of a person who was in a defenceless and vulnerable position on the floor – 2½y imprisonment suspended for 2½y];
* *DPP v Joyce* [2007] VSCA 215 [6y/4y for unprovoked alcohol fuelled attack in victim’s home];
* *R v Pennell; R v Rankin* [2007] VSCA 225 per Curtain AJA (with whom Buchanan & Nettle JJA agreed) [6y];
* *R v Clark* [2007] VSCA 254 per Neave JA (with whom Vincent JA & Curtain AJA agreed) [3½y for punching & kicking victim in victim’s room);
* *R v Ali Ali* [2007] VSC 350 per Curtain J [15y/12y for causing serious injury to cellmate];
* *DPP v McAllister* [2007] VSC 536 per Teague J [shooting where defendant’s moral culpability was said to be high and described as meriting the strongest denunciation];
* *R v Tresize* [2008] VSCA 8 [stabbing of male acquaintance by 55 year old female where there were various mitigating factors including a history of serious mental illness];
* *R v Eastham* [2008] VSCA 67 [prison officer kicked a prostrate prisoner being held by others causing injuries requiring removal of spleen];
* *R v McRae* [2008] VSCA 74 [closed head injury, facial bone fractures, lumbar spine fractures and five laceration wounds suffered by trans-sexual – 5y/2y9m];]
* *R v Castles* [2008] VSC 93 per Bongiorno J [attack on defacto];
* *DPP v Dalley* [2008] VSCA 173 [fractured skull after multiple blows inflicted by young offender with shopping trolley handle after an exchange of words – 18m/12m suspended – dicta in *R v Mills* [1998] 4 VR 224 approved];
* *DPP v Eli* [2008] VSCA 203 [attack on train; sentence increased from 2y to 4y6m];
* *R v Aggelidis* [2008] VSC 445 per Kaye J [stabbing causing very serious permanent injury to victim – prisoner’s impaired mental state and substantially mitigating circumstances – 4y6m/2y3m];
* *R v Cossu* [2008] VSC 458 per Kaye J [premeditated stabbing of prisoner in gaol – 7y6m/5y].
* *R v Zander* [2009] VSCA 10 [care worker causing serious injury to 4 intellectually disabled high needs patients – 3y/2y];
* *R v Papworth* [2010] VSC 422 per Osborn J [stab wound to forearm – plea of guilty by 24 year old offender who was orphaned at 13 and then under the custody of DOHS – offender under influence of drugs and alcohol – prospects of rehabilitation – 4y/2y];
* *R v Emery* [2010] VSC 478 per Lasry J [victim who had been accused’s partner was doused in diesel and set on fire – early plea of guilty – long history of drug abuse – rehabilitation well advanced – 5y/3y6m];
* *R v Rossi* [2010] VSC 602 per Lasry J [victim doused in diesel and set alight with blow torch – impact of medical and psychological conditions on time in custody – 7y/4y];
* *R v Dimitrakis* [2010] VSC 614 per Coghlan J [stabbing of 44 year old man at the apparent instigation of his wife – undertaking to give evidence against coaccused – 7y/5y];
* *R v Stone* [2010] VSC 616 per Coghlan J [brutal attack with knife for no reason – history of drug and alcohol abuse – limited prospects of rehabilitation – 9y/7y].
* *R v Ludeman, Thomas & French* [2010] VSCA 333.
* *R v Mann* [2011] VSCA 189 [multiple stabbing including lacerations to throat & abdomen] – 8y.
* *R v Kavanagh* [2011] VSCA 234 [“Plunging a knife upwards into the abdomen of a guest in an attack provoked by nothing more than the victim’s desire to escape an argument is a crime heinous enough to warrant consideration of a stern penalty for all but the insane.” – 4y/2y – sentence moderated by Verdins’ principles].
* *R v Ian Robbins* [2012] VSCA 34 [appellant hit wife on head three times with claw hammer; guilty plea; no prior convictions; profound remorse; very good prospects of rehabiliation – 11y/7y].
* *R v Hale* [2012] VSC 386 per Lasry J [“severe and unprovoked domestic violence” inflicted on victim by 40 year old defacto; good prospects of rehabilitation – 8y/5y].
* *R v Nash* [2012] VSC 507 per Robson J [“kicking and punching a mature-aged woman”; guilty plea; offender suffering from impaired mental functioning and major depressive disorder causally related to offending conduct; disinhibiting effect of alcohol and drugs – 7y/5y3m].
* *R v O’Brien & Hudson* [2012] VSC 592 per King J [20 year old offenders conducted unprovoked, prolonged, vicious attack on an Asian student motivated partially by racial hatred – 10y6m/8y for offender with extensive prior criminal record; 4y6m/2y6m for offender with no prior record].
* *R v Wallis* [2013] VSC 721 per Curtain J [son stabbed mother with knife four times to chest, abdomen & forearm – judgment impaired due to intoxication, mixed personality disorder and PTSD – genuine remorse and insight – horrific, dysfunctional childhood and early life – 5y/3y].
* *R v Freeman* [2013] VSC 454 per King J [an attack in company with a co-accused which was described as “despicable, inhuman, degrading and sadistic” – 9y {+2y for other offences}/8y6m].
* *DPP v Hamdache* [2014] VSC 158 per Macaulay J [29 year old offender with IQ of 48 shot both father and mother of his partner after an argument – 1st & 5th limbs of *Verdins* enlivened – 7y6m/5y].
* *DPP v Tran* [2014] VSC 223 per Hollingworth J [38 year old offender attended house with friend disguised and intending to confront an occupant – when confronted stabbed unarmed unknown victim 3 times with knife – guilty plea with some remorse – 6y/4y].
* *R v Savage* [2019] VSC 111 per Lasry J [28 year old offender struck the victim with hammer in an unprovoked revenge attack – prior good character – immediate remorse – late plea guilty 5y/3y].
* *R v Pham* [2019] VSC 245 per Coghlan JA [36 year old offender shot victim multiple times with a sawn off .22 calibre rifle – late but utilitarian guilty plea – PTSD and major depressive disorder – 7y6m/5y].
* *DPP v Dalton* [2019] VSC 468 per Beale J [38 year old offender on CCO intentionally encouraged two other offenders to seriously injure the victim at a time and place when he was vulnerable; victim subsequently died; offender assisted in disposal of body – 30m/20m].
* *Anne Marie Hart v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 194 per Maxwell P & Weinberg JJA at [24]-[28];
* *Packard v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 56 [applicant stabbed wife 5 times – 7y/4y6m];
* *Thornton v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 325 [applicant struck fellow prisoner with frozen water bottle causing complex facial fractures and raped him – 6y + 7y6m [rape] – TES IMP 9y6m/6y9m];
* *R v Bonney* [2022] VSC 264 [32 year old schizophrenic offender for whom *Verdins* principles 1, 3, 4 & 5 and the *Bugmy* principles were engaged pleaded guilty at first opportunity of causing serious injury intentionally by using multiple weapons in a near fatal assault on a friend – 7y/5y];
* *R v Gorgulu* [2022] VSC 391 [accused acquitted of attempted murder of a friend whom he set alight but guilty of intentionally causing serious injury – offending was spontaneous and unplanned and accused was immediately contrite and apologetic – limited but relevant criminal history – 10y/7y – DPP appeal allowed & resentenced to 13y/10y: see *DPP v Gorgulu* [2023] VSCA 140];
* *Booker v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 150 [applicant had pleaded guilty to intentionally causing serious injury involving shooting the victim and being a prohibited person in possession of a firearm – TES IMP10y6m/8y not manifestly excessive];
* *DPP v Dastmozd* [2023] VSC 29 [41 year old accused was found guilty of intentionally causing serious injury & aggravated burglary and pleaded guilty to causing criminal damage to property; he had forced his way into his former wife’s home, looking for her male visitor and intentionally stabbed visitor multiple times with a knife he had brought with him, causing serious injuries – he also damaged visitor’s vehicle as he left – motivated by jealousy and anger – offended in presence of young children – no remorse – no prior convictions – mixed prospects of rehabilitation – prospect of deportation at end of sentence – sentenced to IMP 9y for intentionally causing serious injury as part of TES IMP10y2m/7y].
* *R v Douglas* [2023] VSC 663 [61 year old accused stabbed complainant multiple times with a knife to chest, back and face causing some life-threatening injuries — offence unplanned and DPP conceded accused may have believed need for self-defence, but not a reasonable response in circumstances as he perceived them — accused’s moral culpability reduced because judgment impaired by cognitive limitations, paranoia and methamphetamine use — accused’s awareness of impact of drug use offsets mitigation attributable to that factor — plea of guilty — remorse — criminal history mostly irrelevant, limited and dated — hardship of imprisonment given afflictions — reasonable prospects of rehabilitation — initially charged with attempted murder but, with concurrence of DPP, sentence indication given on intentionally causing serious injury — plea of guilty followed sentence indication — neuropsychological report obtained after sentence indication showed intellectual impairment and hardship of prison — IMP5y/2y9m].
* *Carbis v The King* [2023] VSCA 285 [appellant inflicted multiple deep stab wounds to the chest of the victim, intending to cause really serious injuries – IMP8y as part of a TES IMP10y6m/7y6m].
* *Dhal v The King* [2023] VSCA 289 [motivated by jealousy and revenge 31 year old accused stabbed 21 year old former partner with a boning knife causing horrific injuries – IMP11y – also stabbed a friend of himself and his former partner and pleaded guilty to recklessly causing injury – IMP2y6m of which 12m was cumulative – TES IMP12y/8y6m].
* *DPP v Deak* [2024] VSC 723 [60-year old accused physically assaulted father in context of recent death of mother and long history of abuse by father – guilty plea – unique circumstances – no premeditation – absence of weapons – *Bugmy* considerations – limited criminal history – positive prospects of rehabilitation – IMP4y/2y2m].
* *Pihlgren v The King* [2024] VSCA 47 [52 year old accused with a substantial criminal record pleaded guilty to one charge of intentionally causing serious injury in the context of an unprovoked knife attack on a stranger in public – sentenced as a serious violent offender and there were very few mitigating factors – IMP12y/8y – leave to appeal granted but appeal dismissed].
* *DPP v Zheng* [2025] VSC 76 [30 year old accused had a verbal and physical altercation with his wife at a house party – a male guest who assisted the wife was stabbed multiple times to the torso – the male victim would have died without urgent medical care – an offer to plead guilty to a lesser charge was not accepted with relation to the stabbing – lack of remorse – IMP9y/6y6m].
* *R v Liang* [2025] VSC 218 [59 year old accused (aged 61 at time of sentence) pleaded guilty to intentionally causing serious injury to his 39 year old estranged wife in the kitchen of the family home by stabbing her with a knife, without warning, multiple times to the face, upper body, arms and hands – after one of their children wrestled the knife from him, he resumed the attack with a meat cleaver – their children ultimately stopped the assault, allowing their mother to flee – her injuries included permanent blindness in the left eye, significant laceration of her tongue and notable facial and other scarring – offence committed in breach of a family violence intervention order and an adjourned undertaking for breaching a similar order – grave example of offence – accused handed himself in to police and made some admissions – genuine remorse – no prior convictions but previous instances of family violence (albeit not physical) – solid work history and support of adult son – good prospects of rehabilitation – accused’s severe depression, adjustment disorder, cognitive deficits and lack of English make imprisonment more burdensome – IMP10y/7y].

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### **B INTENTIONALLY CAUSING SERIOUS INJURY IN CIRCUMSTANCES OF GROSS VIOLENCE**

In *R v AH* [2016] VChC 1 the 16 year old accused pleaded guilty to **intentionally causing serious injury in circumstances of gross violence** after a charge of attempted murder was withdrawn at committal. She had stabbed an acquaintance in the neck. She was sentenced to YJC22m.

In *R v Gencev & Newman* [2019] VSC 502 both accused pleaded guilty to **intentionally causing serious injury in circumstances of gross violence**. D1 & D2 doused the victim in petrol and set him on fire, striking him with metal bars when he tried to escape. The victim suffered devastating injuries and would have died but for medical intervention. D1 & D2 intended to cause really serious injury. D1, whose childhood was blighted by profound deprivation [cf. *Bugmy v The Queen* (2013) 249 CLR 571], played an active but lesser role than D2. At [8] Beale J held that the “offence was an upper range example of the offence of causing serious injury in circumstances of gross violence”: see *R v Kilic* (2016) 259 CLR 256; *Nash v The Queen* (2013) 40 VR 134 at [10]. D1 was sentenced to IMP13y/9y, D2 to IMP 14y/10y. An appeal by D1 was allowed by majority and the sentence was reduced to IMP11y/7y6m: see *Gencev v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 188.

In *R v Thomas* [2019] VSC 680 the adult accused with an acquired brain injury was sentenced – as part of an overall sentence of IMP11y6m/9y – to IMP8y on a charge of **intentionally causing serious injury in circumstances of gross violence.** Leave to appeal was refused {see [2021] VSCA 97}.

In *R v Tiba* [2021] VSC 680 the 27 year old offender (aged 31 at date of sentence) with impaired cognitive functioning and PTSD was sentenced – as part of an overall sentence of IMP7y6m/5y – to IMP6y on a charge of **intentionally causing serious injury in circumstances of gross violence**. He had fired multiple shots at the victim from a car. It was pre-meditated offending causing life-threatening injuries and was categorised as a “high range example of the offence”.

In *R v Condon* [2022] VSC 425 the 24 year old offender was sentenced to IMP8y/5y on a charge of **intentionally causing serious injury in circumstances of gross violence**. In a prison assault in the company of a co-offender who punched, kicked and stomped on the victim, the offender stabbed the victim repeatedly and kicked him in the head, leading to a profound incapacitation of the victim. At [45]‑[53] Beale J summarised the mitigating circumstances in the offender’s favour as follows: (1) early guilty plea; (2) plea in a time of pandemic; (3) conditions in custody harsher because of the pandemic; (4) offender in solitary confinement because of the nature of the offence; (5) remorse; (6) youth; (7) an extremely disadvantaged childhood; (8) mental health issues. Beale J noted at [54] that although each case has to be decided on its own facts, he had derived some assistance from the following sentencing cases concerning the infliction of serious injury:

*“Chol v R* [2016] VSCA 252 – PG to ICSI – D punched and kicked V – TES of 4y9m with NPP of 3y3m; *Gencev v R* [2021] VSCA 188 – PG to ICSI (GV) – V set on fire by N who was in company with D – V also struck with metal poles by N and D when trying to escape – On appeal, D sentenced to 11y with NPP of 7y6m; *DPP v Hudgson* [2016] VSCA 254 – PNG to ICSI (GV) – D struck V with a hammer – On appeal, D sentenced to 5y with NPP of 4y; *Lukudo v R* [2019] VSCA 248 – PG to ICSI – D chased and stabbed V eleven times – D sentenced to 9y with NPP of 6y9m; *R v Nash* [2013] VSCA 172 – PG to ICSI – D kicked V in face – D sentenced to 7y; *DPP v Zullo* [2004] VSCA 153 – PG to ICSI – D kicked and punched V repeatedly – On appeal, D sentenced to 7y with NPP of 5y”

including the following cases where serious injury or injury was inflicted in prison:

“*DPP v Bennett & Teuira* [2020] VCC 737 – PG to ICSI (GV) – knife/shiv attack on Tony Mokbel by two offenders in their early 20s – Sentences of 9y9m; *Byrne v R* [2020] VSCA 289 – PG to ICI (sic) D, unprovoked, attacked V with his fists – 5y6m; *Hope & Pua v R* [2018] VSCA 230 – PG and PNG to ICSI et al – D1 and D2 punched and stomped on prison officer – D1 fell to be sentenced as a serious violent offender – D1 sentenced to TES of 10y and NPP of 7y; D2 sentenced to 8y with NPP of 5y.”

In *Van Kempten v The King* [2023] VSCA 26 the 37 year old applicant had been sentenced to IMP8y10m/5y10m on a plea of guilty to one charge of **intentionally causing serious injury in circumstances of gross violence**. The 45 year old victim and the applicant were strangers to each other. Both suffered from disabilities. The victim had been diagnosed with Fragile X Syndrome, intellectual disability and Tourette’s Syndrome. The applicant had been diagnosed with borderline personality disorder. The applicant had been observed by a witness to run towards the victim and punch him once to the back of the head. The victim fell to the ground. The applicant then kicked the victim multiple times and punched the victim directly to his face. The victim was, by this stage, immobile. The applicant then punched the victim multiple times to the head, using both fists, while the victim lay still on the ground. The witness then observed the applicant jumping on the victim’s head multiple times, describing each jump as higher than the last, while he victim was lying supine, his arms by his side. The victim’s injuries were life threatening. In refusing leave to appeal, Kennedy & Taylor JJA said at [28] & [53]:

[28] “The judge considered the factors outlined in the case of *Nash v The Queen* (2013) 40 VR 134, 137 [10] (Maxwell P); [2013] VSCA 172 which are relevant in assessing the objective gravity of this offence, including the applicant’s proven intent; the seriousness of the injury actually caused (encompassing the immediate and long-term consequences for the victim); the victim’s vulnerability; and the duration of the attack. The judge noted that the first two factors (intent and seriousness of the injury) particularly inform the seriousness of the offending. The judge found that the applicant’s assault was not attended by aggravating factors such as the use of a weapon or the assault taking place in company. However, the offence charged was one of causing serious injury intentionally in circumstances of gross violence, those circumstances being that the applicant continued with the assault whilst the victim was incapacitated.”

[53] “[T]he judge was prepared to accept (in the applicant’s favour) that he did have some mental ‘condition’ (by reason of the borderline personality disorder diagnosis) for the purposes of applying *Verdins*. We see no error in this approach. The circumstances under which an offender’s moral culpability may be reduced under s.10A(2)(c)(i) [of the *Sentencing Act 1991*] are also different, and appear to set a higher threshold, than is applicable under *Verdins*.”

In *Castillo (a pseudonym) v The King* [2023] VSCA 150 the 17 year old offender pleaded guilty to one charge of **intentionally causing serious injury in circumstances of gross violence** and one charge of armed robbery. He had arranged to meet the 16 year old victim, who was unknown to him, in order to purchase electronic cigarettes. At the meeting the applicant produced a large butcher’s knife. As the victim, still in possession of the vapes, attempted to flee, the applicant gave chase, unsheathed the knife and stabbed the victim in the back. The applicant kicked the victim to the upper body before stabbing him multiple times to the chest as he lay incapacitated on the ground. He also slashed the victim’s fingers, scalp and neck before fleeing the scene with the vapes. He was sentenced under the *Sentencing Act 1991* to IMP5y on the serious injury charge and IMP3y, 1y cumulative on the armed robbery charge. The TES was IMP6y/3y3m.

In *DPP v JA & Ors* [2023] VSC 531 a 16 year old offender MM had pleaded guilty to one charge of **intentionally causing serious injury in circumstances of gross violence** arising out of his involvement – as part of a large group of youths – in a frenzied attack with multiple knives on an unarmed youth [V], culminating in V’s death. The circumstances of the offending are detailed in **subsection 10.3.3.5B and section 11.1.3** above. Hollingworth J imposed a sentence of 3y6m detention in a youth justice centre.

See also *FD v DPP* [2025] VSC 519 summarised in **section 11.1.3** above.

In *Weatherburn v The King* [2023] VSCA 283 the appellant pleaded guilty to one count of intentionally causing serious injury in cricumstances of gross violence and was sentenced to IMP9y/6y6m. In dismissing his appeal the Court of Appeal (McLeish, Taylor & Kaye JJA) said at [57]-[61]:

[57] “In our view, however, the sentence imposed in this case, while certainly high, was within the range available to the sentencing judge. This was an unprovoked and brutal attack on a defenceless victim, which continued after he had become unconscious, as a result of which he sustained very severe injuries. It took place in a public street over an extended period, during which the appellant had ample opportunity to reconsider his actions and refrain from further violence. Instead, although he desisted in the attack on a number of occasions, he then resumed it with vigour.

[58] The cases relied upon by the parties on the question of current sentencing practice reveal that the offence of intentionally causing serious injury, with or without circumstances of gross violence, is one which can take such a variety of forms as to make identification of current sentencing practice especially difficult: see *Nash v The Queen* (2013) 40 VR 134, 145–6 [55]. The cases do not reveal that there is any specific factor, such as use of a weapon or assault in company, which were not features of the present case, which explains the sentences at the upper end of the range. Each case involves its own particular circumstances and generalisations of that kind are not necessarily helpful. It is worthy of note, however, that a sentence of 8y10m was upheld in *Van Kempen v The Queen* [2023] VSCA 26 upon which the respondent relied, for very similar offending which was somewhat less serious in its immediate effects but had significant ongoing impacts that would continue to require treatment and rehabilitation.

[59] In the present case, the duration of the attack stands out, continuing and resuming as it did, when it was plain that Mr Danilovic was unconscious. The assault was entirely gratuitous; Mr Danilovic had given the appellant no cause to attack him. Throughout the assault, he was utterly helpless. The absence of a weapon (apart from the phone) is of little moment when an offender is repeatedly kicking a senseless victim to the head. And although the initial attack seems to have been spontaneous, the fact that the assault was repeatedly renewed means that the appellant had the opportunity to reflect on what he was doing. As the sentencing judge noted, the case has the aggravating features highlighted in *Director of Public Prosecutions v Terrick* (2009) 24 VR 457, 476 [77], namely that the attack was unprovoked, it continued after the victim had become unconscious and the victim sustained very severe, albeit not catastrophic, injuries.

[60] The judge was right to say that general deterrence looms large in cases such as this. The Court warned in *Terrick* at [56]:

‘As has been repeatedly said, those who, when disinhibited by alcohol, engage in unbridled violence in public places must expect severe punishment: *Zullo* [2004] VSCA 154 [31]; *R v Stevenson* [2000] VSCA 161 [27]. ... The kind of random violence which occurred here makes citizens fearful of being on the streets, especially after dark. As the Court said recently in *Director of Public Prosecutions v Dowie* [2009] VSCA 154 [31], the members of our community are entitled to go about their ordinary activities without fear of exposure to physical attack.’: *Terrick* at [56]

[61] More particularly, we refer to what was said in *Wan v The Queen* [2019] VACS 81 at [38], a case involving an attack similar to the present case but which turned out to be fatal:

‘To stomp repeatedly on the head of a person lying defenceless on the ground is obviously unlawful and exceptionally dangerous to the victim’s life. … Violence of this kind, which is all too prevalent, is … likely to fall within the higher range of offences of manslaughter. … [T]he seriousness of such conduct … calls for stern denunciation and the imposition of a sentence which it may be hoped may deter others from similar conduct.’”

In *DPP v BC* [2024] VSC 716 the accused – who was 14 years old at the time of offending and 16 years old at the time of sentencing – had pleaded guilty to causing serious injury intentionally in circumstances of gross violence and common assault – the victims were his grandmother and sister – matters in mitigation were significant delay, the fact that the accused was suffering from high functioning autism spectrum disorder at the time of offending and the accused had no prior criminal history and no subsequent matters – sentenced pursuant to the CYFA to a 15m youth supervision order without conviction.

In *R v Uluivuya* [2025] VSC 29 the 55 year old accused who had no criminal history had pleaded guilty after a sentence indication to intentionally causing serious injury in circumstances of gross violence. He had falsely implicated the complainant in driving infringements in order to avoid demerit points. Upon learning this, the complainant made threats to the accused. Frightened and angered by the threats, the accused followed the complainant to his front door and struck him repeatedly to head with blunt side of small axe, causing serious injury. The complainant suffered multiple head injuries, requiring surgery. He has now largely recovered physically, but still suffers psychological sequalae. A serious example of the offence. The accused’s PTSD makes imprisonment more burdensome. Accused has a strong work history and excellent prospects of rehabilitation. After a sentence indication IMP6y/4y. But for plea of guilty IMP9y/6y.

### **C RECKLESSLY CAUSING SERIOUS INJURY IN CIRCUMSTANCES OF GROSS VIOLENCE**

In *DPP v Price* [2022] VSC 380 the 52 year old offender had pleaded guilty to recklessly causing serious injury in circumstances of gross violence, prohibited person carrying a firearm and possessing cartridge ammunition. Serious brain and facial injuries were suffered by the victim who had been shot in the face. The offender had had significant childhood deprivation and his diagnoses included PTSD, schizophrenia and severe intellectual disability. He had a long history of drug abuse, including methylamphetamine use. Verdins & Bugmy considerations applied. TES IMP6y6m/4y.

In *DPP v Mathiei & Ors* [2023] VSC 123 a group of youthful offenders had alighted from their cars and attacked victims who got out of their car. The principal offender Mathiei (aged 23 at the time of the offending) pleaded guilty to causing serious injury recklessly in circumstances of gross violence, and causing injury recklessly. It was an upper mid-range example of the 1st offence and a lower mid-range example of the 2nd offence. He had no prior or subsequent convictions and excellent prospects of rehabilitation. TES4y6m/4y (mandatory minimum non-parole period). The co-offenders Mangar (then aged 21), Akot (then aged 23) and Majok (then aged 21) were convicted by a jury of causing serious injury recklessly in circumstances of gross violence and were each sentenced to TES IMP359d. Unlike the principal offender there was no mandatory non-parole period because their liability for the main offence was based on intentional assistance. Beale J held at [142]-[143] that inordinate delay was a significant mitigating factor in sentencing.

### **11.2.24.2 Sentencing for recklessly causing serious injury**

In *DPP v Lovett* [2006] VSCA 5 at [54] Ormiston JA, with whom Buchanan & Ashley JJA agreed, drew a sharp distinction between sentencing for **intentionally causing serious injury** and for **recklessly causing serious injury**:

“Doubtless this was a very serious example of the commission of a serious offence, but it must be emphasised that the applicant was not found guilty of intentionally causing the particular injury or indeed of intentionally causing serious injury. The jury were prepared to be satisfied only that it was inflicted recklessly, so that much of the argument based on the devastating nature of the blow and its consequences must be looked at in that context. Of course, to satisfy the test of recklessness, the applicant must have had some comprehension that what he was doing was likely to cause serious injury to the victim, but the verdict also means that he did not directly have it in mind to cause the appalling injuries or the consequences from which David Herbert is now suffering.”

In *R v Winch* [2010] VSCA 141; (2010) 27 VR 658 a very drunk 26 year old Aboriginal offender had been sentenced to 5y imprisonment with a non-parole period of 3y on a plea of guilty to one count of recklessly causing serious injury as a result of “glassing” the victim in a hotel. On appeal the sentence was reduced to 2y9m with a non-parole period of 15m. On a direction by Maxwell P. the Crown collated and reviewed sentences imposed by the County Court in 276 cases of recklessly causing serious injury, 16 of which – summarized in an appendix – involved cases of ‘glassing’. Under the heading “GLASSING CASES – A SERIOUS EXAMPLE OF RCSI”, Maxwell P & Redlich JA said at [31]-[36]:

[31] “The work undertaken on current sentencing pursuant to Maxwell P’s direction led the Crown to submit on this appeal that current sentencing for glassing (as an instance of RCSI) should be incrementally uplifted. For reasons which follow, we agree with the Crown’s submission that the general run of sentences imposed for glassing as an instance of RCSI does not sufficiently reflect the fact that such conduct is inherently dangerous, and should not be treated as a less serious form of the offence of RCSI.

[32] ‘Glassing’ cases have a number of recurrent features. The typical glassing – of which the present appeal is an illustration – occurs in or near licensed premises. It is usually an act of alcohol-fuelled aggression, in disproportionate response to an actual or perceived slight. The typical offender is young and of generally good character, and is full of remorse after the event.

[33] The consequences of glassing are, almost invariably, very serious. Striking to the face or head with a bottle or glass carries a high – and obvious – risk of serious injury. The victim of a glassing almost always suffers severe lacerations; often has permanent facial scarring; and suffers physical and psychological damage which is typically long-term and often permanent.

[34] It is important to recall that RCSI is a very serious offence. It carries a maximum penalty of 15 years. An examination of the elements of the offence reveals why this is so. First, the offence involves the causing of serious injury to the victim. Secondly, the mental element of the offence – recklessness – means that the offender has consciously disregarded a known risk: *R v Towle* [2009] VSCA 280, [31] and the decisions there cited.

[35] The offence of RCSI is only committed if the offender foresaw the probability that his/her action would cause serious injury to the victim, and went ahead regardless of that probability: *DPP v Castro* [2006] VSCA 197, [13] (Coldrey AJA, with whom Callaway AP and Redlich JA agreed); *DPP v Fevaleaki* (2006) 165 A Crim R 524, [12] (Redlich JA); *R v Pota* [2007] VSCA 198, [19]. This is not mere carelessness, where the offender fails to appreciate the risk of injury. This is conscious disregard of a risk of serious injury which the offender knows to exist.

[36] As this Court pointed out in *Ashe v The Queen* [2010] VSCA 119, [27], the court’s assessment of the seriousness of a particular instance of RCSI will involve considering both the degree of probability that serious injury will result, and the degree of seriousness of the injury thus foreseen. What makes glassing a serious instance of RCSI – almost by definition – is the obvious dangerousness of a glass or bottle (whether broken or not) when used to strike a blow to the face or head. Hence, the offender who is convicted of this offence of recklessness is to be taken to have foreseen a high probability of serious injury.”

In *R v Ashdown* [2011] VSCA 408 the applicant (who was on a suspended sentence for a previous assault) had pleaded guilty to one count of recklessly causing serious injury to a former girlfriend. He had punched the victim to the face causing multiple facial fractures. A sentence of 5 years imprisonment was held on appeal to be outside the range of current sentencing practices for the offence of RCSI. The applicant was re-sentenced to 3y6m imprisonment. On the appeal, the Director of Public Prosecutions had mounted an extensive argument that current sentencing practices for RCSI were “inadequate across the board”. A very experienced Court of Appeal comprising Maxwell P, Ashley & Redlich JJA held that this was not an appropriate case for the expression of an opinion about the adequacy of sentencing for RCSI generally. This appeal was heard at the same time as that in *Winch’s Case*. At [46]-[47] Maxwell P said:

“What made it both possible and necessary to express a view about current sentencing practices in *Winch* was that glassing could be identified as a distinct sub-category of RCSI, characterised by the recurrent features to which the majority judgment referred. That made it possible both to identify the state of current sentencing, based on the cases which the Crown had identified, and to express a view about its adequacy. A similar exercise might well be possible with another sub-category, such as RCSI involving the use of a weapon.”

There are four very detailed appendices to this judgment. Appendix A contains a selection of 27 RCSI cases from Crown compilation 2007-2009. Appendix B contains a list of RSCI sentence appeals from 2005-2010. Appendix C contains a lengthy list of RCSI knife case sentences. Appendix D contains a lengthy list of RCSI non-weapon case sentences.

In *DPP v Aslan* [2010] VSC 518 Whelan J applied *Winch’s Case* in sentencing a 28 year old offender who had pleaded guilty to one charge of recklessly causing serious injury – a “glassing” in a restaurant – to 2y6m imprisonment with non-parole period 12m.

In *R v Gerrard* [2011] VSCA 200 the Court of Appeal applied *Winch’s Case* in sentencing a 37 year old offender who had entered an early guilty plea to one charge of intentionally causing serious injury arising from a “glassing” in a hotel to 3y imprisonment wholly suspended for 3y. The suspension of the sentence arose from “a very exceptional combination of circumstances”, including that the offence was provoked by a prior violent assault and family hardship constituted by the offender’s defacto partner being profoundly deaf and dependent on him and his young son suffering from autism.

In *R v Anyang (Sentence)* [2011] VSC 263 the accused pleaded guilty to one count of recklessly causing serious injury. He had stabbed a man walking with the accused’s wife on a busy public road in the daytime. The accused was 23 years old at the time and his motivation was jealousy. Accepting submissions of both counsel that the “glassing” cases were relevant, Whelan J sentenced the accused to IMP 3y/2y.

In *DPP v Batich* [2012] VSC 524, the accused – who was a first offender aged 18 at the time of the offence – had pleaded guilty in the County Court to one count of recklessly causing serious injury by “glassing” the complainant in the face during an altercation at a nightclub. Describing the offence as involving “some aspect of what would have been excessive self-defence”, Judge Chettle exercised a discretion to transfer the proceedi12y/8yng for summary hearing and determination in the Magistrates’ Court pursuant to ss.29 & 168 of the *Criminal Procedure Act*, saying *inter alia* at [41]: “The court below has adequate power to impose a gaol term if it seeks to do so…As a matter of fairness and justice I think it is artificial that he should be dealt with in this court [where a suspended sentence of imprisonment was barred by law] and denied the opportunity of a sentencing disposition that would be open to him in the Magistrates’ Court”. His Honour had had the accused assessed for suitability for detention in an adult YJC. The report had been positive but had included the observation that the accused “would benefit from being diverted away from the penal system in its entirety and [that his] rehabilitation would be better served in a community setting. Mr Batich presents as a young man who is naïve about the criminal justice system, which would make him susceptible to undesirable influences in an adult custodial environment and at risk of becoming impressionable to older more sophisticated offenders.” The DPP made an application to the Supreme Court for certiorari or mandamus to quash the transfer decision of Judge Chettle. After reviewing at [51]-[57] applicable sentencing principles – including current sentencing practices – for ‘glassing’ offences, Bell J dismissed the application for judicial review, holding at [69]:

“Taking into account that the Magistrates’ Court could not impose a sentence of imprisonment of greater than two years, it was open to his Honour to decide that that court could impose an appropriate sentence in the circumstances. In reaching that conclusion, it was relevant for his Honour to take into account that the Magistrates’ Court could suspend a sentence of imprisonment, even though the County Court could not do so. He did not err in law on the face of the record by misinterpreting the transfer provision, exercise the transfer discretion for the improper purpose of circumventing the prohibition on the County Court suspending a sentence of imprisonment, take into account irrelevant considerations or fail to exercise the jurisdiction of that court.”

In *Ejupi v The Queen* [2014] VSCA 2 at [37] Priest JA, with whom Coghlan JA agreed, said:

“Axiomatically, every case must depend on its own particular facts, and every sentence must be the product of the features (both aggravating and mitigating) peculiar to that case. When regard is had to current sentencing practises for the offence of recklessly causing serious injury perpetrated by the use of a knife and resulting in life-threatening injuries, in my opinion the sentence of four and a half years’ imprisonment here fixed for the offence cannot be said to be outside the range of those properly open, notwithstanding the appellant’s plea of guilty (and other mitigating features): see *Winch v The Queen* (2010) 27 VR 658; *Ashdown v R* (2011) 219 A Crim R 454.

In *DPP v Russell* (2014) 44 VR 471; [2014] VSCA 308 the respondent, a trained martial arts fighter, had been sentenced to a total effective sentence of IMP15m/8m having pleaded guilty to charges of recklessly causing serious injury, recklessly causing injury and affray. On appeal by DPP the sentence was increased to IMP3y/1y9m. At [1]-[4] Maxwell P and Weinberg & Santamaria JJA said:

“Random street violence is a scourge on our society. Typically, the violence is brief and unpremeditated but it has profound and enduring consequences. Innocent people are killed or seriously injured; their families are devastated; their communities disrupted. And the outburst of violence is ruinous for the offender, too. Imprisonment with all its destructive consequences is virtually inevitable, as is the shame and embarrassment felt by the offender’s family.

The present case had all of these characteristics. The respondent (‘Russell’) was a participant in random street violence on New Year’s Eve 2012. The consequences were devastating for all concerned. One young man died; another was seriously injured; bystanders were terrified; the victims’ families engulfed by sorrow. The person who delivered the fatal punch pleaded guilty to manslaughter and was sentenced to nine years and three months’ imprisonment, with a minimum of six years: *DPP v Closter* [2014] VSC 484. Russell, who seriously injured one young man and injured another, was sentenced to 15 months’ imprisonment, with a minimum of eight months.

The Director of Public Prosecutions has appealed against Russell’s sentence on the ground of manifest inadequacy. For reasons which follow, we would allow the appeal. In our view, a substantially higher sentence was called for, given the gravity of the offending and the importance of both general and specific deterrence. As to specific deterrence, Russell had a prior conviction for recklessly causing injury. The sentence imposed for that offence evidently did not deter him from engaging in this similar, but more serious, offending.

Given the prevalence of street violence, general deterrence was a particularly important consideration in a case such as this.”

In *DPP v McKay* [2018] VSCA 292 on charges of recklessly cause serious injury [IMP18m], assault with a weapon [IMP 9m, 2m CUM] and possessing a controlled weapon without excuse [IMP 3m] the trial judge had imposed a TES of IMP20m/10m. Allowing the DPP appeal, the Court of Appeal increased the sentence on recklessly cause serious injury to IMP4y6m and fixed a TES of IMP4y8m/ 2y9m. Beach, Hargrave JJA and Almond AJA said at [13] & [24]:

[13] “During the plea hearing the sentencing judge characterised the gravity of the offence as ‘objectively very high’. This is undoubtedly so. Recklessly causing serious injury using a knife is an inherently grave offence. In combination with alcohol the consequences can be life-threatening,2 as was the case here.”

[24] “The appellant submits that the sentence imposed represents precisely 10 per cent of the maximum penalty, which reflects a clear incongruity between the sentencing judge’s characterisation of the offending and the sentence imposed. We agree. Moreover, we note that this Court has recently upheld sentences imposed in several recklessly cause serious injury cases: *Pang v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 5 (IMP4y/2y); *Al Wahame v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 4 (IMP6y/4y6m); *Jojic v The Queen* [2017] VSCA 77 (IMP4y/2y9m). Whilst accepting that every case depends on its own facts and sentences are to be individually tailored, the very substantial difference between the sentences imposed in these cases and the sentence imposed on the respondent is plain.”

In *Hamid v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 5 the 28 year old applicant had ambushed the victim and struck him repeatedly to the head and neck with a bladed knuckleduster causing life-threatening injuries and permanent scarring. There was an element of vigilantism in the applicant’s offending, his text messages indicating that he attacked the victim because he perceived that the victim had dishonoured his sister and he wanted to punish the victim by permanently scarring him. He had prior convictions for intentionally causing serious injury using a knife and for affray. The Court of Appeal granted leave to appeal but dismissed his appeal against a sentence of IMP10y/7y (the 2nd highest ever imposed in Victoria for the offence), holding that it was not manifestly excessive.

In *DPP v Betrayhani* [2019] VSCA 150 B had been found guilty of recklessly causing serious injury and sentenced to IMP4y/3y. The victim had been “king hit” with a single punch to the head causing him to fall backwards and hit his head on the footpath which caused catastrophic injuries including a permanent brain injury. Dismissing B’s appeal against convinction the Court of Appeal held that it was well open to the jury to infer from the circumstances that at the time he struck the victim B realized that serious injury would be the probable result. However the Court allowed a Crown appeal against sentence, holding at [6] that the attack was “a very serious instance of the offence of recklessly causing serious injury” and that the sentence was manifestly inadequate. The attack was without provocation, B had no remorse and had a criminal record of similar offences. After referring to the cases of *Winch v The Queen* (2010) 27 VR 658, *DPP v Russell* (2014) 44 VR 471, 473; [2014] VSCA 308 & *Al Wahame v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 4, the Court resentenced B to IMP7y/5y.

In *Atem v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 35 the 19 year old offender – 18 years old at the time of the offending – had received an aggregate sentence of IMP5y/3y on a charge of recklessly causing serious injury, a charge of reckless conduct endangering life and 2 charges of recklessly causing injury: see *DPP v Atem* [2019] VCC 1177. All the charges arose from an incident that took place in and around the Gasometer Hotel in Collingwood in the early hours of 02/09/2018 and principally relate to the offender’s erratic and dangerous use of a car in a manner that caused injuries to pedestrian onlookers. In refusing leave to appeal, the Court of Appeal noted the seriousness of the offences, that they were committed while he was subject to a youth supervision order and that he had prior violent offending. They agreed with the sentencing judge that the offender’s prospects of rehabilitation were guarded and said at [67] that “the cautious nature of the assessment must mean that supporting his prospects of rehabilitation cannot be the overriding goal of any sentence imposed.” Finally, applying *DPP v Neethling* (2009) 22 VR 466, *Azzopardi v The Queen* (2011) 35 VR 43 and *Harrison v The Queen* (2015) 49 VR 619, the Court of Appeal said at [61] & [63]:

“With respect to Atem’s youth, it has been accepted in the authorities that in sentencing a young offender, the offender’s youth is an important, and a principal, consideration, with the consequence that rehabilitation is usually a more important consideration than general deterrence: *Eade v The Queen* (2012) 35 VR 526, 534–5 [40]–[44]. Nevertheless, there will be cases in which the need for deterrence and denunciation will require greater emphasis…In our view, the very serious nature of Atem’s offending has the consequence that his youth will not provide the strong mitigating effect he seeks. His youth and immaturity must, to some degree, be subordinate to the other sentencing considerations the judge identified, including denunciation, general deterrence and protection of the community.”

Some general considerations relevant to sentencing for the offence of **recklessly causing serious injury** are to be found in the cases of:

* *R v Paul Jedson* [2004] VSC 345 {this was a case in which a 25 year old man was given a 3 year suspended sentence of imprisonment for recklessly causing serious injury to his parents when, at age 16, he struck them in the head with an iron bar when they were in bed; one relevant factor was the parents' complete forgiveness of their son}. Teague J said at [12]:

“I must take account of the great seriousness of your crimes and of the consequences of those crimes. There was a prolonged attack on vulnerable people in their beds. Added to that is the aggravation of the situation by your fleeing from Victoria. Before I embarked on the hearing of the plea I carefully studied the cases that have been referred to by [counsel] during the plea. I refer to cases including *Shaw, Nutter, MFP*, *Cameron*, *Cunliffe*, *Scurrah* and *White*. Some matters can only have a significant bearing on the ultimate sentence in exceptional cases. One such matter is the views of the victims. On the one hand, this is not a private prosecution. The State is prosecuting in the interests of the whole community. On the other hand, it is rare that victims who have been so badly and so humiliatingly injured are prepared to be as forgiving as are your parents. It is a powerful factor encouraging relative leniency.”

* *R v Close* [2004] VSCA 188 {this was a case where the appellant had been grossly provoked by the victim and had retaliated causing serious brain damage to the victim}. The appellant's counsel had placed reliance on *Economedes* (1990) 58 A Crim R 466 at 469 and on the observations of Crockett & Hampel JJ in *R v Boxtel* [1994] 2 VR 98 at 103 to the effect that it is of great importance not to allow the effects of an unintended catastrophe to 'swamp' all other considerations. Charles JA, with whom Winneke P agreed, said at [12]:

"I would accept at once that the appellant was not to be sentenced as someone who intended the degree and nature of the injuries suffered by the victim. But there can be no doubt that the consequences to a victim are relevant sentencing considerations. *Mallinder* (1986) 23 A Crim R 179 at 180; *Economedes* at 468."

* *R v Phuoc Van Bui* [2005] VSC 83 at [39]-[45] {this was a case where a 25 year old offender went to the aid of friend under serious attack; he fired three shots, two of which caused serious injury; he was on parole at the time; he pleaded guilty and was sentenced to 4½ years’ imprisonment}.
* *DPP v Coley* [2007] VCSA 91 – approved and applied by Maxwell P (with whom Ashley JA & Lasry AJA agreed) in *R v Hendy* [2008] VSCA 231 at [29]-[30] – where Kellam AJA said at [48]:

“The use of knives, whether in circumstances of recklessness or otherwise, as a means of resolving disputes is a matter of great concern to the community and to the courts and must be deterred.”

* *DPP v Nikolic* [2008] VSCA 226 was a case in which the learned sentencing judge had noted a number of aggravating features of the offence: (1) it was a very serious offence involving a frenzied attack; (2) it occurred in a public place; (3) there was no provocation; (4) the victim suffered and continues to suffer very serious injury. In allowing a Director’s appeal and replacing a 12 months intensive corrections order with a sentence of 12 months imprisonment with a non-parole period of 6 months Warren CJ (with whom Dodds-Streeton JJA agreed) said at [28]:

“It must be said that unprovoked assaults in public places by young men affected by alcohol plague the community. They result in dreadful injuries and, tragically on occasion, death. In this case the respondent may well have faced a far graver charge if the injuries to the victim had played out only ever so slightly differently.”

* *R v Vandenberg* [2009] VSCA 9 where the Court of Appeal dismissed an appeal against a sentence of 3y6m on a charge of recklessly causing serious injury. At [26]-[27] Nettle JA (with whom Dodds-Streeton JJA agreed) doubted the utility of sentencing statistics:

“Counsel for the appellant argued that the sentence of three years and six months' imprisonment imposed on the count of recklessly causing serious injury undervalued the reckless nature of the offending and the background to it. In a carefully crafted submission, he argued that in view of the Sentencing Snapshot [Sentencing Advisory Council, Snapshot No. 40: Sentencing trends for causing serious injury recklessly in the higher courts of Victoria, 2002-03 to 2006-07] which indicates that the most common length of actual imprisonment imposed for the offence of recklessly causing serious injury is one year imprisonment, a sentence of three years and six months in the circumstances of this case was plainly beyond the range.

I reject that submission. Statistical reference to the most common length of actual sentence imposed is seldom much of assistance, and in this case I think largely irrelevant. To state the obvious, each case depends upon its own facts and circumstances and, critically in a case of this kind, upon the effects on the victim of the offence. The facts and circumstances of this case and the effect of the offence on the victim in my view mark this out as a serious instance of recklessly causing serious injury requiring condign punishment. The recent decisions of this Court in *Director of Public Prosecutions v Massey* [2008] VSCA 254, in which an individual sentence of three years and six months' imprisonment was imposed on a count of recklessly causing serious injury, and *R v Davidson and Konestabo* [2008] VSCA 188, in which an individual sentence of six years' imprisonment was imposed, are arguably more relevant comparators.”

* *R v Vance* [2008] VSC 468{a case where a female accused, who had stabbed her partner once in the back while intoxicated and taking Zoloft, had called an ambulance and had showed immediate remorse was sentenced to 2½ imprisonment wholly suspended for 2½ years}.
* *R v Marino* [2011] VSCA 133 {a case where a 24 year old respondent who had “king-hit” a victim outside his home in a dispute about a drug debt had pleaded guilty – amongst other charges from other incidents – to one count of recklessly causing serious injury; the respondent had punched the victim to the face with his fist whereupon the victim fell back and struck his head on a concrete driveway causing a severe head injury resulting in a severe acquired brain injury and epilepsy; a DPP appeal against a sentence of IMP 5y was dismissed.}
* *McKeon-Muller v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 199 {a case where the 25 year old appellant had struck the victim in the face with a rock or brick – IMP6m with 24m CCO not manifestly excessive.}
* *Moresco v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 336 {a case where the offender aged 19 at the time of the offence had been party to the assault and partial blinding of the 27 year old victim after a dispute at a night club – nil priors – YJC3y.}
* *R v Donnelly* [2019] VSC 777 | *Donnelly v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 109 {a case where the 25 year old very intellectually disabled offender stabbed the victim in the abdomen causing life-threatening injuries – IMP5y9m/3y6m}.
* *Mazzonetto v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 153 {a case where the year old offender with *Bugmy* & *Verdins* considerations had thrown a single punch causing traumatic brain injury within days of being placed on a CCO for similar offending – IMP6y9m/4y3m reduced to IMP6y/4y.}
* *DPP v Almatrah* [2023] VSC 361 {a case where the 29 year old offender with no relevant prior offending had set up the victim, a random member of a rival motorcycle gang, in return for $5,000 by using a fake Instagram account to lure the victim to the scene – the victim was shot 4 times to the head and torso and was seriously injured – offender was aware that the victim would probably be seriously injured but was not aware that firearms would be used – late plea of guilty following a sentence indication – factual basis for plea changed by agreement between sentence indication and plea – prior good character and very good prospects of rehabilitation – high moral culpability – IMP20m/10m}.

See also *R v Ziday* [2006] VSCA 163; *R v Kumar* [2006] VSCA 182 at [66]; *R v Asim Selcuk* [2006] VSC 465; *R v Stuttard* [2006] VSCA 112*; DPP v Castro* [2006] VSCA 197; *R v Campbell Ross* [2007] VSCA 213 at [23] & [26]; *R v Pota* [2007] VSCA 198; *DPP v Toumngeun* [2008] VSCA 91 and especially the list of cases and sentencing statistics cited at [20]-[21]; *R v Earl* [2008] VSCA 162; *R v Wills* [2010] VSCA 235; *DPP v Giannoukas* [2011] VSCA 296; *R v Sindoni* [2012] VSC 238; *DPP v Leys & Leys* [2012] VSCA 304; *R v Kovacs* [2012] VSC 647; *R v El Ali* [2013] VSC 172; *Mogoai & Another v The Queen* [2014] VSCA 219 at [13]; *DPP v McKinnin* [2019] VSCA 114; *DPP v Gilmour* [2019] VSC 766; *Worboyes v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 169; *R v Chee* [2021] VSC 355; *Singh v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 345; *DPP v McNamara* [2021] VSC 845; *Muller v The King* [2022] VSCA 193; *R v Couch* [2022] VSC 717; *DPP v Myko* [2023] VSC 369; *Cole v The King* [2023] VSCA 172; *Russo v The King* [2024] VSCA 55 at [33]-[39] & [45]-[47]; *Findlay v The King* [2024] VSCA 191 at [90]-[92]; *Dahmes v The King* [2025] VSCA 213.

### **11.2.24.3 Sentencing for negligently causing serious injury**

In *R v Roach* [2005] VSCA 162 at [11], in the course of dismissing an appeal by a 46 year old woman, *inter alia* against sentences of 3 years imprisonment & 12 months imprisonment on two counts of **negligently causing serious injury**, Callaway JA, with whom Ormiston & Charles JJA agreed, said:

“Unfortunately, as has often been observed, the maximum penalty for negligently causing serious injury is out of kilter with the maximum penalties for related offences. The only response open to the courts, in cases of such gravity as the present, is to impose a term of imprisonment as close to the maximum as other principles of sentencing will allow.”

See also *R v Brown* [2003] VSCA 153 at [9]; *R v Fackovec* [2007] VSCA 93 at [37]; *DPP v Albert* [2010] VSCA 75; *Jakob Sutic v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 246.

In *R v Shi Mok* [2011] VSCA 247 the appellant (who was 18 at the time of the offence) had been found guilty of negligently causing serious injury to his infant son by placing him in a hot bath and had been sentenced to IMP 3y/20m. The Court of Appeal allowed an appeal against sentence and re‑sentenced him to 2y of which all but 9m was suspended. At [4]-[5] Nettle JA said:

“First, despite the very serious consequences of the offence, I place the objective gravity of the offending down in the low to medium range. By definition, it involved a degree of negligence worthy of criminal punishment. But according to the jury’s verdict, and my assessment of the facts, it was negligence constituted of momentary inattention, as opposed to the kind of sustained, near to recklessness negligence often associated with offences of negligently causing serious injury in motor accidents. It was with a view to the latter, not the former, that the maximum penalty for negligently causing serious injury was increased from five to 10 years’ imprisonment.

Secondly, I place the appellant’s moral culpability towards the lower end of the scale. Certainly, he is responsible for what occurred and he should not have allowed it to happen. But according to the jury’s verdict, and my assessment of the facts, his negligence was the result of nothing more egregious than immaturity, inexperience and inattention. That he did not own up to the error as quickly as he should have does not alter that fact. Given his age and immaturity, one can readily understand that he might have hoped and perhaps even believed that the problem would go away without medical intervention. More importantly, there was no thought here of hurting the child or disregarding its welfare. The appellant’s intention was to care for the child by bathing it. The only problem was that he went about it negligently. His degree of moral culpability thus stands in contrast to the higher degree of moral culpability involved in the so-called baby shaking cases of negligently causing injury.”

In *Fox v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 3 the applicant had pleaded guilty to negligently causing serious injury and was sentenced to IMP3y9m. The circumstances were unusual. The applicant had reversed while the victim was leaning into the car and then drove the vehicle forward over the victim’s leg. The victim sustained a fractured femur and ankle. Leave to appeal was refused. On the issue of ‘serious injury’ Maxwell P & Beach JA said at [25]:

“[T]he applicant, by his plea of guilty accepted that the injuries were ‘substantial and protracted’, within the definition of ‘serious injury’ in s 15 of the *Crimes Act 1958*. In our view, a fractured femur — which required the insertion of a rod and pins to secure it — is properly described as a ‘very serious’ injury. The judge was also right to have regard to what was said in *Harrison* (2015) 49 VR 619, 635 [68]; [2015] VSCA 349, as follows:

‘We would wish, in passing, to advise against the common practice of drawing detailed distinctions between the precise injuries suffered in different cases. Sentencing judges are often asked to compare injuries which are plainly extremely serious and enduring with other very serious and enduring injuries, and place them in some hierarchy of severity.’”

In *Cook v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 293 the Court of Appeal dismissed an appeal against a sentence of IMP5y3m/3y8m imposed on a 30 year old driver on a charge of negligently causing serious injury. At [40]-[42] Priest & T Forrest JJA said:

“The objective gravity of this offending is, in our view, very high. The appellant drank for hours. He made the conscious decision to drive, and then to drive with an appalling disregard for the safety of other road users. He drove while affected by alcohol (with a blood alcohol content of 0.107) and at a ferocious speed (in the range of 170 kilometres per hour) in Springvale Road — a busy, multi-lane metropolitan road. The consequence of this gross negligence has been life-changing for Mr Burhan, who was profoundly injured and lucky to survive.

In our view, the judge, in her impeccable sentencing reasons, simply could not overlook or diminish the objective gravity of this offending, and neither can we. That is not to say that her Honour ignored the powerful mitigating factors. It is clear from her reasons for sentence that she gave each such factor careful attention. Ultimately, however, in this and in similar cases of high objective gravity, less weight will be accorded to personal mitigating factors than would otherwise be the case: see, eg, *Harrison* (2015) 49 VR 619, 638 [85]–[86] (Maxwell P, Redlich and Tate JJA).

This Court has observed that this offence and the similar offence of culpable driving causing death (which differs only in consequence) are frequently committed by young offenders and/or offenders of previous good character, many of whom have excellent prospects of full rehabilitation: *Harrison* at [115]. The prevalence and seriousness of this type of offending requires general deterrence and denunciation to assume more significance in the sentencing exercise, and, accordingly, less significance must be placed upon mitigating factors such as youth, previous good character and rehabilitation prospects: *Harrison* at [116].”

See also *R v Gorladenchearau* [2011] VSCA 432; *DPP v Miller* [2012] VSCA 265 at [31]-[48]; *DPP v Walsh* [2018] VSCA 334; *Abbott v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 149; *Byast v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 344; *Mashayamombe v The King* [2023] VSCA 60; *Kellway (a pseudonym) v The King*; *Donald (a pseudonym) v The King* [2023] VSCA 109; *Hickey v The King* [2024] VSCA 138; *Di Gregorio v The King* [2025] VSCA 103.

### **11.2.24.4 Sentencing for intentionally / recklessly causing injury**

In *R v Saltalamacchia* [2010] VSCA 83 the appellant, who had no prior convictions, pleaded guilty to offences involving the invasion of his ex girlfriend’s home and was sentenced as follows: Aggravated burglary-2 years; threat to kill-2 years; recklessly cause injury-12 months; criminal damage-8 months. With a measure of cumulation, a total effective sentence of 3 years was produced. A non-parole period of 18 months was imposed. On appeal the individual sentences were approved and the same cumulation applied but all but a little over 1 year of the sentence was suspended for a period of 3 years. At [24] Maxwell P said:

“I respectfully agree with what her Honour said in sentencing the appellant, about the need for a person to be free to bring a relationship to an end without the other party to the relationship reacting violently:

‘People in Ms Hogan’s position must be allowed to freely exercise their right to terminate a relationship, to have their wishes respected even if they do not accord with the wishes of the other party to the relationship, even if the other party feels hard done by. People in Ms Hogan’s circumstances must be able and feel free to terminate a relationship without fear of violence, actual or threatened, without violation of their sense of safety in their homes and without fear of suffering damage to or destruction of their property. Where a person, even if they feel they are a jilted lover, and even if they feel they have a justifiable sense of grievance over the circumstances in which the relationship came to an end, resorts to violence, threats and wanton destruction of property directed towards the person they were in a relationship with, they must understand that if they do so, they are committing serious criminal acts and will suffer punishment at the hands of the criminal justice system. They must also accept that it is their behaviour, not that of the other party, which has put them in a position where they face criminal charges and that they must not consider that they can pressure or threaten their victims into withdrawing the charges. If they do what you have done, they must understand that such conduct too is criminal and they will be punished for it. A failed relationship, or a prospect of facing criminal sanctions for the manner in which you conducted yourself with your former girlfriend and her friends is no justification for using threats, violence and causing wanton damage to property to attempt to deter her from proceeding or in retaliation for her proceeding with being a witness in criminal proceedings. They were of course, not her proceedings but proceedings taken by the police as a result of the complaints made by her and others.’”

In *Rivera v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 5 the Court of Appeal approved a sentence of IMP5y11m/4y imposed on the applicant – who had a substantial criminal history – on a charge of intentionally causing injury to an expartner. At [34]-[40] Beach & Weinberg JJA said:

[34] “Ultimately, the issue is whether the judge sentenced the applicant for an offence other than the one for which he fell to be sentenced or relied upon, as an aggravating matter, a circumstance which could have formed the basis of a distinct (and in this case more serious) charge: Cf *De Simoni* (1981) 147 CLR 383, 389. In our view, the judge made no such error. Four points may be made.

[35] First, we observe that no objection was taken on the plea hearing to the admission of Dr Schreiber’s opinion concerning the complainant’s need for a blood transfusion to avoid a potentially fatal outcome. Nor was any issue taken on the plea by the applicant’s plea counsel to the prosecutor’s use of the word ‘life-threatening’.

[36] Secondly, evidence suggestive of a serious injury in a case involving an offence involving injury simpliciter is not necessarily inadmissible. Such evidence may be admissible in order to properly delimit the nature and extent of the injury which is the subject of the relevant offence of causing injury.

[37] Thirdly, the offence to which the applicant pleaded guilty was one of intentionally causing injury. While the injury actually caused may have satisfied the definition of ‘serious injury’ in the *Crimes Act*, there is no suggestion that the judge sentenced the applicant on the basis that he *intentionally* caused a serious injury. The extent of the injury actually caused by an offender may be discrete from the extent of the injury that the offender intended to cause. In the present case, while it might be thought that the applicant caused the complainant to suffer a serious injury and that he undoubtedly caused an injury, there was no suggestion he intended to cause a serious injury…

[40] Fourthly, having noted at the commencement of her reasons that the applicant had pleaded guilty to a charge of intentionally causing injury, the judge was at pains later to say that she was now required to sentence him for ‘a most serious example of intentionally causing injury’. Contrary to the applicant’s submissions, the judge made no error of the kind identified by the High Court in *De Simoni.*

In dismissing an appeal in *Harvey v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 84, Beach, Niall & Whelan JJA said of a sentence of IMP5y6m on a charge of intentionally causing injury:

[64] “There can be no doubt that the [sentence] was high. That conclusion is reinforced once the sentence is compared to sentences imposed in the vast majority of cases concerned with that offence. Sentences of 5 years or more on a guilty plea are rare and have generally been reserved for those instances where the injury is at the gravest end of the spectrum and the offender has a violent history. {There followed a list of 8 cases referred to by the judge as being potentially comparable and 3 others added by the Court of Appeal.} …

[66] Ultimately, given the objective seriousness of the offending, we are not persuaded that the sentence was manisfestly excessive. The need to address specific and general deterrence and denunciation adequately called for a lengthy prison term and left open a sentence of the length ordered by the judge.”

In *Gommers v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 258 the 21 year old offender (22 at the date of sentencing) received a sentence of IMP 3y on a charge of intentionally cause injury in circumstances in which the applicant shot the victim in the upper left thigh with a sawn-off .22 calibre rifle in the context of a demand for money that was allegedly owed to him. In refusing leave to appeal, Priest & Kaye JJA held at [47] that the sentence was “proportionate to the seriousness of the applicant’s offending”, saying at [44]:

“In our view, the seriousness of the offence of intentionally causing injury is not only to be gauged by the injuries caused, but by the manner of their infliction. See *Phillips v The Queen* [2017] VSCA 313, [54] (Osborn and Priest JJA); *DPP v Milson* [2019] VSCA 55, [61] (Priest and Weinberg JJA); *Shau v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 252 (Priest JA). The applicant’s was a nasty and cruel act of gratuitous violence, which resulted in significant injury requiring surgical intervention. Other than youth, there was little that mitigated the shooting itself. It could not be said, for example, that — apart from failing to pay the full amount owed — the victim had offered the applicant any provocation [see, eg, *R v Okutgen* (1982) 8 A Crim R 262, 264 (Starke J)] or had posed a threat to him.”

In *Baroch v The Queen; Ater v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 90 the Court of Appeal said at [3]-[5]:

“On the charge of intentionally causing injury, Baroch was sentenced to 3 years and 9 months’ imprisonment, while Ater was sentenced to 3 years and 3 months’ imprisonment. Baroch contends that his sentence was manifestly excessive and, in the alternative, that there was no reasonable basis for the differential of 6 months between himself and Ater. Ater likewise advances a ground of manifest excess but her principal contention is that the judge failed to take into account the inevitable cancellation of her visa and the increased burden of imprisonment resulting from her facing the prospect of deportation.

For reasons which follow, we would refuse Baroch’s application for leave to appeal. The charges of intentionally cause injury arose from a very violent attack on a person who had come to offer assistance to the applicants, an attack which rendered him unconscious. In every relevant respect, this offending was at the high end of the scale of objective gravity. The sentence of 3 years and 9 months imposed on Baroch was moderate in the circumstances, reflecting the giving of full weight to the mitigating factors on which he was able to rely.

In the case of Ater, the Crown conceded that the judge had overlooked the question of visa cancellation and the impact on her of facing the prospect of deportation. As explained below, this occurred as a result of the way that issue was addressed before her Honour. On that ground alone, Ater’s application will be granted, and her sentence reduced to a limited extent [to IMP 3y].”

In *DPP v Miller (Sentence)* [2022] VSC 775 the principal offender had committed the offence of intentionally causing injury by stabbing the victim three times with a knife. The accused – who was 40 years old and had a long-standing acquired brain injury – was acquitted of manslaughter but convicted of the alternative charge of assistanting the principal offender to avoid apprehension for the offence of intentionally causing injury by taking and concealing the knife. In imposing a sentence of IMP 18m, Kaye JA noted that the accused had made an early offer to plead guilty to that offence and also noted “the onerous circumstances in which you have served the last two years while you were on remand”.

In *DPP v Silivaii* [2023] VSCA 19 the respondent had pleaded guilty in the County Court to one charge of causing injury recklessly, one summary charge of assaulting an emergency worker on duty and one summary charge of resisting an emergency worker on duty. The victim of each of the charges was an emergency worker on duty. The sentencing judge had sentenced the respondent to IMP 7d on the charge of causing injury recklessly and on the other 2 charges to an aggregate CCO of 12 months with 50 hours of unpaid community work. The DPP appealed against the sentence on the charge of recklessly causing injury on the single ground that:

The learned sentencing judge erred at law in finding that there were substantial and compelling circumstances that are exceptional and rare under s 10A(2)(e) of the Sentencing Act 1991 (Vic) that justified a finding under s 10AA(4) of the Sentencing Act 1991 (Vic) that a special reason existed so as not to impose a term of imprisonment of not less than 6 months in relation to Charge 1.

The Court of Appeal held that the ground of the appeal was established, stating at [28] & [29] that the the mandatory sentencing provisions introduced by the Victorian Parliament have set the sentencing bar very high indeed and noting that in *DPP v Bowen* (2021) 65 VR 385, 388; [2021] VSCA 355 Maxwell P, Priest, McLeish, T Forrest and Walker JJA had said at [11] that these mandatory sentencing provisions create a requirement that is ‘almost impossible’ to satisfy. Nor was there a sufficient evidentiary basis to enliven the general *Bugmy* principles, nor any real basis for the judge to conclude that *Verdins* limb 5 was engaged. However, noting that the respondent had completed 7 days’ imprisonment and part of the CCO and referring to the factors enunciated by McLeish, Niall & Kennedy JJA in *DPP v Lombardo* [2022] VSCA 204 at [109], the Court exercised its residual discretion and dismissed the appeal, a course not contested by the appellant.

See also *Didier Lam Kee Shau v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 252; *R v Ball* [2020] VSC 623; *Johnie Baker (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 158; *Fonua v The King* [2022] VSCA 213; *DPP v Wal & Anor* [2022] VSC 828; *Magee v The King* [2023] VSCA 80; *Foster (a pseudonym) v The King* [2023] VSCA 94; *DPP v Sari* [2023] VSC 523.

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### **11.2.24.5 Sentencing for affray / violent disorder**

The offence of violent disorder was introduced in 2017 by the *Crimes Legislation Amendment (Public Order) Act 2017*. That Act abolished the common-law offences of affray, rout and riot and introduced two new statutory offences of affray (contrary to s 195H of the *Crimes Act 1958*) and violent disorder (contrary to s 195I of the *Crimes Act 1958*).

In the particular circumstances of *R v King; R v Ngyouen* [2007] VSCA 263 the Court of Appeal concluded that the count of **affray** for each appellant had included the same factual matters as those that constituted the count of intentionally causing serious injury. However, the Court noted at [28]-[29]:

“[A]n additional and distinguishing element of the count of affray is that the unlawful fighting was such that a bystander of reasonable firmness and courage (whether or not present or likely to be present) might reasonably be expected to be terrified.

Notionally, therefore, cumulation was permissible in both cases without breaching any principles prohibiting double punishment. However, in the circumstances of this case any additional element of criminality may be regarded as minor.”

In *R v Casley* [2021] VSC 503 the 18 year old offender (19 at time of sentence) had pleaded guilty to a charge of **affray** in which he and coaccused ST & XY were involved with the victim CS. CS had the accused by the feet when the latter was on his back. Spontaneously JL struck CS in the chest with a sharp implement. CS ultimately collapsed on to the footpath, bleeding profusely. The accused and XY each kicked CS once to the head as he lay defenceless on the path and then fled with ST & JL. CS died from the stab wound. LC, ST & XY were not criminally responsible for the death of CS. The gravity of the affray was increased by kicking CS. The accused had prior convictions for assault, dishonesty and drug offences. His mental health was precarious and he had had a deprived early life but had taken promising steps while on remand. LC was sentenced to IMP8m (already served) + CCO 8m. On breach of CCO he was resentenced on the affray to IMP8m (already served) + CCO 12m: see *DPP v Casley* [2022] VSC 718 and subsequently *R v Casley* [2023] VSC 678. See also *R v Taylor* [2021] VSC 746 where Casley’s coaccused ST (a 21 year old female who had spent 138d on remand) was sentenced to CCO 10m; *DPP v WA* [2022] VSC 506 (16 year old male – YJC2m).

In *R v Tafa* [2022] VSC 466 the 20 year old accused (22 at time of sentence) had pleaded guilty to a charge of **violent disorder**. He had been part of a group of 10 youths who attacked another youth S in a public car park. He was sentenced to IMP9m (already served in pre-sentence detetion). Taylor J referred to T’s moderate prospects of rehabilitation and prospect of deportation and said at [46]-[48]:

“Your offending was serious. In a public place you participated in a pack attack on a defenceless and unarmed teenager who, after trying to evade you, put up no resistance and lay in the foetal position on the ground. You were armed with a baseball bat. Two others were armed with knives, another with an extendable baton and yet another with a glass bottle. The attack was vicious. And you, the only member of the pack aged more than 18 years, were a leader in the enterprise.

Bravery is not demonstrated nor is respect found in pack behaviour. Being a member of a gang masks cowardice. True courage is shown by stepping away from a group bent on unlawful, violent behaviour and indeed, by opposing it.

Your behaviour must be denounced by this Court and the sentence I impose must give significant weight to general deterrence. [Counsel for the accused conceded that the role of general deterrence in the sentence made any issue of parity with the co-accused, who are all minors, redundant.] There can be no doubt that anyone who acts as part of a group, particularly an ongoing gang, with the common intention of inflicting violence and who causes injury will be met with substantial punishment. I reiterate that the injury for which you are sentenced does not include the death of [S] nor the infliction of the fatal stab wound.”

The case of *DPP v Sewell; DPP v Hersant* [2024] VSCA 70 was the first appellate consideration of the offence of **violent disorder** which was enacted in 2017. Mr Sewell (aged 28) and Mr Hersant (aged 22) had entered guilty pleas following a sentence indication. On a charge of violent disorder Mr Sewell was sentenced to IMP1m with pre-sentence detention of over 6m in solitary confinement reckoned as time served and the prosecution having not challenged the judge’s treatment of the time in custody. Mr Hersant was sentenced to IMP3d with a community correction order of 14m. The Court of Appeal held that the sentence imposed on Mr Sewell was not manifestly inadequate and dismissed the Director’s appeal. It held that the sentence imposed on Mr Hersant was manifestly inadequate but noting that Mr Hersant had completed all 200 hours of unpaid community work, that it was undesirable to return him to custdy and that the sentence imposed enhances his prospects of rehabilitation, the Court exercised its residual discretion and dismissed the appeal. In so doing, it noted that it was still providing appellate guidance. At [89]-[99] Emerton P, Kennedy & Boyce JJA said:

[89] “Although we accept that the specific involvement of any participant may be considered, the judge was correct to find that it is the pack mentality and violence perpetrated as a group which is the essence of the offence of violent disorder.

[90] There are a number of features which suggest that the offending was indeed serious in this case. Thus, there were in fact two groups which came together to constitute a larger group of some 10–15 black-uniformed males which ‘set upon’ the innocent hikers so as to intimidate them and force them to hand over their phones. The threat of unlawful violence was particularly serious in circumstances where members of the group were armed with knives, including a hunting knife. The fact that one of the participants was brandishing a knife was so frightening that it caused one of the hikers to urinate on himself. There was also serious damage to the Volkswagen by reason of the window smashing. In such circumstances it is not surprising that the judge found that each of the victims was ‘terrified’. The conduct was inherently likely to produce such an effect.

[91] Against this, however, there were other factors which the judge correctly took into account in assessing the level of the seriousness. Critically (and fortunately), the physical injury inflicted was minor. Moreover, the offending was not planned, was spontaneous and reactive, and was not politically or racially motivated. Consistent with concessions made by the prosecution, the judge also found that there was no evidence that either offender had a weapon, or engaged in any specific act of violence. We also consider that the judge was entitled to take into account the absence of a face covering in circumstances where it was alleged that many of the participants did wear such coverings.

[92] Whether the judge erred in concluding that the respondents’ offending should be seen as ‘towards the lower end of seriousness for offending of this type’ by reference to the fact that the respondents did not wear a face covering gave rise in argument to the issue whether the offence of violent disorder was one offence able to be committed in two ways (either with or without a face covering), or whether two offences were contemplated.

[93] However, in the end, it is unnecessary to decide this matter because we consider that the reference by the judge to ‘offending of this type’ incorporated acts which included the offending described in both s 195I(3)(a) and (b). It is thereby apparent that her Honour cannot have counted in mitigation a matter that was already definitional of the offending.

[94] When all these factors are taken into account, we are unable to be satisfied that the judge erred in her characterisation of the seriousness of this offending. Rather, we consider that it was open for the judge to find that, although serious, the offending was at the ‘lower end of seriousness for offending of this type.’

[95] We note in this regard that the comparable cases to which the judge was referred concerned violent disorders which led to more serious injuries. In R v Tafa, the offender participated in a pack attack by striking the victim with a baseball bat.49 One of the other assailants fatally stabbed the victim.50 The judge emphasised that the offender was not being sentenced for the fatal stabbing.51 Director of Public Prosecutions v Leek, 52 Director of Public Prosecutions v Akok53 and Director of Public Prosecutions v Puoch54 49 [2022] VSC 466, [20]–[21] (Taylor J). 50 Ibid [21]–[23]. 51 Ibid [48], [62]. 52 [2022] VCC 1071. 53 [2021] VCC 1795. 54 [2022] VCC 1063. all arose from a brawl that took place in and around a lift at 200 Spencer Street in March 2021. Some of the victims suffered knife wounds.55

[96] However, this does not resolve the manifest inadequacy issue since even offending at the ‘lower end of seriousness’ would ordinarily warrant substantial punishment. The principles of general deterrence, denunciation and community protection dictate such a course in circumstances where the maximum penalty is 10 years’ imprisonment.

[97] In considering the adequacy of the sentence, however, it is also necessary to consider the personal circumstances of each offender, including any significant matters in mitigation.

[98] Turning first to Mr Sewell, he was a leader of one of the groups, was older and committed the offence whilst on bail. Nevertheless, the judge was entitled to give weight to the plea given it saved a lengthy trial, as well as having some regard to Worboyes (given the prosecution concession that it applied). She was also entitled to have regard to his prospects of rehabilitation, which the prosecution conceded were ‘reasonable’. More significantly, consistent with the concessions of the Director, the judge was entitled to, and did, treat the (more than) 6 months’ imprisonment he had served on remand as part of Mr Sewell’s punishment in respect of this offending. Not only did he serve a period of 6 months, but he also served that time in extremely harsh conditions. 56 We are not satisfied that the sentence imposed is wholly outside the range when this time served is taken into account.

[99] Turning next to Mr Hersant, it is true that his position can be distinguished from Mr Sewell because he was younger and had no relevant criminal history. Nevertheless, he was not only a leader of one of the groups, but was also identified as a leader during the course of the offending.

See also *R v Akin Sari* [2008] VSCA 137 at [18] per Ashley JA and at [62]-[65] per Lasry AJA; *R v Musa & Wubneh* [2014] VSC 15 per Dixon J; *DPP v McCloskey-Sharp* [2014] VSC 634; *DPP v Wal & Anor* [2022] VSC 828; *DPP v Pedlar* [2023] VSC 250.

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### **11.2.24.6 Sentencing for reckless endangerment / recklessly exposing emergency worker to risk by driving**

### **A RECKLESS CONDUCT ENDANGERING LIFE / SERIOUS INJURY**

In *R v Hennessy* [2010] VSCA 297 the applicant had been sentenced to IMP5y/3y after pleading guilty to one count of reckless conduct endangering life. The impugned conduct consisted of repeated acts of unprotected sexual intercourse between the applicant and his future wife for 4 months in 1996, the applicant being aware at all relevant times that he was HIV positive. Drawing a distinction between reckless endangerment on the one hand and intentional endangerment and intentionally causing serious injury on the other – and giving significant weight to the 12-13 year delay between offence and sentencing – the Court of Appeal allowed the appeal and re-sentenced the applicant to IMP4y/2y6m. See also *The Queen* *v Neal* [2011] VSCA 172 at [109]-[111]; *R v Oakley* [2012] VSC 392.

In *DPP v SI (a child)* [2018] VChC 3 the 15 year old offender – who suffered from a profound hearing loss and an autism spectrum disorder at level 3 severity requiring very substantial support – had pleaded guilty to two charges of reckless conduct endangering life, two charges of reckless conduct endangering serious injury, one charge of assaulting an emergency worker and one charge of unlicensed driving. All of the charges arose out of SI’s conduct when – dressed in dark military style clothing – he drove erratically and recklessly in the Melbourne CBD in his father’s car. The consequences of SI’s driving could have been catastrophic but fortunately they were not. At [47]‑[48] Judge Chambers held that notwithstanding SI’s absence of priors and the significance of his disability, the serious nature of his offending warranted a conviction; she placed SI on a 12 month youth supervision order with special conditions that he does not drive a motor vehicle and only has access to a computer or other internet connected device for activities approved by his disability support worker or his school.

In *Butler v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 132 the applicant had pleaded guilty to attempted arson, reckless conduct endangering serious injury and related summary offences. Describing the sentence of IMP 14m on the reckless endangerment charge as “extremely lenient, if not inadequate”, Priest JA said at [42]:

“The applicant’s was appalling driving, by a man with a bad record, for the express purpose of evading police. Driving such as the applicant’s, putting the public in danger so as to avoid facing the consequences of other criminal activity, is to be strongly condemned and severely punished. Furthermore, general deterrence is of prime importance in a case such as this. People tempted to drive recklessly and endanger the public in order to evade police must know that when caught they will receive stern punishment.”

In *DPP v Graoroski* [2018] VSCA 332 the 37 year old respondent was the victim of a violent home invasion by 3 men acting in concert with his then girlfriend. As the offenders retreated, the respondent fired a shotgun from close quarters. One of the offenders sustained life-threatening injuries. The respondent was sentenced to IMP7m plus a 2y CCO. The Crown appeal was allowed, the Court of Appeal holding, “after anxious consideration”, that the sentence was manifestly inadequate notwithstanding that the respondent had been “confronted with an extremely difficult set of circumstances” – including his home having been invaded and he having been attacked with a baseball bat and a machette by 3 violent criminals, he having sustained injuries to various parts of his body and his father having also been placed in danger. At [32]-[33] the Court said:

“By the time the respondent chased Anagnostou from his house, the danger had passed. And, as a prohibited person, he shot Anagnostou with his loaded shotgun in the upper back from a distance of one to two metres. Whilst the respondent could not be punished for intentionally injuring Anagnostou, his action in discharging the shotgun so close to Anagnostou was extraordinarily reckless and caused life-threatening injuries. We have concluded that his Honour, in imposing the sentence on this charge, gave insufficient attention to these factors and, as a consequence, insufficient attention to general deterrence. We are unable to discern any ‘primacy’ given to general deterrence in either of the impugned sentences.”

A total effective sentence of IMP2y/1y was substituted.

In *R v Natale* [2019] VSC 30 the 87 year old offender – who had fired two shots from a distance of about 7 metres at a sex worker of whom he had been a long-term client – pleaded guilty to reckless conduct endangering life. His offending was motivated by anger and a sense of entitlement. Holding that general deterrence and denunciation were of primary importance he was sentenced to IMP4y and in conjunction with offences of using an unregistered longarm, stalking and threat to kill a total effective sentence of IMP4y6m/18m was imposed.

In *Nicos Kiril (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 133 the applicant had provided inadequate care for his elderly mother putting her in danger of death. At the time of her death the victim was living in squalid conditions, weighing 34 kilograms and covered in sores. After a late guilty plea, the applicant was sentenced to IMP18m/12m notwithstanding the prosecution concession that a CCO was an appropriate sentence, a concession strongly criticised by T Forrest JA at [53].

In *DPP v Deakin (a pseudonym)* [2021] VSC 719 a desperate young mother, not coping on her own with two very young children, held her son’s head under bathwater for a few seconds before letting him go. The child suffered no physical or mental injuries. The offender had longstanding mental health and substance abuse problems and Verdins principles were enlivened. . She had made full admissions, had genuine remorse and had entered a guilty plea. Hollingworth J sentenced her without conviction to a community corrections order for 18 months.

In *Cooper v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 288 the Court of Appeal described a sentence of IMP3y imposed on a 27 year offender as “stern” but refused leave to appeal, holding at [74]:

“The fact that the applicant’s offending involved the discharge of a firearm in retaliation for Mr Lee’s previous assault heightened the importance of general deterrence. In *Kelly v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 171, [46] — which involved the discharge of a firearm in the direction of a car from which two shots had been fired at the offender’s home — this Court stated the following about offending that was retaliatory in nature:

‘The courts have repeatedly emphasised that the sentences for individuals who take the law into their own hands and commit crimes in order to resolve real or perceived grievances must be sufficiently high to deter others from adopting that course. For example, in *Zogheib v The Queen* (2015) 257 A Crim R 454, 475 [89], 477 [98]; [2015] VSCA 334., this Court said the following:

Rather than contacting police, the appellant took the law into his own hands…The appellant’s conduct, and such conduct by like-minded individuals, simply cannot be countenanced in a civilised society. In such a case, considerations of denunciation and general deterrence must be given substantial weight.’”

In *Cho Nguyen v The King* [2025] VSCA 3 the Court of Appeal dismissed an appeal against a sentence of IMP20m imposed on the 47 year old applicant with a ‘dreadful’ criminal history on a charge of reckless conduct endangering serious injury in the context of driving described by the sentencing judge as ‘simply appalling’. Both Niall CJ at [25] and Walker JA at [48] & [56] considered that no different sentence ought be imposed. After describing the 20m sentence as “lenient” Niall CJ said at [39]-[40]:

[39] “The charge of recklessly endangering serious injury can cover a variety of circumstances, only some of which involve the operation of a motor vehicle. Where as in this case the offending arises from driving a car on a freeway, the risk of danger is often large. Here, the applicant was driving his car at speeds which were considerably greater than surrounding vehicles on a busy stretch of freeway and engaged in aggressive and unpredictable driving. The risk of serious injury is obvious. The collision that ultimately ensued could very easily have resulted in very serious injury for the occupant of that car or other road users. The driver lost control of her car as a result of the collision and it rebounded in a way that could have easily resulted in a further collision with oncoming traffic. The judge’s description of the driving as ‘appalling’ was entirely apt, and the risk it involved was high. The objective gravity was significant and certainly not towards the lower end.

[40] Importantly, offending of this kind required close attention to general deterrence to deter reckless and cavalier driving at speed on public roads. The important need for deterrence meant that it was legitimate to temper the moderating impact of the personal circumstances of the applicant...”

In *Brown v The King* [2025] VSCA 39 the appellant had pleaded guilty at an early stage to reckless conduct endangering persons and had been sentenced to IMP18m/12m. The co-accused, his brother, had ignited a blow-torch in two places in a house while the occupants were asleep. The appellant was present only during the first ignition which was minor and did not cause damage to the house. The second ignition – in which the appellant was not involved – had resulted in the destruction of the house. Noting that the offending had occurred only days after the death of the appellant’s mother and holding that the co-accused’s offending had been erroneously considered when sentencing the appellant, the Court of Appeal allowed the appeal and substituted a sentence of IMP9m.

See also *R v LW & Anor* [2021] VSC 278; *Jones v The King* [2023] VSCA 167; *DPP v Campbell* [2023] VSC 691; *Gardezi v The King* [2023] VSCA 297 at [30]-[45]; *El-Hassan v The King* [2023] VSCA 307.

### **B RECKLESSLY EXPOSING EMERGENCY WORKER TO RISK BY DRIVING**

In *Kehiyas v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 261 the 39 year old applicant had been sentenced to a TES6y/3y6m on charges which included the following-

* recklessly exposing emergency worker to risk by driving: IMP4y;
* reckless conduct endangering persons: IMP30m-15m CUM; and
* dangerous or negligent driving when pursued by police: IMP18m-9m CUM

In refusing leave to appeal, Niall & Sifris JJA cited with approval at [38], [47] & [60] the following remarks of the sentencing judge:

“This is a situation which comes down to in my view very dangerous driving indeed and that is exemplified by the fact that two policeman were put in a very precarious set of circumstances. Only a salutary sentence can signify the danger of what you did and so far as other people are concerned make them aware that if you drive like this and put people at risk like this you are going to receive significant gaol sentences indeed.”

See also *Clark v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 350 at [21]; *Smith v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 148, esp. at [49]-[51]; *Nelson v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 219; *McKay v The King [No 2]* [2023] VSCA 8; *El-Hassan v The King* [2023] VSCA 307; *Anh Thai Nguyen v The King* [2024] VSCA 290.

### **11.2.25 Sentencing for drug trafficking / cultivation / importation etc**

In *R v Carl Williams & Walter Foletti* [2004] VSC 424 at [39] Kellam J stressed the importance of general deterrence in sentencing for drug trafficking, stating: "For that reason the courts have repeatedly stated that those who take the risk of trafficking in drugs for profit, should expect to receive severe punishment if they are apprehended. Furthermore, those like you who play for high stakes and are detected conducting the business of trafficking in drugs of addition for profit can expect condign punishment for their conduct."

In *R v Xin Liang* [2011] VSCA 148 at [24] Harper JA (with whom Ashley JA & Lasry AJA agreed on this point) made a strong statement about drug trafficking:

“Had the Crown properly established that the quantity of heroin trafficked by the appellant was at the high end of the marketable scale, a sentence of eight years’ imprisonment would not in my opinion have been manifestly excessive. Drugs are a scourge on society. Those who trade in the misery of others for the selfish benefit of themselves, as the appellant has done, must be sentenced having regard, amongst other things, to the fact that the maximum penalty for this offence is 25 years’ imprisonment. Eight years’ incarceration for marketing a quantity of heroin towards the upper limit of the range of a ‘marketable quantity’ should, other things being equal, be regarded as merciful, even given a plea of guilty.”

So did Kaye AJA (with whom Redlich & Whelan JJA agreed) in *Dawid v DPP* [2013] VSCA 64 at [35] in upholding a sentence of IMP 9y/6y2m on charges of trafficking in a large commercial quantity of methylamphetamine and trafficking in cocaine:

““The nature and pervasive extent of drug trafficking of the type engaged in by the applicant is such that, on sentencing, the principles of general deterrence and denunciation assume substantial prominence. It is the large profits, which can be gained from trafficking in drugs, that attracts people, such as the applicant, to engage in the type of offending for which the applicant was sentenced. It is important that persons, like the applicant, who contemplate embarking on such an enterprise, do so in the clear knowledge that, if detected, they will be sentenced to lengthy terms of imprisonment. In other words, it is necessary that the sentences imposed for such drug trafficking be sufficiently severe to offset the lure of large and relatively easy profits, which can be derived from the trafficking of illicit drugs.

This dicta was referred to with approval in the joint judgment of Maxwell P and Weinberg & Santamaria JJA in *Samuel Bass (A pseudonym) v The Queen* [2014] VSCA 350 at [180] in imposing a sentence of IMP 10y6m/6ym on charges of trafficking a commercial quantity of methylamphetamine and trafficking methylamphetamine.

In *Kim v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 149 the Court of Appeal (Kaye & T Forrest JJA), in dismissing the appellant’s appeal against a sentence of IMP9y9m/7y on charges including trafficking in a large commercial quantity of MDMA, trafficking in methylamphetamine and trafficking in heroin, said at [31]:

“We wish to make it clear once more that long prison sentences await those who participate in this pernicious trade. Those lengthy sentences are the occupational risk of the drug dealer and with modern policing techniques, that risk becomes greater by the day. Should that risk become reality, the principles of general deterrence and denunciation will normally be accorded particular prominence in the sentencing mix. Those who choose to embark on the business of drug trafficking must understand that they will lose their liberty for an extended period. It is only in this way that the courts can discourage those lured by greed into an enterprise that is so harmful to our community.”

In *Lang & Ors v The King* [2025] VSCA 49 the first-named applicant sought leave to appeal against a TES IMP16y4m/12y on a charge of trafficking in a drug of dependence (heroin) in a large commercial quantity and 3 charges of knowingly dealing with proceeds of crime. A co-offender had been given substantially the same TES and NPP. The Court of Appeal held that it was not reasonably arguable that the head sentence was manifestly excessive or that the orders for cumulation or the TES infringed parity principles. However, given the differences between the co-offenders as to prior criminal history and prospects of rehabilitation it was not open to the judge to impose identical NPPs. Leave to appeal was granted for the first-named applicant and the NPP was reduced to 11y. In relation to sentencing commercial quantity drug traffickers, Beach & McLeish JJA said at [63]:

“In *Lieu v The Queen* (2016) 263 A Crim R 173; [2016] VSCA 277, this Court dealt with the principles applicable in the sentencing of offenders who had engaged in commercial quantity drug trafficking. Redlich, Beach & Kaye JJA said at 185-6 [41]-[43]:

The principles applicable to the offences to which the applicant pleaded guilty are well established, and need not be rehearsed at length. Essentially, the determination of the seriousness of the offending is informed by a range of factors, including the role of the offender, the position of the offender in the drug trafficking (or importing) hierarchy, the nature and extent of the offender’s involvement in the enterprise, the sophistication of the enterprise, and the amount of drugs involved, or intended to be involved, in the enterprise. In describing the role of the offender in the hierarchy, it is important that any shorthand label attaching to that role does not obscure the nature and extent of the actions and involvement of the offender.

In determining the seriousness of the offence, the weight or amount of the drugs involved is a factor of some importance. That circumstance is relevant to determining the dimension of the enterprise in which the offender is involved, and the amount of profit that was expected from the enterprise, which generally constitutes the primary if not sole motive for the offending. The weight or amount of the drugs involved might also indicate that the enterprise, in which the offender has been involved, was far reaching, and sophisticated. On the other hand, that factor, per se, is not necessarily the primary or overriding factor in determining the gravity of the offending under consideration.

*It is well recognised that in cases such as this significant weight is attached to the principle of general deterrence.* The difficulty of detecting importation offences, and the great and far reaching social consequences stemming from the proliferation of illicit drugs in the community, are factors which support the importance of the concept of general deterrence in sentencing for such offences. *In particular, it is recognised that, in light of the very large profits that motivate importation and trafficking offences, it is important that the sentence imposed by the courts ‘… must signal to would be traffickers that the potential financial rewards to be gained from such activities are neutralised by the risk of severe punishment …’*. On the other hand, the previous good character, and personal circumstances, of an offender in drug trafficking or importation offences are generally attributed less weight as a mitigating factor.”

In *R v Mahmoud Kheir* [2003] VSCA 209 the Court of Appeal upheld an appeal by a 25 year old man with 5 previous unrelated offences against a sentence of 200 days imprisonment on one count of trafficking in a very small quantity of amphetamine and reduced the sentence to 14 days imprisonment. However, the Court of Appeal rejected counsel's submissions that the sentence should be an unconditional discharge or a fine without conviction. At [7] Callaway JA drew a graphic distinction between the appellant and a drug-addicted 15 year old street trafficker:

"I am quite satisfied that a conviction was properly recorded and that that conviction should not be disturbed. The appellant pleaded guilty to an offence that is rife in our community. It carries a maximum custodial penalty of 15 years' imprisonment and is one in relation to which general deterrence is of great importance. The appellant was not a drug addicted 15 year old succumbing to a spur of the moment temptation on the street. He went with his brother to a prearranged rendezvous to engage in a pestilential activity. Although his priors are not related to drug trafficking, he does not have an unblemished record to be prayed in aid. For similar reasons, notwithstanding that he took no active part in the transaction, I would not impose a fine. I think a sterner mark of the Court's denunciation of the trafficking is warranted."

In *McCabe v The King* [2023] VSCA 329 the 35 year old applicant – who “came from a ‘good family background’, was ‘highly educated’ and it could not be said that his drug trafficking was conducted in order to finance his own drug habit” – was convicted by a jury of one charge of trafficking in a large commercial quantity of a drug of dependence (5.3kg of MDMA, also known as ‘ecstasy’) and was sentenced to IMP11y/7y. In refusing leave to appeal the Court of Appeal (Macaulay & Taylor JJA) found no error in the judge’s conclusion that “the applicant’s moral culpability was high”, saying at [43]:

“The offence of trafficking a large commercial quantity of a drug of dependence is, by its very nature, an offence which is objectively very grave. The applicant’s role in the trafficking hierarchy, and the fact that profit was his sole motivation, were significant sentencing facts which impacted his moral culpability. The prosecution did not have to prove the anticipated return from trafficking this MDMA in order to establish that the applicant’s offence was objectively serious. The applicant offered no evidence to displace the legislative presumption that trafficking 5.3 kg of mixed MDMA was truly commercial in nature. The judge would only have been speculating, impermissibly, to accept a submission that trafficking these particular pills could only have produced small returns far below those to be expected from trafficking a large commercial quantity of MDMA as defined in the DPCS Act.

In *Elkadi v The King* [2023] VSCA 328 the 40 year old applicant had pleaded guilty to two counts of trafficking a commercial quantity of a drug of dependence and three counts of trafficking a drug of dependence by means of a sophisticated ‘dark web’ enterprise. He had relevant prior convictions but powerful evidence of rehabilitation. Leave to appeal a TES IMP12y4m/7y4m was refused, the Court of Appeal (Macaulay & Taylor JJA) holding that the sentence was not manifestly excessive and saying at [30]-[35]:

[30] “There are many factors relevant to the determination of the seriousness of any particular example of the offence of trafficking a commercial (or large commercial) quantity of drugs. These include the role of the offender, his or her position in the enterprise, the nature and extent of his or her involvement and the amount of drugs involved: *Lieu v The Queen* (2016) 263 A Crim R 173, [41]; [2016] VSCA 277. The latter is a highly relevant consideration and, other things being equal, the greater the quantity trafficked the more serious the offence: *Gregory (a pseudonym) v The Queen* 268 A Crim R 1, [23]; [2017] VSCA 151. The methylamphetamine relevant to charge 1 was well in excess of the commercial quantity threshold. The MDMA relevant to charge 2 was nearly double the commercial quantity threshold.

[31] There can be no doubt that the applicant’s offending was grave.

[32] He also had significant and relevant prior convictions. Furthermore, it is to be noted that a sentence of imprisonment for drug trafficking did not deter him from further, similar offending. It occurred just over one year after his sentence had expired and represents a considerable escalation in his criminal behaviour.

[33] General deterrence and denunciation assume great importance in sentencing for significant drug trafficking. Like the applicant, people are attracted to the promise of large profits, caring little for the societal harm occasioned by the use of illicit drugs. It must be clear that anyone embarking upon a drug trafficking enterprise of this nature will, if detected, be sentenced to a lengthy term of imprisonment.

[34] Further, it is to be recalled that the applicant fell to be sentenced as a serious drug offender with respect to charge 2, elevating protection of the community to the principal sentencing consideration.

[35] Turning to the applicant’s ‘collection of matters’ in mitigation, it is clear that the judge considered and gave appropriate weight to them individually and as a combined force. In particular, the judge recorded, at some length, the steps the applicant had taken towards rehabilitation and commended his desire to ‘pay back’ the community through the establishment of two charitable organisations. The judge specifically recorded that specific deterrence was accorded lesser weight. The applicant’s efforts towards rehabilitation are noteworthy, but in combination with the other matters advanced on his behalf do not, when weighed against the objective gravity of the offending and his moral culpability, establish that the sentence is manifestly excessive.”

Sometimes the fact that a drug trafficker is also a drug user may be a mitigating factor. Sometimes it may be an aggravating factor. Sometimes it may be neither. In *Beckerton v The Queen* [2011] VSCA 107 the Court of Appeal explained why. Although dismissing an appeal against a sentence of IMP 3.5y/2.5y on counts of trafficking of 7.65 pounds of cannabis and 238 grams of methylamphetamine, Ashley & Weinberg JJA were critical of the sentencing judge’s observation that the applicant’s offending was “so much the worse” because of her past experience with drugs and her knowledge of the harm they did to those who used them. At [42] & [44]-[45] Weinberg JA said:

[42] “This Court was highly critical of that same expression when used by his Honour in an unrelated case that came before it earlier this year: *Nguyen v The Queen; Phommalysack v The Queen* [2011] VSCA 32. On that occasion Maxwell P had this to say about that expression when applied by this judge in a Commonwealth matter involving the importation of a large quantity of drugs:

‘There is, however, more substance to the complaint about the judge’s comment that [the appellant’s] offending was ‘so much the worse’ because he had personal experience of the ‘disabilities’ affecting drug-addicted people. His Honour’s statement conveys the clear impression that he regarded [the appellant] as more morally culpable, and hence deserving of more severe punishment, because of his personal experience of drug addiction. As the prosecutor readily conceded on the appeal, this was not a contention advanced by the prosecution on the plea, and the judge was therefore bound to invite submissions from the defence before he could have decided to treat it as an aggravating factor. This is particularly so given the novelty of the proposition that a person’s drug addiction should be treated as aggravating the seriousness of that person’s participation in an offence involving the manufacture or distribution of drugs.

At the same time, for a sentencing judge to treat a matter as aggravating the seriousness of an offence is, in the absence of agreement between the parties, a significant step to take. This experienced sentencing judge gave lengthy and careful reasons for sentence, dealing in turn with all the relevant sentencing considerations. He did not, in terms, characterise this as an aggravating feature.’

[44] *Nguyen* needs to be understood in context. There are, in my opinion, some circumstances in which it can fairly be said that a past history of drug addiction not only does not mitigate an offence such as trafficking, but may be viewed as a factor that worsens the applicant’s level of culpability. I have in mind the admittedly unusual case of an offender who, having been an addict for much of his or her adult life, and therefore fully appreciates the devastating consequences that addiction can have, then overcomes his or her habit, and subsequently decides to sell drugs purely for profit, and out of a sense of greed. In such a case, comments such as ‘so much the worse is your offending’ may be entirely apt.

[45] The present case does not quite fall into that description. The applicant was still addicted to drugs throughout the period that she engaged in trafficking. Nonetheless, it is fair to say that her primary motivation seems not to have been to obtain money or drugs to maintain her habit, but rather to generate profit which she spent on various personal items, as previously discussed.”

See also *R v Scott* [2011] VSCA 108 at [35]; *R v Scott Wilson; DPP v Sassine; DPP v Kalakias; R v Vicki Wilson* [2012] VSCA 141.

In *R v Shane Moran* [2004] VSCA 6 the Court of Appeal dismissed an appeal against a sentence of 3 years imprisonment with a non-parole period of 1 year imposed on a 19 year old man of previously good character who had pleaded guilty to during the committal proceedings to attempted trafficking of amphetamine. At [10] Smith AJA, with whom Vincent JA & O'Bryan AJA agreed, said:

"In my view, itis cannot be shown that the mitigatory circumstances were not given adequate weight or that the sentence is manifestly excessive. The applicant was closely engaged for five months in the enterprise, an enterprise intended to result in the production of amphetamines and related drugs. This was planned anti-social behaviour of a very serious kind. The sentence imposed was a lenient one."

In *R v Paul Harold Walker* [2004] VSC 412 Teague J, in sentencing a 70 year old man for 6 offences, including the supplying of cannabis to a 15 year old girl, said at [14]:

"I accept in your favour that you did not inveigle your victim into starting up the illegal activity of sm oking marijuana, but merely encouraged its continuation. You have been described before me as an aged hippie. It seems that too many aged hippies choose to wear rose-coloured glasses. They choose not to see the wreckage caused by marijuana which is so often the subject of evidence before sentencing judges."

In *R v Pablo Foletti* [2004] VSC 277 Kellam J agreed that a partly suspended sentence resulting in the defendant's immediate release should be imposed on a 23 year old man who assisted on one occasion in the transport of a commercial quantity of ecstasy. At [7]-[8] His Honour said:

Nevertheless, the trafficking of drugs causes great harm to the youth of our community. Indeed, you have your own experience of this. For this reason such offences must be regarded seriously by the courts. Whilst you did play a minor part in the trafficking in question, it must be remembered that major drug traffickers rely upon those such as you to be the couriers and to move drugs around the community. Trafficking of the type in which you engaged would almost invariably justify the imposition of a substantial prison sentence, particularly in the case of a person who has prior convictions for trafficking drugs. However, there are a number of mitigating factors which have been pointed out by your counsel".

In *R v Chinh Quang Do* [2004] VSCA 203 the Court of Appeal held that a trial judge did not err in failing to treat trafficking in a commercial quantity of cannabis more leniently than trafficking in commercial quantities of other drugs of dependence. At [10]-[12] Buchanan JA, with whom Winneke P & Vincent J agreed, said:

"[10] A number of courts have sought to draw distinctions between different drugs of dependence for the purpose of sentencing. In *R v Ryan, Salinas and Lizza* [unreported, 24/02/1988] Southwell J expressed the view that trafficking in cocaine did not represent as great a threat to society and its victims as did the heroin trade. In *R v Stavropoulos and Zamouzaris* (1990) 50 A Crim R 315, McGarvie J, with whom Murphy and Brooking JJ agreed, said at 324:

'The sentences of the courts under the *Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act* show that offences committed with respect to drugs such as heroin have been treated for sentencing purposes as inherently more heinous and serious than offences involving cannabis.'

In *R. v. Bimahendali* [1999] NSWCCA 409 Wood CJ at CL referred to the New South Wales Court of Criminal Appeal’s consistent treatment of ecstasy as a mid-range drug and to authority for treating amphetamine as a mid-range drug, and said at [16]:

'However, I am quite unpersuaded that it is appropriate, let alone helpful, to attempt any greater gradation of seriousness between drugs falling into the broad categories of soft drugs (e.g. cannabis), middle range drugs (amphetamines in their various forms) and high range drugs (heroin and cocaine).

See also *R v Vivian* (1979) 23 SASR 45 at 50 per White J.

[11] More recently, faced with an increasingly complex and rapidly changing drug industry, the courts have treated trafficking in commercial quantities of different drugs of dependence as equally serious, relying upon the common maximum penalty. In *R v Casey* [2002] VSCA 117, Winneke P, with whom Phillips JA and O’Bryan AJA agreed, said that it was:

'non-productive in sentencing offenders to speak of graduations of seriousness depending upon the substance involved. Courts should always take their cue from the legislature and the penalties prescribed by statute rather than import into the sentencing discretion individual views as to the perniciousness of the substance.'

See also *R v Carey* [1998] 4 VR 13 at 18 per Winneke P; *R v Kevenaar* [2004] NSWCCA 210 at [112] per Hulme J; *R v Amran Efendi* [2001] NSWCCA 391 at [14]-[15] per Heydon JA. In *Pereira v. The Queen* (1992) 66 ALJR 791 Mason CJ, Deane and McHugh JJ*,* refusing special leave to appeal, said that a Court of Criminal Appeal was not shown to have erred in regarding drug offences involving cocaine as no less serious than those involving heroin. They noted what was said by the Court of Criminal Appeal in the Supreme Court of Victoria in *R. v. Thomas* [unreported, 26/10/1990]:

'The offences of trafficking in the drugs of dependence of heroin and cocaine are very serious offences and both deserve severe punishment. It is not appropriate for this Court in the absence of expert testimony to seek to categorise such offences further.'

[12] Accordingly, I think that, in the absence of expert testimony as to the addictive qualities and the psychological and social effects of the various drugs of dependence, the trial judge did not err in failing to treat trafficking in a commercial quantity of cannabis more leniently than trafficking in commercial quantities of other drugs of dependence."

In *R v Pidoto; R v O’Dea* (2006) 14 VR 169; [2006] VSCA 185 a Court of Appeal constituted by 5 judges, after tracing the legislative history of the *Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981* through its various amendments, making comparison with related UK & New Zealand legislation and analysing a large number of related cases, held that when a person is being sentenced for the offence of trafficking in a drug of dependence, it is not relevant for the Court to consider either:

(i) the nature and extent of the harm which the particular drug causes, both directly to users of the drug and indirectly to the community as a whole; or

(ii) whether the particular drug of dependence is, by those measures, more or less harmful that another drug of dependence.

Hence, the Court said at [3]: “As a matter of statutory construction, the harmfulness of the drug is irrelevant to the exercise of the sentencing discretion.” At [7] the Court expressly shared the view expressed by Winneke P (with whom Phillips JA and O’Bryan AJA agreed) in *R v Casey* [2002] VSCA 117 at [27] that it was “non-productive in sentencing offenders to speak of graduations of seriousness depending upon the substances involved.”

In *R v Power* [2010] VSCA 139 at [19] Hansen AJA (with whom Nettle & Harper JJA agreed) referred with approval to the statement in *R v Pidoto; R v O’Dea* (2006) 14 VR 269, 278 [41] that “the principal measure of seriousness of the offence is the quantity of drugs trafficked.” Hansen AJA at [16]-[17] and Nettle JA at [26] drew a distinction with *DPP v Collins* (2004) 10 VR 1, 13 [29] where it was held that a sentencing judge had not erred in imposing a low penalty on the basis that any trafficking in the relatively small amount of drugs involved in that case had been ‘nipped in the bud’ before causing any damage.

In *R v Adams* [2007] VSCA 37 the Court of Appeal (Buchanan, Vincent & Nettle JJA) accepted a submission made on behalf of the Commonwealth DPP that the reasoning in *R v Pidoto; R v O’Dea* applied equally to quantity-based drug offences under the *Customs Act 1901* (Cth). An appeal to the High Court was dismissed: (2008) 244 ALR 270.

Allowing an appeal in *R v Bala* [2010] VSCA 78, Maxwell P (with whom Ashley JA & Coghlan AJA agreed) said at [12]:

“Importantly, the amount which Bala trafficked was less than five per cent of a commercial quantity of cannabis. The sentencing regime for drug trafficking offences is quantity-based [*R v Pidoto & O’Dea* (2006) 14 VR 269], which means that the quantity trafficked will ordinarily be a key indicator of the seriousness of the offence, though it is never determinative of penalty [*R v McCulloch* [2009] VSCA 34 at [46]]. Based on quantity, Bala’s offence was at the bottom end of the scale of seriousness for trafficking in a non-commercial quantity.”

In *DPP v Fatho, Van & Huynh* [2019] VSCA 311 Maxwell P and Priest & Beach JJA said at [70]:

“As is now well understood, the sentencing regime for drug trafficking is quantity-based. The quantity trafficked can never be the determining factor but it will always be of importance. Other things being equal, the greater the quantity trafficked, the more serious the trafficking offence: see,eg, *DPP v KMD* [2015] VSCA 255.

Allowing an appeal in *Qui v The Queen*; *Ng v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 147, the Court of Appeal (Kaye & T Forrest JJA) said at [58]-[59]:

[58] “It is a well-established principle of sentencing, in cases involving the importation of a border controlled substance, that the amount of drug involved in the importation is a particularly relevant factor in determining the objective seriousness of the offence and the culpability of the offender. In *Phuong Bich Nguyen* *v The Queen* (2011) 31 VR 673 at 682, Maxwell P stated the relevant principles, in that respect, in the following terms:

“Although the weight of the drug imported is not the principal factor to be considered when fixing sentence, the size of the importation is a relevant factor and has increased significance when the offender is aware of the amount of drugs imported.

Ordinarily, the amount of the drug involved in an importation is a highly relevant factor in determining the relevant objective seriousness of the offence, even to the extent of assessing that a particular offence is in the worst category of its type. In many cases, the only factor that would lead to a determination that one importation is worse than another would be the amount of drug involved where otherwise the circumstances of the importation were the same or very similar.’

[59] The statutory proscription of the importation of border controlled substances, such as heroin, and the gradation of sentences for the offence according to the amount that was the subject of the importation, reflects the simple premise that the greater the amount of heroin or prohibited substances that are imported into this country, the greater the harm that is caused to its citizens. Conversely, the moral culpability of the offender must increase, ordinarily, as the amount that was the subject of the importation is larger, as a reflection of the degree of criminality involved in the offending, and the amount of financial gain that is expected to be derived from such an egregious activity.”

In *R v Do* [2008] VSCA 199 the Court of Appeal (Vincent & Weinberg JJA & Robson AJA) held that a trial judge had not erred in declining to treat as a mitigating factor what was described by defence counsel – without supporting evidence – as “low level” purity of not less than a commercial quantity of MDA. The Court left open at [35]-[38] the question whether the case of *R v Mahasay* (2002) 135 A Crim R 232, 234 - which is authority for the proposition that low purity is a mitigating factor – has survived the rejection by the Court of Appeal in *R v Pidoto; R v O’Dea* of the concept of a harm-based system of classification of drug offences.

However, in *R v Trajkovski & Waters* [2011] VSCA 170 Weinberg JA (with whom Ashley JA & Hargrave AJA agreed) held that the judge’s statement that the low purity of the drug in the mixture was not to be given significant weight when assessing the applicant’s culpability was incorrect, stating at [124] & [127]:

“There is no reason, in principle, why the fact that the mixture contains what is plainly only the most miniscule quantity of a drug of dependence, and is therefore unlikely to produce the deleterious effects normally associated with a much larger amount of that particular drug, albeit in a mixture, should not be regarded as a significant factor to be taken into account in assessing the gravity of the offending…

In my opinion, there is nothing in *Pidoto* which requires the low level of purity of a particular drug in a case such as the present to be given little or no weight. Whether one views such a matter as a mitigating circumstance, or rather as simply reducing the objective culpability of the offending, matters little in the ultimate result. There is obviously a difference between trafficking in 3.9 kilograms of pure methylamphetamine, and trafficking in 1.9 grams of methylamphetamine in a mixture of 3.9 kilograms. To treat these two offences as relevantly indistinguishable would be an affront to common sense.”

On the issue of “purity” see also *R v Nguyen* [2011] VSCA 139 at [16].

In *Kapkidis v The Queen* [2013] VSCA 35 at [25] Maxwell P & Redlich JA said:

“In our view, nothing said in *Trajkovski* and *Nguyen* detracts from what this Court made clear in *Pidoto*. There is no place for considering the relative harmfulness of a drug in sentencing an offender for trafficking offences. Where the purity of the amount trafficked is ‘de minimis’ it may be taken into account, but save for such exceptional circumstances, the relative purity of a mixed quantity of a drug of addiction does not bear upon the objective gravity of the offence.”

For further discussion on the decision in *R v Pidoto; R v O’Dea*, see *R v Yacoub* [2006] VSCA 203; *R v Duncan* [2006] VSCA 239; *R v D’Aloia* [2006] VSCA 273; *R v Adams* [2007] VSCA 37; *R v Reed & Shortis* [2007] VSCA 67; *R v Karafilowski* [2007] VSCA 156; *R v Perrier, Pop & Tilley* [2008] VSCA 97.

In *R v Burgess* [2004] VSCA 187 the trial judge had not accepted the defendant's explanation that the reason he was cultivating 221 cannabis plants was to provide seed to feed his racing pigeons. In dismissing the appeal Charles JA, with whom Winneke P & Nettle JA agreed, noted at [19]:

"During the plea, both counsel and the judge accepted, I think, that quite different sentencing considerations would apply, depending upon whether her Honour found that the marijuana was being cultivated to provide seed for the appellant’s pigeons, as against for purposes of trafficking. It was not in question that where the purpose of cultivation might be described as 'innocent' such as for the purpose of feeding pigeons, this would mitigate the criminal conduct and lead to the imposition of a lesser sentence, and that such a factor should be proven by the offender on the balance of probabilities."

In *R v Weitering* [2006] VSCA 54 the Court of Appeal held that in relation to the offence of cultivation of cannabis, a commercial quantity could be established either by weight or by number of plants.

In *R v Ro Si Vo* [2005] VSCA 21 the appellant had pleaded guilty to one count of trafficking in heroin and was sentenced to 4 years’ imprisonment with a non-parole period of 2 years and 8 months. The appellant had been paid $2,000 to transport a package of heroin from Melbourne to Port Kembla. The trial judge, after noting that “trafficking in drugs is regarded as a most serious offence and…that drug-related offending is attacking the very fabric of our community”, held that for the purpose of sentencing the appellant was a courier. His Honour continued: “It is beyond argument that the courier has a most pivotal role to play in any drug distribution operation. Without the courier the proscribed drugs could not find their way on to the streets and so into our community.” His Honour held that the appellant’s “level of culpability…lies marginally below that of any principal”. In dismissing the appellant’s appeal, the Court of Appeal accepted and applied the following statements of principle from the judgment of Phillips CJ, Ormiston & Chernov JJA in *R v Nicholas* (2000) 1 VR 356 at [158] which, in turn, applied the majority judgment of Gleeson CJ, Gaudron, Hayne & Callinan JJ in R v Olbrich (1999) 199 CLR 270:

“1. The identification of the precise nature of an offender’s involvement in the act of importation of drugs is not an essential aspect of the sentencing process (See [13]).

2. For sentencing purposes, concentration should be on what it was that the offender actually did, in the setting of the offence for which he stood to be sentenced (See [19] & [21]).”

In *R v Fisher* [2005] VSCA 75, the Court of Appeal dismissed an appeal against a total effective sentence of 3 years’ imprisonment with a minimum term of 18 months imposed on the 32 year old female appellant who had pleaded guilty to one count of trafficking in speed and one count of attempted trafficking in cannabis, notwithstanding that she had shown a significant degree of rehabilitation. At [17] Chernov JA, with whom Warren CJ & Batt JA agreed, said:

“This Court has emphasised on a number of occasions the serious nature of the offence of trafficking in drugs of dependence given their devastating effect on the community, particularly on those who can least afford to be subjected to them. Consistently with its condemnation of such conduct, the Court has made it plain that those who traffick in such drugs should expect to receive condign punishment.”

In *R v White, Higgins & Dines* [2005] VSC 437 at [9]-[10], Teague J imposed community-based orders on three accused aged 27, 22 & 24 but reiterated the seriousness of drug trafficking:

[9] “The three of you were trafficking in speed at close to the lowest level. That was most clearly so in the case of you, Matthew White. Nevertheless, the expectations of the community are that courts will impose heavy penalties for trafficking in illegal drugs. Only rarely will it be appropriate not to impose an immediate term of imprisonment. The personal use of marijuana is also to be condemned. But trafficking in speed is a great deal more serious. Immense harm is caused by both drugs.

[10] I am satisfied that, because of the combination of several factors, the situation of all three of you is that an immediate term of imprisonment is not the only appropriate option. The first is that the trafficking was at a relatively lower level. The second is that Z was not sentenced to an immediate term of imprisonment. Accordingly, parity factors apply, although his undertaking to give evidence against others makes his position more difficult to compare. The third is that you have all pleaded guilty. The fourth is that your personal circumstances in each case operate to your advantage. None of you has had any prior convictions. Each of you has a good work record. Each of you has family support. Each of you has placed before the court letters of commendation. Finally, I have been provided with pre-sentence reports that support the imposition of a community based order subject to certain conditions.”

In *R v Catanzariti* [2006] VSC 162 the defendant had pleaded guilty to two counts of cultivation and cannabis and theft of electricity. In sentencing him to a wholly suspended sentence of 2y4m – which was based in part on an early plea of guilty, an offer to give evidence against co-accused and the Crown submission that a lengthy suspended sentence was within range – Teague J said at [5]:

“The high maximum penalties prescribed by Parliament reflect the community attitude that the cultivation of cannabis is to be condemned. I do accept that the aim of your involvement in the provision of advice and other assistance as to the cultivation of these cannabis plants was not primarily financial. Your aim was to acquire a large quantity of cannabis for personal use.”

In *DPP(Cth) v Alon Inbar* [2005] VSCA 116 the respondent had been sentenced to 5½ years’ imprisonment with a minimum of 3¼ years on a count of aiding and abetting the importation of ecstasy contrary to s.233B of the *Customs Act 1901* (Cth). His role had been to “clear drugs” through Customs. In the course of allowing a DPP appeal and increasing the respondent’s sentence to 7½ years with a minimum of 5 years, Winneke P – with whom Byrne & Osborn AJJA agreed – discussed principles relevant to the sentencing of persons involved as “couriers” in drug importation cases. At [23] his Honour said:

“True it is that the respondent is not a principal, but the role he played was a very significant one; and one which - like the courier - is vital to the aspirations harboured by his controllers. It has often been said that drug trafficking across international boundaries can only flourish if you have those who are prepared to carry them, even though for moderate reward. Experience in these courts shows us that couriers and others in similar capacities are people generally of good character and who take the risks which they do take for little reward. I refer, for example, to *R. v. Carey* [1998] 4 VR 13. Equally, experience tells us that these people frequently are kept in the dark by their principals about the nature and quantity of the drugs that they are carrying: see, for example, *Carey* and *Perrier and Richardson* (1990) 59 A Crim R 164. The same can be said in respect of the role played out by this respondent. It should not need to be said again by this Court that all those who play significant roles in bringing harmful drugs into this country can expect to receive condign punishment if caught; and particularly if - when caught - they do not co-operate with police. Although the respondent did not know the nature and quantity of the drugs the importation of which he was facilitating, he took the risk of aiding the importation of a huge amount which, if it had been circulated, would have inflicted real and lasting harm upon the community. It is my view that his conduct warranted a penalty in the order of nine to ten years; and similar penalties have been inflicted upon couriers for importing commercial quantities of this and other types of narcotics. I refer in particular to *Carey*, particularly at p.19; *R. v. Su* [1997] 1 VR 1 and *Perrier and Richardson*. The penalty which his Honour imposed, in my view, seriously under-estimated the part which the principles of general deterrence must play in inflicting penalties for this type of offence upon persons who play significant roles in the importation of large quantities of drugs and who do not co-operate when apprehended. I take the opportunity to remind judges who are dealing with couriers from other countries of what was said by Fullagar J in *Perrier and Richardson* at page 170. His Honour said:

‘Parliament has indicated the clear legislative intention that severe sentences be imposed for offences of this type. Bearing in mind that policy and the general level of sentence imposed for such offences, I consider that an appropriate level of sentence for this courier, if he had not co-operated with the police, would be of the order of 15 years' imprisonment. In reaching that conclusion, I have regarded as extenuating circumstances the respondent's previous good character and his impecuniosity and the fact that the sentence will be served in a country not his own.’

It must be remembered that, when those comments were made, remissions applied, so that the 15 years which his Honour mentioned would translate in current terms to 10 years.”

In *R v Gates* [2005] VSCA 61 the appellant had pleaded guilty to trafficking in a commercial quantity of pseudoephedrine (30kg of 80% purity). A sentence of 12 years’ imprisonment, said by the trial judge to represent a significant to high discount, was held by the Court of Appeal to be manifestly excessive. The appellant was re-sentenced to 10 years’ imprisonment. Nevertheless Eames JA, with whom Warren CJ & Batt JA agreed, noted at [27]: “The importance of general deterrence in cases of major drug trafficking has been repeatedly emphasised in the courts: see *R. v. Berisha* [1999] VSCA 112.” And at [18] his Honour said:

“As an examination of recent sentencing decisions discloses, the manufacture and trafficking in methylamphetamine has reached very serious levels throughout Australia, particularly in New South Wales, where the pseudoephedrine was bound in this case. The incidence of offences of trafficking in pseudoephedrine reflects directly on the growth in the trade of the finished product. Without the trade in one, there is not the trade in the other. In my opinion, the fact that pseudoephedrine is merely a precursor to manufacture of methylamphetamine ought produce only a modest amelioration in sentence for those who traffick in it, rather than in the finished product, but modest as the difference may be there must be some reflection in penalty for the fact that traffickers in commercial quantities of methylamphetamine seek even greater profits than those trading in pseudoephedrine.”

In *R v Cassar* [2005] VSCA 164 the appellant had been found guilty of one count of being knowingly concerned in the importation into Australia of not less than a traffickable quantity of cocaine. The appellant had no prior convictions. Being second in charge of an international freight company’s warehouse and operating in effect as a customs agent, his role in the enterprise was to be the “man on the inside”. In holding that a sentence of 6 years’ imprisonment with a non-parole period of 4 years was not manifestly excessive, Nettle JA, with whom Chernov JA & Byrne AJA agreed, said at [27]:

“Recently in *DPP v Leach* (2003) 139 A Crim R 64 at [9], Vincent JA noted again the concern repeatedly expressed in this court over the destructive effects of illicit drugs in our society and the importance of general deterrence as the principal sentencing consideration in drug trafficking cases. *Leach* was to do with trafficking in a commercial quantity of methylamphetamine, but of course the same considerations apply as much if not more in cases involving the importation of prohibited narcotics: *R v Marcuson Marcus* [2004] VSCA 155 at [4], applying *R v Berisha & Ors.* [1999] VSCA 112 at [39] – [43]. In my opinion it cannot be stressed too much that those who are tempted to get involved in the importation of traffickable quantities of prohibited narcotics will be sternly punished.”

In *R v Phenny Thai* [2005] VSCA 283 the appellant had been found guilty of one count of importing into Australia, by posting from Cambodia in a package addressed to his wife, 316.7g of heroin of approximately 70% purity. Although on appeal the non-parole period of his sentence of 5½ years imprisonment was reduced from 4 years to 3½ years, the Court of Appeal said at [29]:

“[T]he factors of both general and specific deterrence are of particular importance. This was a calculated offence conducted for no reason other than commercial gain by an entrepreneur seeking to shore up his other business activities by the injection of profit from the importing of heroin to Australia. Although it is said that the offence is not sophisticated, it did not require to be, but it was certainly calculated.”

In *R v Kiam Fah Teng* [2005] VSC 33 Kellam J sentenced the offender, a Malaysian citizen, to 22 years imprisonment with a non-parole period of 15 years after he had pleaded guilty to one count of aiding and abetting the importation of a commercial quantity of heroin into Australia. At [63]-[65] His Honour said:

[63] “This is a serious example of a grave crime. To have been involved at the level that you were, in the largest importation of heroin ever detected in this State, and one of the largest ever detected in Australia, calls for severe punishment. The issue of general deterrence is of great significance in the determination of the appropriate sentence to be imposed upon you. Those who see fit to take the risk of playing a part in the importation of heroin into this country must have no expectation other than that the consequences of engaging in such enterprises will be severe. As the Victorian Court of Appeal said in *R v Soo Su* [1997] 1 VR 1 at 73:

‘Again and again the Courts have said that importers and traffickers of heroin will receive heavy sentences.’

[64] I have no doubt that that comment applies to those who aid and abet the importation of substantial quantities of heroin.

[65] The importation of a large quantity of heroin in which you played a substantial facilitative role had the potential to cause grave harm to many members of our community. As Sully J said in *Cheung Wai Man* [unreported, Court of Criminal Appeal NSW, 22/03/1991]:

‘The importation or the attempted importation of, and the trafficking or attempted trafficking in, a quantity of heroin of the amount here in question is in a very real sense a declaration of war upon this community. It is a distinct challenge both to concepts of human dignity and to moral values otherwise which are fundamental to our way of life. It is no less a challenge to the rule of law which is in the end the ultimate guarantor of the personal freedoms and of the social stability which all of us Australians take for granted.

In the face of such challenges each of the institutional supports of our society has a role to play. That of the courts is to punish and deter according to law. Obviously, the courts alone cannot meet adequately, let alone defeat, the challenge of which I have been speaking. What the courts can do is to punish drug-related crime in a way which signals plainly to drug traffickers, especially foreign drug traffickers, that the courts are both able and willing to calibrate their sentences until a point is reached at which, to a significant extent even if never perfectly, fear of punishment risked will neutralise the greed which is the only possible motive of those who … engage in drug related crime…’

[66] In my view the words of Sully J are applicable to the circumstances of this case. As I have said, the circumstances of your case are such that the issue of general deterrence is most important. This country has a vast and unprotected coastline which some foreign drug dealers may see as providing an opportunity for undetected crime. Those persons and those who assist them must know that when detected they will suffer a heavy penalty for their greed.”

See also the sentencing remarks of Kellam J in sentencing co-accused in *R v Yau Kim Lam* [2005] VSC 98; *R v Ta Song Wong* [2006] VSC 126.

In *R v Doan* [2010] VSCA 250, the Court of Appeal dismissed an appeal by a “young offender” aged 20 and of prior good character against a sentence of 2 years imprisonment with a non-parole period of 14 months on a charge of cultivating cannabis in a commercial quantity. At [18] Nettle JA said:

“In my view lest there be any doubt about it, there should be no doubt that in cases involving cultivation of a narcotic plant in not less than a commercial quantity, general deterrence is at the forefront of sentencing considerations.”

In *R v Chandler & Paksoy* [2010] VSCA 338, the accused had pleaded guilty to one count of trafficking in a large commercial quantity of methylamphetamine that they had manufactured. This was 13.2kg, no less than 18 times the minimum required to constitute a large commercial quantity. The Court of Appeal held at [25] that: “Other things being equal, manufacturing a large commercial quantity of a drug for distribution is no less culpable than the distribution of that quantity of drug. Nevertheless the Court of Appeal reduced their sentences from IMP14y/9y to IMP12y/7y. One of the additional factors that the Court of Appeal took into account was the question of the lengthy delay between charge and sentence and that the accused Chandler was suffering severe clinical depression that made imprisonment more burdensome on him.

In *R v Gonzalez* [2011] VSCA 175 the accused had pleaded guilty to one count of trafficking in a large commercial quantity of pseudoephedrine which he had taken without permission in the course of his employment with a company whose business was the authorised disposal of pharmaceutical waste. In allowing an appeal by the DPP and increasing a sentence of IMP 4y to IMP 6y6m, the Court of Appeal said at [32]:

“As to the relevance of the weight of the drugs in question, it is plain that weight is but one of many sentencing considerations and weight should not be permitted to swamp other relevant sentencing considerations. Nevertheless, weight is a highly relevant factor. And in the present case, the enormous quantity of pseudoephedrine was highly relevant to denunciation, punishment and general deterrence.”

In *R v Son Anh Pham* and *R v Ken Tang* [2012] VSCA 101 each of the accused had been sentenced to IMP 19y/14y on counts of importation of large commercial quantities of drugs of dependence (71kg of cocaine, 9.7kg of ecstasy and 29kg of methamphetamine). In holding that the sentences were not manifestly excessive, the Court of Appeal said at [4]-[5]:

[4] “[I]t will be useful in some circumstances to distinguish the positions occupied by offenders within a hierarchical criminal organization as a means of determining the offender’s level of culpability. For example a courier will generally attract a more lenient sentence than a principal within a criminal drug hierarchy. The characterization of an offender’s position may not always illuminate and may sometimes obscure the actual level of criminality of the offender assessed by reference to his conduct {*The Queen v Olbrich* (1999) 199 CLR 270, 279 [19]–[20]; *De La Rosa* [2010] NSWCCA 194 [255]; *Nguyen and Pham* [2010] NSWCCA 238;  *Phommalysack v The Queen* [2011] VSCA 32, [34]; *Paxton v R* [2011] NSWCCA 242}. Where the evidence establishes the acts performed by the offender and their position within the criminal organization, the offender’s criminality is to be assessed by a consideration of both the actions of the offender and the role he occupies within the organization {*The Queen v Olbrich* (supra); *Savass v R* (1995) 183 CLR 1;  *R v Wong; R v Leung* [1999] NSWCCA 420; *Tyler v R* [2007] NSWCCA 247, [78]–[95]; *R v Riddell* [2009] NSWCCA 96 [37]–[41]}.

[5] It will often be difficult to categorise the role of the offender within the criminal enterprise or to determine his role relative to others. The focus must then be upon the degree of criminality of the acts performed and their importance in accomplishing the organisation’s criminal purpose. When dealing with a number of offenders whose positions within the enterprise are difficult to identify or are closely aligned, the need will arise to identify the features of each offender’s conduct that justify the imposition of the sentences, whether they are the same or different, which have been imposed on each co-offender.”

Attached to the judgment in *DPP v OPQ* [2012] VSCA 115 there are two tables detailing respectively:

* + six sentences imposed for possession and attempted possession of a marketable quantity of a border controlled drug contrary to s.307.6(1) of the Cth Criminal Code; and
  + 24 sentences imposed for importation and attempted importation of a marketable quantity of a border controlled drug contrary to s.307.2(1) of the Cth Criminal Code

Neave JA (with whom Maxwell ACJ specifically agreed) stated at [39] that the “provision of information of this kind is particularly helpful when it is claimed that a sentence falls outside the range of sentences which can be imposed for a particular offence.” In this case the appellant was not convicted of importation but of attempting to possess a marketable quantity of a border-controlled drug. At [42] Neave JA referred with approval to the following dicta of Johnson J (Macfarlan JA and RA Hulme J concurring) in *R v Nguyen* (2010) 205 A Crim R 106, 127-8 [72]:

“(l) where an offender…is to be sentenced for an attempted possession offence, it should be kept in mind that the act of attempted possession can be attended by a wide range of moral culpability, so that the circumstances in which a person so charged attempted to come into possession of the drug, and what it was that the person intended to do with that drug, is relevant to determining the degree of moral culpability attached to the act of attempted possession itself, so that a sentencing judge should have regard to the offender’s involvement in the overall transaction for the purpose of determining the offender’s degree of involvement in a drug-smuggling enterprise: *El-Ghourani v The Queen* (2009) 195 A Crim R 208, [33]-[37];

(m) offences of attempting to possess imported drugs are not, for that reason, in a less serious category than that of importing the drugs: *R v Ferrer-Esis* (1991) 55 A Crim R 231, 230.”

In *Gregory (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2017] VSCA 151 the Court of Appeal (Maxwell P, Redlich & Beach JJA) dismissed an appeal against a sentence of IMP8y6m/6y imposed on a charge of trafficking in a commercial quantity of methylamphetamine. The appellant’s offending was described by the Court of Appeal as follows:

“For a period of eight months in 2013, the appellant (BG) ran a drug trafficking business in regional Victoria. The drugs – principally methylamphetamine (‘ice’) – were brought to regional Victoria by van from New South Wales. BG supplied the drugs to a network of dealers who on-sold them. He used intimidation, fear and violence to enforce payment of the debts which the delers incurred.”

At [98] the Court said:

“[S]entences well into double figures would have been expected for commercial quantity trafficking offences where one or more of the following features was present:

* the quantity involved approached the large commercial quantity threshold;
* the offender was in charge of the trafficking business;
* the business was conducted for a substantial period;
* the offender pleaded not guilty; and/or
* the offender had relevant prior convictions.

In *Frank Blango v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 210 the Court of Appeal dismissed an appeal against a TES of IMP16y6m/12y6m imposed on a 30-31YO on (1) a rolled-up charge of attempting to possess 33 consignments containing methylamphetamine with an aggregate quantity of 55.95kg and an estimated street value of $31-$61 million; (2) a charge of attempting to possess a marketable quantity of heroin, namely 4 consignments totalling 725g with a street value of $217,500; (3) a charge of attempting to possess a marketable quantity of cocaine, namely 28.89g with a street value of $8,600. The appellant was a member of a criminal syndicate that imported and distributed border controlled drugs in Victoria. At [55] Whelan & Kyrou JJA said:

“The judge was correct to emphasise the importance of general deterrence in a case such as the present. As this Court said in *Brown* [2017] VSCA 162 [9], [68], there needs to be ‘a clear signal to would-be offenders, motivated by the potential financial rewards of drug importation, that detection will inevitably lead to very lengthy terms of imprisonment’.”

In *Sarah Ellis v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 221 the Court of Appeal refused leave to appeal against a TES of IMP4y6m/3y imposed on a 24YO on charges of (1) trafficking and (2) trafficking a commercial quantity of 1,4-butanediol. At [19]-[21] Whelan & Beach JJA said:

“The judge…stated that he regarded the applicant’s traumatic childhood as a mitigatory feature. He also referred to the psychologist’s report, including the discussion of the applicant’s drug use and mental health issues.

The sentencing judge said he had had careful regard to the decision of *DPP v Maxwell* [2013] VSCA 50 in which this Court considered the relationship between the financial reward anticipated by a drug offender and the objective gravity of the offence. The judge noted the Crown’s concession that 1,4-butanediol is less profitable than other drugs of dependence. The sentencing judge accepted the applicant’s counsel’s submission that the applicant’s offending ‘lies at the lower end of the range of offences of trafficking in a commercial quantity of a drug of dependence’.

The sentencing judge assessed the applicant’s prospects of rehabilitation as poor. He noted that despite her relative youth, the applicant had a significant prior criminal history, and that much would depend on her ability to remain drug free.”

In *Ban Joo Teoh v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 239 the Court of Appeal refused leave to appeal against a TES of IMP9y/7y imposed on charges of attempting to possess and of trafficking a marketable quantity of methylamphetamine. At [49]-[50] Kyrou & Kaye JJA said:

“During the past decade or more, the courts have become increasingly conscious of the proliferation of drugs in our society, and of the grave and pernicious harm caused to individuals who have succumbed to their temptation to use them, and to society as a whole. In the vast majority of cases, persons who engage in trafficking prohibited substances are driven by the lure of large profits. In short, their motivation is pure greed.

It is for that reason that general deterrence and denunciation assume an important, if not primary, role in the determination of sentences for the kind of offence that was the subject of Charge 2 [trafficking]. As the authorities have emphasised, sentences to be imposed for drug importation offences, and for drug trafficking offences, must be such as to impress on intending drug traffickers that by seeking to reap the potentially large financial rewards from drug trafficking, they run a significant risk, when detected, of severe punishment, consisting of sentences which deprive them of their liberty to live in society for long periods of time. For these reasons, it is recognised and accepted that personal mitigating circumstances, such as previous good character and lack of previous convictions, are generally given less weight as mitiganting factors. See for example *R v Nguyen*; *R v Pham* (2010) 205 A Crim R 106, 127 [72].”

At [55]-[58] Kyrou & Kaye JJA went on to analyse and approve the following four cases to which reference had been made by the prosecutor to demonstrate current Commonwealth sentencing practices: *Nguyen v The Queen* [2010] NSWCCA 132*; DPP (Cth) v Merrill* [2015] VSCA 52; *OPQ v The Queen* (2012) 221 A Crim R 424; *Cappis v The Queen* [2015] NSWCCA 138.

In *Bembo v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 308 the Court of Appeal refused leave to appeal against a TES of IMP35y/25y imposed after separate trials, the first invoving an attempt by the applicant to possess a commercial quantity (3.767 kilograms pure) of heroin, the other an attempt by the applicant to possess a commercial quantity (125.682 kilograms pure) of methamphetamine. At [167]-[168] Priest, Niall & Ashley JJA said:

“We need not add to the lament concerning the harm to society that drugs such as those that the applicant sought to possess cause. They are destructive of the mental and physical health of a great many members of the community, with incalculable harm to society. The applicant’s participation in drug-related activity was motivated by greed, not altruism.

His very considerable offending called for very considerable punishment. Not only was general deterrence an important feature that needed to be reflected in the sentence imposed, but his enthusiastic and cynical offending demonstrated that a healthy measure of personal deterrence was also required. We would not be sanguine about his prospects of rehabilitation.”

In *Goh v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 24 the Court of Appealdismissed an appeal against a sentence of IMP11y/6y9m on a plea of guilty to attempting to possess 8.31kg of heroin. The appellant was a “mid-level functionary” who had recruited and coordinated others. He had cooperated with authorities, had a lack of prior convictions, had good prospects of rehabilitation and faced deportation on release. A coffender had been sentenced to IMP7y/4y6m. In dismissing the appeal, T Forrest & Walker JJA said at [60]:

“In our opinion the sentence imposed by the sentencing judge, while stern, was within the range of sentences open to a judge to impose in the reasonable exercise of sentencing discretion. This was serious offending and the appellant’s moral culpability was high. Offending of this kind requires giving real weight to general deterrence and public denunciation, consistently with the maximum penalty of life imprisonment: *Schanker* [2018] VSCA 94, [229] (Tate and McLeish JJA and Kidd AJA). The appellant’s involvement was significant, rather than at the lower level, although we accept that he was not a key figure in the operation, as his expected financial gain revealed. The quantity of drugs involved was well above the commercial quantity threshold, and was greater than the quantities involved in *Ng* [2010] NSWCCA 232, *Thomas* (2016) 53 VR 546; [2016] VSCA 237 and *Lam* [2015] NSWCCA 143, which attracted similar sentences.”

In *Terry James Johnson v The King* [2022] VSCA 228 the Court of Appealrefused leave to appeal against a sentence of IMP2y6m/16m imposed on a 31 year old offender with an extensive criminal history who had pleaded guilty to trafficking methylamphetamine. At [9] & [23]-[24] Priest AP & Niall JA said:

[9] “The charge of trafficking in a drug of dependence was put on the basis of possession for sale: see the definition of ‘traffick’ in s 70 of the Drugs Act. In this case, the applicant was found in possession of 94 grams of pure methylamphetamine. The commercial quantity of methylamphetamine is 50 grams pure [Drugs Act, Schedule 11, Part 3, column 2] and the trafficable quantity is three grams (in a mixture) [Drugs Act, Schedule 11, Part 3, column 3]. All other things being equal, the greater the quantity trafficked the more serious the offence: see *Wong v The Queen* (2001) 207 CLR 584, 609 [67]–[69]; *R v Pidoto* (2006) 14 VR 269, 278 [41]; *DPP (Cth) v KMD* (2015) 254 A Crim R 244, 257 [52]; *Gregory (a pseudonym) v The Queen* (2017) 268 A Crim R 1, 8 [24]; *Lytras v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 150, [59]‑[63]. Thus, even if one accepts — as was put to the judge by the applicant’s counsel — that some of the ice in the applicant’s possession was intended for personal use, the quantity that he possessed for sale remains significant.”

[23] “Although, in the circumstances of this case, the sentence imposed appears to be stern, we are not persuaded that it is wholly outside the range of sentences open in the sound exercise of discretion. That being so, appellate intervention is not warranted.

[24] This Court has emphasised on many occasions that general deterrence is an important sentencing consideration in cases of drug trafficking. Those who seek the apparent financial rewards associated with drug trafficking must know that they will be punished appropriately if detected. It is also important that a sentencing court take into account the prevalence of the offence of trafficking in methylamphetamine when assessing the weight to be given to general deterrence*: Haddara v The Queen* [2016] VSCA 168, [69] (Redlich, Priest and Beach JJA).”

In *Rohen v The King* [2024] VSCA 1, the applicant was found guilty after a jury trial and sentenced to IMP10y/6y6m on a charge of attempting to possess a commercial quantity of an unlawfully imported border controlled drug, namely 15.456kg of cocaine. In refusing leave to appeal against the sentence, Boyce JA (with whom Priest & Taylor JJA agreed) said at [125]-[126]:

[125] “…[T]he offence committed by the applicant carries a maximum penalty of life imprisonment. The applicant attempted to possess a very substantial quantity of cocaine — well over the commercial threshold — that was valued at millions of dollars (whether the value be assessed at wholesale or street level). His role, while limited, was nonetheless an important one; after all, he signed for the consignment containing the drugs and assisted in the consignment’s transfer away from the point of delivery. The judge, in my view correctly, characterised the applicant’s assistance as ‘substantial and important’ to the overall aims of the criminal enterprise. The applicant could not rely on the mitigating effect of a plea of guilty. The applicant had relevant prior convictions.

[126] The applicant was able to rely upon various mitigating factors which included the various ‘moderating factors’ taken into account by the sentencing judge. Whilst the combination of those factors carried weight, in my view the sentence imposed, having regard to the sentencing principles that apply to offending of the type committed by the applicant and given the overall circumstances of the offending, gave adequate expression to the combined weight of the mitigatory matters relied upon.”

In *DPP v Christie* [2024] VSCA 198 the 32-year old respondent – who had no criminal history – had pleaded guilty to charges including–

1. a rolled up count of trafficking in a large commercial quantity of a drug of dependence comprising 59.52kg of methamphetamine, 33.16kg of cocaine & 3.7kg of MDMA for which he had been sentenced to IMP12y;
2. a count of trafficking in a commercial quantity of a drug of dependence comprising 4.01kg of 1,4-butanediol for which he had been sentenced to IMP4y of which 2y was cumulative on the sentence on charge 1; and
3. a count of knowingly dealing with the proceeds of crime in the form of $1,585,985 in cash for which he had been sentenced to IMP5y of which 2y was culumative on the sentence on charge 1.

The total effective sentence was IMP16y/11y. The DPP appeal was allowed and the respondent was re-sentenced to a TES IMP18y/11y6m made up as follows:

1. IMP16y;
2. IMP4y wholly concurrent on the sentence on charge 1; and
3. IMP5y of which 2y was cumulative on the sentence on charge 1.

At [68]-[73] the Court of Appeal (Emerton P, Priest & McLeish JJA) said:

[68] “In this case, we agree with the Director that the sentence on charge 1 of 12 years’ imprisonment is manifestly inadequate having regard to the eye-wateringly large quantity of drugs involved. The quantity of methamphetamine alone is 79 times more than the threshold for a large commercial quantity. The quantity of cocaine exceeds the LCQ threshold by a factor of 33. Despite the charges being limited to conduct on one day, this is trafficking on a significant scale. None of the LCQ cases to which the Court was referred involved amounts even approaching these quantities.

[69] In so holding, we are cognisant that, while nearly always important, the quantity of drugs involved is only one of the factors that bears on sentencing [as] the judgments in *R v Pham* (2015) 256 CLR 550 explained at 562 [36]:

[T]o treat the weight of the narcotic as the chief factor in fixing sentence, without taking into account the many conflicting and contradictory elements which bear upon sentencing an offender, represents a departure from fundamental sentencing principle.

[70] And at 564 [45]:

It is well settled that the quantity of the drug is not the controlling factor when it comes to the assessment of the seriousness of an importation offence (or other drug offence). The quantity of the drug imported (or trafficked or possessed) will usually be relevant to assessment of the seriousness of the offence. In some cases it will be the most significant consideration in this regard and in other cases it may be of little moment.

[71] In this case, the quantity of the drugs the subject of charge 1 is a most important consideration in sentencing. The sheer quantity of the drugs trafficked by the respondent makes the offending objectively very serious indeed, as the judge recognised. Although the respondent can call upon a number of mitigating factors — most especially his guilty plea to each charge — they are not individually or in combination so weighty or compelling as to justify a term of imprisonment on charge 1 that is significantly below the standard sentence for LCQ trafficking.

[72] There is no challenge to the way in which the judge described the role of the respondent in the trafficking operation in question. He was a ‘trusted participant’ whose role was ‘a vital and important one’. The legislature has made it plain that LCQ trafficking must attract a significant term of imprisonment, and that the penalties must be noticeably more severe than those for trafficking in commercial quantities. General deterrence is a particularly important sentencing consideration in light of the pernicious effects of the drugs in question on individuals and the community more generally.

[73] Given the standard sentence of 16 years’ imprisonment for LCQ trafficking, and having regard to the seriousness of the offending in this case, 12 years’ imprisonment is outside the range of available sentences, notwithstanding the respondent’s guilty plea and the other factors raised in mitigation.”

In *DPP v Luong Tran* [2024] VSCA 16 the respondent had pleaded guilty – after a sentence indication – to one count of cultivation of a large commercial quantity of a narcotic plant (cannabis) at Campbellfield, Kilsyth and Braeside, at which large scale factory-based hydroponic facilities were used. The plea was conducted on the basis that the respondent knew that a large commercial quantity of cannabis was being cultivated at Campbellfield, but that he was unaware of the volume being cultivated at the other two premises. The respondent was not alleged to have been an organiser of the syndicate that operated the cultivation premises. Rather, he had participated in the cultivation by delivering supplies that were necessary to cultivate the cannabis hydroponically and by providing other support to the organisers of the syndicate (such as hiring trucks and making payments of rent for the Campbellfield premises). He also attended the three premises on various occasions. The sentencing judge imposed a sentence of IMP4y4m/2y8m. On appeal all three justices held that the sentence was manifestly inadequate. However, Walker JA would have dismissed the appeal in the exercise of the residual discretion. Niall & Boyce JJA did not exercise the residual discretion and resentenced the respondent to IMP6y/4y, saying at [2]-[7]:

[2] “The relevant considerations that a sentencing court must take into account are primarily found in the *Sentencing Act 1991* as explicated in decisions of this Court and the High Court. The principles that are to be applied in sentencing an offender for drug offences generally accord with those applicable to other offences. That said, the cases emphasise certain factors as being of particular importance in sentencing offenders for drug offences.

[3] First, the structure of drug offences is tied to the quantity of drugs involved: *Nguyen v The Queen* [2010] VSCA 127, [19]; *Dang v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 24, [2], [15].

[4] Second, Parliament’s assessment of the gravity of this type of offending is partially revealed by the relevant maximum term of imprisonment: *Nguyen v The Queen* [2010] VSCA 127, [20]; *Lai v The King* [2023] VSCA 151, [23]. There is no room for the Court to make any relative assessment as to the harm caused by various drugs: Parliament has already attended to that task, as reflected in the different quantities of each drug that make up trafficable, commercial and large commercial quantities.

[5] Third, in part demand for drugs is fuelled by addiction. That is not always the case. For some people, even where addiction is not relevant drugs are still often highly sought after. Either way, demand is strong. On the other side of the equation, supply is limited by general prohibitions on the possession and sale of illicit drugs, resulting in a large illicit market with very high prices. For that reason, the supply of drugs is often motivated by financial rewards which can be enormous. Having regard to the societal harm that drug use can produce and the enormous profits that can be gained from illicit supply, general deterrence is a very important factor in sentencing: *Lai* [2023] VSCA 151, [18].

[6] Fourth, it is a corollary of giving significant weight to general deterrence that factors personal to the offender, while remaining important, are often required to yield or be accorded less weight than in respect of other kinds of offences: *Tsang v The Queen* (2011) 35 VR 240, 274 [162]; [2011] VSCA 336.

[7] Fifth, as many of the cases demonstrate, in addition to the weight of the drugs involved, the role played by an accused may be significant in assessing the relative criminality and culpability that the offending entails: *Nguyen v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 134, [59]; *Dang* [2020] VSCA 24, [15]. There may be, to our minds at least, a tension between a focus on role and the achievement of the deterrence that the maximum penalties are intended to support. That is because it may serve to atomise the organisation in a way that dilutes the fact that the overall enterprise has been assessed by the legislature as grave criminal behaviour which, in respect of a large commercial quantity, attracts a maximum of life imprisonment, an available penalty reserved for very few offences.”

In *Hourigan v The King* [2024] VSCA 30 the Court of Appeal refused leave to appeal to a 29 year old offender, saying at [21]:

“It follows that we are not satisfied that the applicant has demonstrated that the sentence is manifestly excessive. An assertion of manifest excess is an assertion that the sentence imposed is wholly beyond the range of sentences open to the judge in the reasonable exercise of his or her sentencing discretion. The sentence must be sufficiently excessive that it bespeaks otherwise unidentifiable error. As we have indicated, our conclusion is that the aggregate sentence of 5 months’ imprisonment falls well short of this characterisation. This was serious offending. The applicant possessed over 2 kilograms of butanediol, nearly 3.5 kilograms of cannabis and smaller quantities of cocaine and methylamphetamine. Cannabis seedlings were growing under a heat lamp. The original sentence was merciful and the resentence, in our view, is still lenient. An examination of comparative sentences demonstrates this: see, for example, *Nguyen v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 346.”

In *Pulis v The King* [2025] VSCA 2 the 40 year old applicant had pleaded guilty and been sentenced to IMP8m + CCO18m on one charge of cultivation of Cannabis L, namely 221 plants found at the applicant’s residence which he maintained were for personal use to self-medicate for mental health issues. Refusing leave to appeal Emerton P & J Forrest JA said at [73]:

“The end result was well within the available range of sentencing options available given:

1. the nature of the set up and the quantity of plants involved;
2. the fact that the applicant was a repeat offender — and that the prior conviction had only occurred a short time prior to the instant offending; and
3. the applicant committed the offending whilst on a CCO.”

Other cases of sentencing for drug trafficking / cultivation / importation etc include:

* *R v WMR* [2005] VSCA 59 – Trafficking of pseudoephedrine – Commercial quantity of approximately 3kg – Plea of guilty – Appellant transferred to Victoria for sentencing from interstate prison, where undergoing sentence for five years’ imprisonment for manufacturing methylamphetamine within same period as Victorian offence – Interstate offence deemed to have been imposed in Victoria – Commencement date of interstate offence deemed to have been imposed by a Victorian Court – Sentence by Victorian judge of four years’ imprisonment on trafficking count and sentences for other counts to be served concurrently – Victorian sentence ordered to be served cumulatively on interstate sentence, producing total effective sentence of nine years’ imprisonment, with new non-parole period of five years and three months’ – Sentence held manifestly excessive – Principle in *Mill v R* (1988) 166 CLR 59 – Sentence of three years’ imprisonment on trafficking count substituted, with twelve months cumulative on interstate sentence – Total effective sentence of six years - New non-parole period fixed of four years. See also *DPP (Cth) v Vestic* [2008] VSCA 12.
* *R v Luong & Ors* [2005] VSCA 94 - Trafficking in commercial quantity of heroin on wide scale – Applicants and several other co-offenders part of an elaborate heroin distribution organization –Sentences of 10 years with minimum of 7½ years, 9 years with minimum of 7 and 8 years with minimum of 6 not manifestly excessive.
* *R v Ken Ha Khanh Phong* [2005] VSCA 149 - Importation of 2.996 kg. of pure heroin – Sentence of 15½ years with non-parole period of 11½ years not manifestly excessive – At [85] Court of Appeal noted: “It has been repeatedly said by the courts in sentencing for offences dealing with the importation of, and trafficking in heroin, that much weight is to be given to general deterrence”: See e.g. *R v Berisha, Elmazovski and Rizmani* [1999] VSCA 112 per Tadgell JA at [39] to [43]; *R v Roberts and Urbanec* [2004] VSCA 1 per Batt JA at [147].
* *DPP v Barbaro & Zirrilli* [2012] VSC 47 – Guilty plea to conspiracy to traffick 4.4ton MDMA & 1.4 ton pure MDMA (2900 times the commercial quantity), traffick in commercial quantity MDMA (1.2 million tablets – 50kg pure MDMA) and attempt to possess commercial quantity of cocaine (99.9kg pure) – Highest level of offending, international organized crime, conducted as business, greed, professionalism, profit. Barbaro at apex IMP Life/30y. Zirrilli his right hand man IMP 26y/18y. Appeals dismissed [2012] VSCA 288 & [2014] HCA 2.
* *R v Yim & Ors* [2012] VSC 325 – Guilty plea to importing a commercial quantity of a border controlled drug (207kg pure cocaine: “one of the largest ever detected by our authorities”) – IMP 20y/16y & 29y/15y. Young coffender aged 20½ guilty plea to attempting to possess a commercial quantity – IMP 11y/6y6m.
* *R v A Mokbel (sentence)* [2012] VSC 255 – Guilty plea two counts of trafficking in a drug of dependence (MDMA & methylamphetamine) in an amount not less than a large commercial quantity and a count of incitement to import a prohibited import – Accused was “the principal head of this enterprise” – IMP30y/22y – in footnote [37] a number of comparable cases are listed. This sentence was subsequently varied to IMP26y/20y: see *Mokbel v The King* [2023] VSCA 40.
* *R v Doble* [2007] VSCA 47 - Trafficking in amphetamine & heroin and possession of cocaine, ecstacy & amphetamine: – 4y2m/25m not manifestly excessive – Defendant was one of 16 persons who played various parts in the conduct of a major drug distribution syndicate controlled by Dominic Parisi, all of whom pleaded guilty to various offences and were sentenced by the same judge.
* *R v Mr Z* [2005] VSC 90; *R v Bosio, Clarke & Zogheib* [2005] VSCA 209 [“one step above street level dealing”]; *R v Komljenovic* [2006] VSCA 136 [cannabis trafficking business conducted “at street level” but heroin traffic business “at least two strata above street level” – “the evils of drug trafficking…and its effects on the community…criminal conduct of the kind committed by the applicant is regarded as being particularly reprehensible”].
* *DPP v Willis & Hossack* [2009] VSCA 14 – Trafficking & cultivation of commercial quantity of cannabis – Court of Appeal upheld wholly suspended sentences and fines.
* *Polimeni v The Queen* [2014] VSCA 72 – 13 day trial of charge of conspiracy to traffick more than 50 times the commercial quantity of cocaine – IMP18y/12y: “Given the nature and gravity of the applicant’s offending and the level of his moral culpability, any suggestion that the sentence is excessive is…untenable.”
* *Dao v The Queen; Tran v The Queen* [2014] VSCA 93 – Trafficking in more than 30 times a large commercial quantity of heroin and methylamphetamine – Offence committed on a single day – Late plea of guilty – Insufficient evidence adduced of extent of appellants’ role – Offence correctly characterized as “most serious example of most serious offence” – Sentences IMP18y/13y characterized as “stern sentences at the upper end of the available range” but not crushing.
* *Director of Public Prosecutions (Cth) v Brown* [2017] VSCA 162 – 2 x importation of commercial quantity of methamphetamine for financial gain – 1st 4.5 x commercial quantity – 2nd 60 x commercial quantity – TES12y/7y manifestly inadequate cf comparable cases – resentenced TES20y/15y.
* *Anthony Pham v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 200 – Convicted following trial to attempting to traffick in a large commercial quantity of cocaine – 250kg which is 250 times the applicable large commercial quantity – IMP15y/11y6m – No reasonable prospect that sentence would be reduced on appeal.
* *Djordjic v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 227 – Two charges of trafficking in a commercial quantity of a drug of dependence involving 4.2kg of substances (cocaine & methylamphetamine), a charge of knowingly dealing with proceeds of crime involving cash totalling $3.7 million and possession of an unregistered handgun – TES IMP 19y6m/14y6m characterised as “stern but reflecting, appropriately, the seriousness of the offending that the applicant had engaged in, and, as such fulfilled the requirement that sentences imposed for such offending be sufficient to constitute a clear and unambigious message by the courts that those, who wish to reap large pofits from the egregious trade of drug trafficking, must, if detected, expect to lose their liberty for a long period of time.”
* *Foley v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 99 – One charge of attempting to possess a commercial quantity (815g) of MDMA – IMP7y6m/5y not manifestly excessive.
* *Rahmani v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 51 – Having regard to the maximum penalty of life imprisonment, the applicant’s plea of not guilty and the importance of general deterrence, the sentence of IMP9y for trafficking in a large commercial quantity of methamphetamine (1.33kg at 87% purity) was “very moderate” and considerable weight must have been given to the mitigating factors on which the applicant relied; compare *Gregory* *(a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2017] VSCA 151; *Arico v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 135.
* *Osman v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 176 – 2 x trafficking + 2 x trafficking in a large commercial quantity of heroin & ‘mixed substance’ by 54 year old applicant at ‘middle level’ of drug trafficking syndicate – appeal allowed – sentence IMP19y/13y reduced to IMP16y/12y.
* *Tran v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 278 – The 28 year old applicant pleaded guilty to one charge of attempting to possess a commercial quantity of a border controlled drug – 301.6kg of methamphetamine with wholesale value of between $36.2 million and $75.4 million – applicant was a ‘trusted organiser’ of one part of the enterprise – original sentence IMP23y6m/15y6m was 3.76 times that of coaccused – on appeal on grounds of parity resentenced to IMP18y/12y.
* *Awad v The Queen; Tambakakis v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 285 – Appeal against conviction on charge of attempting to possess a commercial quantity of an unlawfully imported border-controlled drug (cocaine of value $3.9-5.3 million) refused – appeal against sentence IMP15y/10y refused – coaccused aged 41 & 35 with no relevant priors – the majority held that “it was open to the judge to conclude that neither of the applicants were mere conduits or had only a transitory connecton with the contraband…the judge was entitled to regard both of the applicants as playing a key role in the possession of a large quantity of cocaine as it entered the Australian illicit market and for the purpose of it being moved on. It was well open to the judge to find that the role played by each applicant involved foresight and planning and was motivated by the promise of substantial gain”. Appeal against conviction allowed by High Court on ground of breach of s.44J *Jury Directions Act 2015* and new trial ordered: *Awad v The Queen;* *Tambakakis v The Queen* [2022] HCA 36.
* *Tawfik v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 287 – The Court of Appeal (Maxwell P, McLeish & T Forrest JJA) allowed an appeal against sentence on a charge of conspiracy to import a commercial quantity of cocaine – for Tawfik a sentence of IMP25y/16y9m was reduced to IMP20y/14y – for coaccused Saptura a sentence of IMP18y/12y was reduced to IMP14y/9y6m.
* *Chuah v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 51 – The Court of Appeal (Priest & Kyrou JJA) allowed an appeal against a TES of IMP8y/4y6m on charges of attempt to possess a marketable quantity of an unlawfully imported border controlled drug (methamphetamine) and improper possession of a foreign travel document and imposed a TES IMP 6y9m/3y9m.
* *Donnes v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 123 – The Court of Appeal (Walker JA) refused leave to appeal against a TES of IMP5y/3y6m on charges of trafficking and possessing various drugsdetailed in [1], including heroin, 1-4 Butanediol, methylamphetamine, cocaine, MDMA & cannabis.
* *Rodgerson v The Queen [No 2]* [2022] VSCA 154 – The appellant pleaded guilty to one charge of possessing a substance, equipment or instructions for the commercial manufacture of controlled drugs, one charge of conducting a business of trafficking a marketable quantity of a controlled drug MDMA, one charge of possessing a controlled drug MDMA and one charge of failing to comply with an order under s 3LA(2) of the Crimes Act 1914 (Cth). The Court of Appeal (Emerton P, Kyrou & T Forrest JJA) upheld a TES IMP6y5m/3y8m, holding at [92] that “a lesser sentence would not be of a severity appropriate in all the circumstances of this case.”
* *Alicia Mason (a pseudonym) v The King* [2023] VSCA 75 – The applicant had pleaded guilty to a charge of importing a commercial quantity of a border controlled drug described by the Court of Appeal as “enormous”, namely around 1.2 tonnes of methylamphetamine and just under 30kg of heroin. She had been sentenced to IMP11y/7y, the sentencing judge having taken into account her plea of guilty, her cooperation with authorities, her ongoing physical and mental health issues and the impact of imprisonment on her family including her 13 & 16 year old children. The Court of Appeal (Beach & Niall JJA) dismissed the appeal, holding that it was not reasonably arguable that the head sentence and the non-parole period were manifestly excessive.
* *Ong v The King* [2023] VSCA 116 – The 27 year old applicant, a Malaysian citizen, had pleaded guilty to one charge of attempting to possess a commercial quantity of unlawfully imported border controlled drug (7.7 kilograms of methamphetamine crystals, of 80.1% purity, concealed within 12 water filters). In refusing leave to appeal, Kyrou JA held at [72]: “Having regard to the gravity of the offending and the applicant’s moral culpability, the fact that the judge imposed a sentence of [IMP7y/4y] for an offence with a maximum penalty of life imprisonment can only be explicable on the basis that the judge gave significant weight to the principles in *Worboyes* and to the other mitigating factors upon which the applicant relied.”
* *DPP v Jabbour* [2023] VSCA 204 – The respondent had pleaded guilty to onecharge of trafficking a drug of dependence in large commercial quantity, one charge of trafficking and one charge of possession. On the charge of trafficking in large commercial quantity the sentence imposed was IMP12y. The standard sentence is IMP16y. The TES was IMP12y6m/7y. The respondent had two prior convictions for trafficking a drug of depending. The current offending was “at or just below the middle range of seriousness”. There were significant mitigating factors including positive prospects of rehabilitation. The Court of Appeal (Emerton P, Beach & McLeish JJA) held that the sentences and non-parole period were within range and dismissed the DPP appeal.
* *Kwag v The King* [2024] VSCA 279 – The respondent had been convicted of offences including trafficking a large commercial quantity of methylamphetamine and trafficking a commercial quantity of cocaine – TES IMP16y/10y – Base sentence IMP13y for the large commercial quantity offence and sentence IMP9y6m, 2y cumulation for the commercial quantity offence – Applicant played a vital and trusted role within serious high-level criminal enterprise – His personal circumstances had been taken into account in mitigation – Regard to current sentencing practice – General deterrence prominent – The Court of Appeal (Macaulay & Kaye JJA) held that the sentence was within permissible range and refused leave to appeal.

**CULTIVATION OF CANNABIS**:

* *R v S* [2006] VSCA 134;
* *R v Sibic & Sibic* [2006] VSCA 296;
* *R v Garlick (No 2)* [2007] VSCA 23;
* *R v Vardouniotis* [2007] VSCA 62;
* *R v Evans* [2007] VSCA 76;
* *R v McKittrick* [2008] VSCA 69;
* *Ngyuen v The Queen* [2010] VSCA 127 where the Court of Appeal set out in a table numerous cases in which an offender was sentenced for the offence of cultivating a commercial quantity of a narcotic plant and where the sentences imposed ranged from 10m to 5y IMP;
* *R v Chhim, R v Arslanov* [2010] VSCA 347;
* *R v Hanks* [2011] VSCA 7;
* *Barton v The Queen* [2013] VSCA 360;
* *Romano Falzon v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 179 [commercial quantity –IMP3y9m/2y6m];
* *Jamel Mohtadi v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 238 [commercial quantity – IMP3y3m];
* *Muaremov v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 298 [high end quantity but cultivation *simpliciter* – IMP2y];
* *Tuan Pham v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 308 [commercial quantity + 2 counts of theft IMP4y6m/2y9m];
* *Quan Quan Le v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 309 [IMP2y/18m for a ‘crop-sitter’ cultivating cannabis characterized as ‘stern’ but within range];
* *Kennedy v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 127 [IMP4y];
* *Nguyen v The Queen; Ho v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 134 [IMP3y8m/2y3m];
* *Dang v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 24 [IMP3y6m/2y7m];
* *Brown (aka Davis) v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 60 [commercial quantity + theft – IMP5y6m/3y reduced on appeal to 4y/2y3m];
* *Selaci v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 276 [commercial quantity + theft of electricity – IMP 3y10m/2y2m];
* *Symons v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 276 [cultivate 82kg=>3xcommercial quantity by weight and dealing with proceeds of crime – appellant sole proprietor of crop, not mere crop-sitter — Cultivation for profit — IMP4y/2y8m];
* *Nguyen v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 346 [cultivate 142 plants (31.5kg) + 50 immature plants (60.5g) in house – IMP18m/12m];
* *Dang v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 69 [commercial quantity 113kg in crop house + theft of electricity $9932 + dealing in proceeds of crime $610 – appellant more than a ‘crop sitter’ – IMP4y/2y];
* *Nguyen (a pseudonym) v The King* [2022] VSCA 284 [cultivation of commercial quantity of cannabis – IMP4y/2y6m – appeal dismissed];
* *Hoang Lai v The King* [2023] VSCA 151 [cultivation of a large commercial quantity of cannabis – IMP8y/5y6m – appeal dismissed];
* *Vocaj v The King* [2023] VSCA 242 [cultivation of a commercial quantity of cannabis – IMP3y3m];
* *Elezi v The King* [2025] VSCA 81 [cultivation of a commercial quantity of cannabis & theft of electricity – IMP4y6m/2y8m – appeal dismissed];
* *Failla v The King* [2023] VSCA 132 [cultivation of a commercial quantity of cannabis – offender leased property used to cultivate cannabis – IMP4y/2y6m].

**DRUG TRAFFICKING**

* *R v Van Xang Nguyen* [2006] VSCA 158 [commercial quantity of cannabis];
* *R v Downing* [2007] VSCA 154 [MDMA];
* *R v Wright & Gabriel* [2008] VSCA 19 [ecstacy & amphetamine];
* *R v Hoa Trong Vu & Duc Tien Vu* [2008] VSCA 64 [commercial quantity of heroin];
* *R v Koumis & Ors* [2008] VSCA 84 [heroin & methylamphetamine]; *R v Demaria* [2008] VSCA 105 [large commercial quantity of cannabis];
* *R v Van Dat Le* [2008] VSCA 155 [heroin];
* *R v Crabbe* [2008] VSCA 160 [commercial quantities of methylamphetamine & methylenedioxy];
* *R v Taric & Sindik* [2008] VSCA 166 [commercial quantity of cannabis];
* *R v Mansour* [2008] VSC 226 [42kg methylamphetamine];
* *R v Vasic* [2010] VSCA 89 [two presentments: large commercial quantity of MDMA/large commercial quantity of cocaine];
* *R v Velevski* [2010] VSCA 90 [methylamphetamine & commercial quantities of MDMA & pseudoephedrine];
* *R v Duncan* [2010] VSCA 92;
* *DPP v Fleiner* [2010] VSCA 143 [commercial quantity of cannabis plus trafficking in other drugs and possession of firearms];
* *R v Bui* [2010] VSC 342 [large commercial quantity of MDMA, cocaine, methylamphetamine and Methorphan];
* *R v Rizzo* [2011] VSCA 146 [manufacture and distribution of at least 42kg of methylamphetamine, traffick in cocaine and MDMA and money laundering activities];
* *R v Samac* [2011] VSCA 171 [large commercial quantity of MDMA];
* *R v Kneifati, R v Taha* [2012] VSCA 124 [cocaine, large commercial quantity of MDMA];
* *Nguyen v The Queen* [2016] VSCA 198 [middle/high level of cultivation of a commercial quantity of cannabis];
* *Rocco Arico v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 135 [traffick by offering to sell a large commercial quantity of drug];
* *Volkan v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 33 [1 count of trafficking 1,4-butanediol & 13 counts of possession];
* *DPP v Condo* [2019] VSCA 181 [trafficking in just under a large commercial quantity of methylamphetamine – IMP5y9m increased to IMP9y9m];
* *Roach v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 205 [trafficking in 3 times the commercial quantity 1,4-Butanediol];
* *Dukic v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 18 [trafficking in large commercial quantity of methylamphetamine – IMP11y/8y];
* *Gayed v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 141 [trafficking in a commercial quantity (279kg) of 1,4-butanediol – IMP7y/4y6m];
* *Quah v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 164 [trafficking in a large commercial quantity of methamphetamine + firearms & other offences – IMP16y5m/10y];
* *Roxburgh v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 181 [trafficking in 1½ times a commercial quantity of methylamphetamine – IMP4y6m/3y6m];
* *Pasquale Barbaro v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 277 [trafficking in commercial quantity MDMA, trafficking in cannabis & methylamphetamine – IMP5y/2y9m – *Bugmy* considerations];
* *Billy Dimovski v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 6 [trafficking in large commercial quantity methamphetamine (25.4kg with 84-86% purity) – IMP11y/7y];
* *Johnson v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 9 [trafficking in a large commercial quantity of cannabis (47.52kg stored in >100 plastic bags located in a hidden storage section under the base of a bed in the rear of a truck) – not sentenced as “a courier or ‘mule’” – IMP5y6m/3y6m];
* *Thuy Thanh Thi Tran v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 44 [trafficking in a commercial quantity of methamphetamine (1.06 times commercial quantity threshold in a single transaction) – applicant supplied methamphetamine for sale and pressured her adult son to deliver methamphetamine – IMP10y6m/7y];
* *Thi Thuy Tam (Lina) Tran v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 45 [49 year old applicant pleaded guilty to trafficking in a commercial quantity of heroin (1.56 times commercial quantity threshold) – IMP10y6m/7y];
* *Bruce v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 100 [applicant pleaded guilty to trafficking in 4.8 x a large commercial quantity of methylamphetamine and was sentenced to IMP12y as part of a TES of IMP21y6m/15y];
* *Hawker v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 127 [trafficking in 5.7kg heroin and 15.8g methylamphetamine – IMP3y3m/15m – appeal dismissed];
* *Polos v The King* [2022] VSCA 258 [applicant pleaded guilty to trafficking in a commercial quantity of methylamphetamine and was sentenced to IMP3y3m as part of a TES of IMP3y9m/2y9m];
* *Obian v The King* [2023] VSCA 18 [after the 5th contested trial (juries having been discharged without verdict in the previous 4 trials) the applicant was found guilty of 3 charges of trafficking in nor less than a commercial quantity of 1,4-Butaneidol (quantities between 400 and 8,000 times the commercial quantity threshold) – applicant was the directing mind of a sophisticated operation with sole motivation being financial gain – TES IMP 17y10m/12y10m – unsuccessful appeal to High Court against conviction on issue of whether a substantial miscarriage of justice resulted from the trial judge granting leave for the prosecution to adduce evidence in reply pursuant to s.233(2) *Criminal Procedure Act 2009* based on incorrect statements by the prosecutor: see [2024] HCA 18];
* *Biricik v The Queen* [2023] VSCA 47 [trafficking in cocaine for nearly 2 months described as ‘low level but not lowest level street trafficking’ – IMP2y6m as part of TES IMP3y11m/2y];
* *DPP v Goldsmid; DPP v Moreau* [2023] VSCA 124 [trafficking in a large commercial quantity of ketamine, MDMA & cocaine, trafficking in amphetamine, trafficking in LSD – TES IMP9y/4y6m [G] IMP8y/4y [M] – sentences on the trafficking large commercial quantity charge IMP7y [G]; 6y [M] manifestly inadequate – residual discretion exercised – appeals dismissed];
* *Ovadia v The King* [2023] VSCA 211 [applicant had originally been sentenced to a community correction order for four years and payment of fine for charge of possession of a drug of dependence (cocaine) for purpose of trafficking – on breach of the CCO he was sentenced to 18 months’ imprisonment – the Court of Appeal held that the sentence was manifestly excessive, granted the applicant leave to appeal and resentenced him to IMP8m];
* *DPP v Richardson* [2023] VSCA 241 [Crown appeal against a sentence of IMP4y/3y (to be served cumulatively upon a sentence currently being served) on a charge of attempting to traffick in a large commercial quantity of a drug of dependence (1,4-BD) dismissed in circumstances where Verdins’ factors applied and the sentencing judge had applied the principle of mercy];
* *Quang Xuan Do v The King* [2023] VSCA 254 [2 x trafficking in a drug of dependence (>4.45 times the statutory ‘large commercial quantity’ of heroin and > 2 times that of methylamphetamine – trafficking for profit – TES IMP15y/10y – leave to appeal refused].
* *Thang Nguyen v The King* [2023] VSCA 310 [73 year old applicant pleaded guilty to trafficking 2.1kg of heroin – pressed into six 350g blocks – hidden in the centre console of a car he was driving to Queensland – prosecution accepted plea on basis that applicant was not involved in the concealment of the drugs in the vehicle, did not have actual knowledge of drugs on board, but was nevertheless aware of the likelihood that the car he was driving carried a drug that was being trafficked – *Verdins* principles not engaged, there being scant evidence that the applicant suffered from impaired mental functioning, let alone that there was a serious risk that imprisonment would have a significant adverse effect on the applicant’s mental health. IMP6m – leave to appeal refused];
* *Wu v The King* [2025] VSCA 4 [applicant pleaded guilty to trafficking in a commercial quantity of methylamphetamine, trafficking in heroin and cultivation of a narcotic plant (cannabis) – IMP5y10m/3y10m];
* *Parks v The King* [2025] VSCA 84 [applicant pleaded guilty to trafficking in a commercial quantity of 1,4-butanediol (14½ times the commercial quantity threshold) and trafficking in a commercial quantity of methylamphetamine together with firearms and proceeds of crime offending while on parole for similar offending – significant and relevant criminal history – IMP7y as base sentence on the trafficking 1,4-butanediol charge and IMP6y (1y cumulative) on the trafficking methylamphetamine charge – TES IMP 8y6m/5y – sentence was within range, was not manifestly excessive and did not infringe the principle of totality].
* *Ale v The King* [2025] VSCA 92 [applicant who was aged 34-35 during the offending pleaded guilty to multiple charges – principally drug trafficking, conspiracy to commit arson and conspiracy to recklessly cause injury charges – and was sentenced to TES IMP18y/13y9m – the base sentence was IMP14y6m for trafficking in a drug of dependence (large commercial quantity of methamphetamine) – sentence was not manifestly excessive].
* *Hogan v The King* [2025] VSCA 142 [trafficking of methylamphetamine & cocaine].
* *Tarasinski v The King* [2025] VSCA 162 [trafficking of methylamphetamine].
* *Fenton v The King* [2025] VSCA 168 [trafficking of methylamphetamine].
* *Belhaj v The King* [2025] VSCA 174 [trafficking of commercial quantity of methylamphetamine and possession of cocaine].
* *Polos v The King* [2025] VSCA 192 [trafficking of commercial quantity of 1,4-Butanediol and methylamphetamine].

**DRUG IMPORTATION**

* *Alavy v The Queen* [2014] VSCA 25 [marketable quantity of methamphetamine – IMP7y/5y not outside range];
* *Hibgame v The Queen* [2014] VSCA 26 [marketable quantity of benzylpiperazine [BZP] – IMP 5y reduced to 4y/1y9m];
* *Lee James Matthews v The Queen*; *Tuyet Thi Vu v The Queen* & *Sayeed Hashmi* *v The Queen* [2014] VSCA 291;
* *Cuthbertson v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 104 [plea guilty to importation of 837.9 grams of pure cocaine, which represented 419 times the marketable quantity and 41% of the commercial quantity of cocaine – IMP8y3m/5y9m].
* *Luu v The King* [2024] VSCA 267 [plea guilty to importation of a commercial quantity of a border controlled drug being 11.9kg of pure methylamphetamine (15 times the commercial quantity threshold) – IMP12y/8y].
* *McMurray v The King* [2024] VSCA 276 [plea guilty to importation of commercial quantity of border-controlled drug (gamma-butryolacetone or GBL) – IMP18m with release on recognisance after serving 6m].
* *Rivero v The King* [2025] VSCA 144 [plea guilty to import of commercial quantity of border controlled drug (2.68kg cocaine) – IMP 6y6m with release on recognisance after serving 3y7m – as a consequence of a post-sentence diagnosis of terminal cancer with short life expectancy, appeal allowed to vary the non-parole period so that the appellant is eligible to apply for immediate release on parole].
* *Mannella v DPP & CDPP* [2025] VSCA 195 [plea of guilty to importation of not less than a commercial quantity of heroin & methamphetamine and attempting to traffick not less than a large commercial quantity of 1,4–Butanediol – IMP13y/6y10m – applicant residing in solitary confinement for duration of sentence – leave to appeal refused].
* *Mallahie v The King* [2025] VSCA 196 [appeal against sentence IMP14y/8y9m on a charge of aiding and aetting the importation of a commercial quantity of a border-controlled drug MDMA – Crown concession of error – resentenced to IMP11y/7y].

**CONSPIRACY TO TRAFFICK**

* *DPP v Johnson, Zerna and Bugeja* [2008] VSC 330 [not less than commercial quantity of methylamphetamine]. Sentence of IMP10y/8y on *Johnson* upheld: see [2010] VSCA 321.

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### **11.2.26 Sentencing for armed robbery / robbery / aggravated carjacking / carjacking**

### **11.2.26.1 Sentencing for armed robbery / attempted armed robbery / robbery**

### **A ARMED ROBBERY**

In *R v Bortoli* [2006] VSCA 62 at [23], Redlich AJA (Maxwell P & Buchanan JA agreeing), said:

“**Armed robbery** is a particularly serious offence because of the impact of threatened violence upon its victims and because the use of a weapon carries with it the risk of serious injury or death. An armed robbery involving the use of loaded firearms at secured premises, with a likely presence of security guards, increases the risk of serious injury or death in the course of the commission of the offence. The armed robberies committed by the appellant fell into this category. These are, as this Court observed in *R v Williscroft* [1975] VR 292 at 302 offences of such gravity that they call for a “condign sentence”. The high maximum sentence for such an offence has been viewed as indicating that deterrence is a matter that should be given priority: *Sentencing - State and Federal Law in Victoria* – Fox & Frieberg, 2nd ed, para 12.501. Armed robberies which are carefully and professionally planned and executed must be viewed as more deserving of exemplary punishment: *Barci v Asling* (1994) 76 A Crim R 103.”

In *R v Crossley* [2008] VSCA 134 at [17] Ashley JA (with whom Buchanan & Nettle JJA agreed) said:

“Armed robbery and attempted armed robbery, committed at all hours of the day, in public places, against vulnerable victims, committed in order to feed a drug habit (as was here the case) are serious offences. Considerations of just punishment, denunciation and general and specific deterrence are evidently important. The learned judge recognised that this was so.”

In *R v Kittikhoun* [2004] VSCA 194 the Court of Appeal dismissed an appeal by a 27 year old man, with no relevant priors, against a sentence of 10 years imprisonment, with a non-parole period of 7 years, imposed after he pleaded guilty to:

* 12 counts of armed robbery (each attracting 4 years imprisonment);
* 1 count of attempted armed robbery (2 years imprisonment); and
* 2 counts of false imprisonment (each attracting 12 months imprisonment).

At [15] Chernov JA, with whom Vincent JA & Gillard AJA agreed, said:

"Given the nature of the offences and of the appellant's offending conduct, the principle of general deterrence assumes particular significance for sentencing purposes, even if one assumes that specific deterrence is to be regarded as of little relevance in light of the appellant's prospects of rehabilitation. It is true that there are significant mitigating circumstances that operate in the appellant's favour, to which reference has already been made, but as this Court has said in the context of other cases where armed robberies have been perpetrated against soft targets, 'because of the prevalence and the seriousness of offences of this nature… the mitigating and other personal circumstances of the offender must, to a degree, give way to the primary purpose of punishment of such offences, namely, deterrence'. See, for example, *R v Cotry* [2002] VSCA 13 at [8] per Winneke P and *R v Pratt* [2003] VSCA 186 at [20] per Eames JA where a blood-filled syringe was used. As Buchanan JA (with whom Callaway JA and Coldrey AJA agreed) observed in *R. v. Swingler* [2001] VSCA 26 at [11], 'the crime of armed robbery perpetrated against defenceless, isolated persons late at night is a serious offence and calls for condign punishment in order to deter others'. His Honour also cited with approval in that case the following observations of Winneke P in *R v Orlikowski* [Unreported, Court of Appeal, 16/10/1997, at p.4] made in the context of the attempted armed robbery of a service station by a youth wielding a knife:

'One has to be careful, I think, in entertaining applications against sentences of this sort, not to allow too readily the personal circumstances of the offender to mask the features of this crime which required the sentencing judge to properly regard principles of general and specific deterrence as important features in the exercise of the sentencing discretion. The crime is one which is perpetrated upon usually defenceless members of the community whilst those persons are going about their business, often in circumstances of isolation. The crime is one which instils terror into its victims …'

I consider that these observations apply to the facts of the present case. That is not to say that the significant mitigating factors that operate here are to be minimised or that the sentencing disposition should be determined otherwise than in the context of the facts and circumstances applicable to the particular case. See *R v Roy* (2001) 119 A Crim R 147 at 149 per Tadgell JA with whom Winneke P and Buchanan JA agreed. In the end, his Honour had to balance the mitigating factors against the aggravating circumstances to which I have referred and determine, as I have said, a proper sentence, having due regard to the principles of general deterrence and the requirement to impose just punishment for these offences."

In *DPP v Gardner & Coates* [2004] VSCA 119 the Court of Appeal allowed a Director's appeal against sentences of 8 years & 7 years, each with 5 years non-parole, and increased the sentences to 11 years with 8 years non-parole. The defendants were aged 37 & 47 respectively and had some prior criminal history. They had been found guilty of armed robbery and reckless conduct endangering life in circumstances where they had held up an Armaguard van servicing an ATM. At [20] Winneke P, with whom Buchanan JA agreed, said:

"The armed robbery was about as serious an example of that offence as can be imagined, short of one in which death or serious injury has been actually inflicted. It was planned, it was premeditated, it was callous in its execution, and it involved the use of weapons in circumstances which exposed the robbers’ victims to the maximum prejudice – namely the firing of bullets into a confined space where the victims were trapped. It is remarkable in those circumstances that no one was killed or seriously injured; although, as his Honour noted, the ruthlessness with which this crime was executed has left an indelible mark on at least one of its victims."

In *R v Winslett* [2004] VSC 426 where Cummins J, after discussing at [17]-[19] the cases of *R v Roy* [2001] VSCA 61, *R v Cotry* [2002] VSCA 13 and *R v Pratt* [2003] VSCA 186, found exceptional circumstances and imposed a fully suspended sentence of 3 years imprisonment on a 25 year old woman who had pleaded guilty to 2 counts of armed robbery of a convenience store attendant using a blood-filled syringe. At [21] his Honour said:

"Offences such as this should be dealt with ordinarily by substantial sentences of imprisonment to be immediately served in custody. That is because the victims are vulnerable, the victims usually are alone, the quality of the offence is particularly terrible and dreadful psychologically speaking, is very oppressive upon victims and often is haunting thereafter and there are high objective risks. Further, often such offenders, as the courts have pointed out, are young persons, often drug addicts, and the means of committing the offences, namely a blood-filled syringe, is readily available to such persons. All of those considerations involve that normally the proper disposition of such cases is a substantial term of imprisonment to be served immediately, including for persons with no prior convictions. The courts rightly have emphasised that in such cases deterrence of others (even if the individual accused does not require substantial specific deterrence) is the primary factor in sentencing."

Nevertheless his Honour found that specific facts personal to the defendant, including the fact that she was a mother of 3 small children aged 7, 4 & 2, had no relevant priors and had worked for 7 years as a child care assistant, justified suspending the sentence for a period of 3 years.

In *R v Roy* [2001] VSCA 61 at [7] Tadgell JA said of such offences:

"These kinds of armed robberies, prevalent as they are and easy to perpetrate as they are upon soft targets, need to be dealt with as a particularly horrible species of an undesirable genus, but always having regard to their own facts. They are commonly perpetrated by unstable criminals, usually drug addicts, and calculated to instil into the victim an exquisite sense of anguish and fear of the unknown. It is almost as if the criminal is engaged in a kind of biological warfare that will naturally introduce great apprehension into the mind of the victim. To that extent armed robbery with the wielding of a syringe full of blood is to be viewed *sui generis* (meaning of a special kind) and in the context of all other circumstances surrounding the case, dealt with appropriately."

Winneke P agreed and said at [9]:

"Blood-filled syringes are undoubtedly a fearful weapon because they instil into the victim a legitimate fear of being pricked by a person who is usually a drug addict and out of control, with the consequence that the victim goes through the anguish of not knowing whether any of the fatal ramifications might flow. This no doubt is a factor which judges will take into account in imposing the appropriate sentence, including the weight which should be given for the purpose of general deterrence."

In *R v Cotry* [2002] VSCA 13 Winneke P, with whom Brooking & Charles JJA agreed, said at [8]:

"Our courts are all too commonly being called upon to deal with relatively young drug-addicted offenders who threaten and rob law-abiding citizens at the point of a syringe ... [Judges] must bear in mind sentencing principles which this Court has, from time to time, stated for their guidance. In cases of armed robbery of citizens with the use of syringes, this Court has frequently said that a primary purpose of punishment must be deterrence... The point has been made that syringes, whether blood-filled or not, are particularly fear-producing and provide a cheap and effective weapon for robberies of soft targets. Nor can sentencing judges lose sight of the fact that Parliament has been increasing the maximum penalties for armed robbery and the maximum now stands at 25 years."

In *R v Pratt* [2003] VSCA 186 at [20] Eames JA, with whom Winneke ACJ & Phillips JA agreed, said:

"This Court has on many occasions stated that offences of this type are prevalent and that because of their seriousness, mitigating factors personal to offenders must, to a degree, give way to the primary purpose of punishment for such offences, namely, deterrence."

For further judicial comment on armed robberies of “soft targets” see *DPP v Spiteri* [2006] VSCA 214 at [23]; *R v Mekal* [2006] VSCA 218 at [4]; *R v Pio* [2007] VSCA 180 at [20]-[21]; *R v Piper* [2008] VSC 569 at [12]-[18]; *DPP v Singh* [2011] VSCA 333 at [15]-[16]; *DPP v Aditya Singh* [2023] VSCA 17 at [59].

In *R v McNamara* [2007] VSCA 267 Redlich JA (with whom Callaway JA & Coldrey AJA agreed) said at [15]:

“The prevalence of armed robbery committed by relatively youthful offenders who are addicted to drugs and who steal to finance their addiction is well recognised: *R v Nguyen and Okobagerish* [2002] VSCA 130 per O’Bryan AJA, with whom Batt JA agreed. Armed robbers affected by drugs are unpredictable and have the potential to injure or kill a victim should things go wrong. One community interest which bears upon both the head and minimum sentence to be fixed is the need of the community to be protected from a violent offender, ‘especially one whose prospects for rehabilitation are bleak’: *Attorney-General v Morgan and Morgan* (1980) 7 A Crim R 146; *Bugmy*, at 531-2. In such circumstances, protection of the community and deterrence, both specific and general, are very important in the sentencing process: *R v Nguyen and Okobagerish*, at [36].”

In *DPP v Karipis* [2005] VSCA 119 at [9] the Court of Appeal allowed a Director’s appeal against a sentence of 3 years YJC detention imposed on a 20 year old man who had pleaded guilty, *inter alia*, to 3 counts of armed robbery and 3 counts of aggravated burglary arising from 3 separate incidents when he was 17 & 18. He was sentenced to 2 years YJC on each count and 6 months of the 2nd & 3rd aggravated burglaries were ordered to be cumulative on the sentence on the 1st aggravated burglary. The victims were known by K to be drug suppliers. K had prior and subsequent matters to be taken into account. The Director had acknowledged that there were mitigating circumstances, including K’s youth; his lesser role in the offending than the co-offender; his personal history and background, the family support available to him; his plea of guilty and co-operation and the remorse that the judge accepted on the basis of K’s record of interview and evidence led on the plea. The Director also accepted that there was favourable material in a psychological report from Ms Elizabeth Warren and reports from the Juvenile Justice Court Unit and the Malmsbury Juvenile Justice Centre regarding K’s suitability for a youth training centre sentence and the progress he had made following the sentence of detention imposed on 26th July 2004. Rehabilitation was important too and the trial judge had accepted that K had a reasonable likelihood of rehabilitation. Nevertheless the Court of Appeal held at [14] that a longer period of custody than 3 years was required, partly because of the gravity of the offences and their separation in time and partly because of K’s antecedents and subsequent convictions. The sentences on the individual counts of aggravated burglary and armed robbery were increased to 3 years’ imprisonment and the accumulation altered to produce a total effective sentence of 4½ years’ imprisonment. The Court of Appeal fixed a non-parole period of 2 years and recommended to the Adult Parole Board that it consider transferring K to a YTC pursuant to s.244 of the CYPA [now s.471 of the CYFA].

In *DPP v Jason Thomas Roe* [2005] VSCA 178 the Court of Appeal dismissed a Director’s appeal against a sentence of 12 months imprisonment, to be served by way of intensive correction order, on a respondent aged 25 with an IQ in the region of 75-79 who had pleaded guilty to one count of armed robbery and one count of intentionally causing serious injury. He had 41 prior convictions and 10 previous findings of guilt, mostly related to offences of dishonesty but including one conviction for robbery in 2000 for which he was sentenced to 12 months’ imprisonment, 8 months of which was suspended. The offences were committed in the context of a heroin addiction against a fellow heroin user to whom the respondent had given $100 to provide heroin. In dismissing the appeal, Charles JA, with whom Vincent & Ashley JJA agreed, said at [18]:

“The circumstances of the offences make them both unquestionably very serious. Specific and general deterrence were both of great significance. Having regard to the respondent's prior convictions, a substantial sentence involving immediate incarceration might have been expected to be almost inevitable. But the judge was perfectly entitled, on the available evidence, to detect a possibility of genuine rehabilitation in the respondent, and to act on that possibility. In so doing, her Honour was obliged to place in the balance the interests of the community and the victim, both for their future protection and the proper punishment of the respondent, as well as general and specific deterrence on the one hand, and, on the other, the fact that a sentence which resulted in the immediate incarceration of the respondent might well extinguish the last hopes for his rehabilitation. Her Honour's sentence was plainly framed with the rehabilitation of the respondent at the forefront.”

In *R v Kilmartin* [2006] VSCA 12 at [10] Charles JA (Vincent JA & Mandie AJA agreeing), said:

“The armed robbery was, I think, a very serious example of a serious offence. The appellant had been invited into the premises by people with whom he was acquainted. It was for this reason that the circumstances did not give rise to a burglary, but his entry rapidly developed into a home invasion with terrifying consequences for the inmates and actual violence brought to bear on them. The application of this violence to Mr and Mrs Bird had as an aggravating feature that it took place in the presence of their children.”

In *R v Woolley* [2008] VSCA 44 a 19 year old appellant with no prior convictions had pleaded guilty to one count of attempted armed robbery and had been sentenced to 12 months imprisonment with a non-parole period of 6 months. On appeal he was sentenced to 12 months imprisonment with the balance to be served by way of intensive correction in the community. The Crown conceded that the sentencing judge erred by misapplying *DPP v Candaza & Others* [2003] VSCA 91. In that case Chernov JA (with whom Winneke ACJ & Phillips JA agreed) accepted the DPP’s submission “that it would be necessary to establish rare and exceptional circumstances to justify a sentencing disposition that did not result in a conviction for a crime as serious as armed robbery”. However, in *R v Woolley* the sentencing judge appeared to have considered that *Candaza* was authority for the proposition “that it would be necessary to establish rare and exceptional circumstances to justify a non-custodial disposition for an offender who had committed an armed robbery”.

In *Agoc Deng Shok v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 294 the Court of Appeal upheld a sentence of IMP 5y imposed on a 23 year old offender of North Sudanese background. At [38]-[40] & [44] Maxwell P & Niall JA said:

[38] “Plainly, armed robbery of a store in which there is both a staff member and a number of innocent shoppers present, and in which the disguised perpetrator uses an imitation handgun and threatens to shoot the staff member, is a serious offence.

[39] The maximum penalty is 25 years. Such an offence is terrifying for the victims, extremely dangerous, and cannot be tolerated in a law abiding society. As Osborn J observed in *DPP v Stevens* [2013] VSCA 187 at [31],such offending is ‘predatory in its violence and fundamentally destructive of the security and confidence in the law which those who operate facilities such as convenience stores are entitled to enjoy.’

[40] The fact that the gun was an imitation made the offending less serious than if the applicant had been armed with a genuine, loaded weapon. However, brandishing an accurate replica of a handgun to commit two serious offences over the course of a day is a very dangerous activity. It is likely to provoke an armed response from police who have no way of knowing that the handgun is an imitation. More importantly, given how lifelike the replica was, the fact that it was an imitation would not have reduced the terror felt by the victims. Plainly, this was a serious example of armed robbery.”

[44] “In *Walker v The Queen; Dargan v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 137 the two offenders had committed an armed robbery on a bottle shop with a large knife and an imitation handgun. The manager was robbed at gun point and a staff member and two customers were also threatened. The offenders had relatively modest prior convictions. They were sentenced by a judge in the County Court to 12 years’ imprisonment each. Those sentences were set aside by this Court on the basis that they were manifestly excessive. Each offender was resentenced to a term of eight years and six months’ imprisonment for the offence. In arriving at that conclusion, this Court surveyed a number of cases dealing with armed robbery that showed sentences of five years {*Lord v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 52; *Driver v The Queen* [2012] VSCA 242}, six years {*Umi v The Queen* [2013] VSCA 211}, seven years {*Cottee v The Queen* [2010] VSCA 285; *DPP v* *Stevens* [2013] VSCA 187}, eight years {*Waugh v The Queen* (2013) 38 VR 66; [2013] VSCA 36}, 10 years {*Johnson v The Queen* [2011] VSCA 348} and 14 years {*Binse v The Queen* [2016] VSCA 145}.”

In *Sinclair v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 180 the Court of Appeal refused the 20 year old offender leave to appeal against a TES IMP2y2m/1y5m on a number of charges, of which IMP1y8m was imposed on a charge of armed robbery. At [50]-[52] Priest & Kyrou JJA balanced the various sentencing considerations as follows:

“The applicant’s moral culpability was high in the light of the fact that he was serving a CCO and was on bail at the time of the offending and committed the armed robbery very soon after he was sentenced for the previous armed robbery. However, we accept that the applicant’s moral culpability was moderated to some extent due to his deprived background.

The applicant’s extensive criminal history was relevant to the exercise of the sentencing discretion in a number of ways. First, it amplified the weight to be given to protection of the community and specific deterrence. Secondly, it demonstrated that previous sentencing dispositions which contained features such as supervision that focused upon the applicant’s rehabilitation were unsuccessful in deterring him from further offending.

We accept that the mitigating factors upon which the applicant relied warranted significant weight in the exercise of the sentencing discretion. However, their moderating impact had to be balanced against the sentencing considerations — particularly the gravity of the offending and protection of the community — which underscored the need for a substantial custodial sentence. Thus, whilst the applicant’s youth and deprived background meant that rehabilitation remained a key sentencing consideration, its moderating impact was diluted due to the heightened need to protect the community given the gravity of the current offending and similar previous offending by the applicant. It is also relevant in this context that the applicant could not rely upon positive findings regarding remorse and prospects of rehabilitation.”

In *Damon Fraser v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 52 the 18-year old applicant had pleaded guilty to four unsophisticated armed robberies and five attempted armed robberies in the company of his 20 year old sister. Leave to appeal against a sentence of two years’ detention in a Youth Justice Centre was refused.

In relation to sentences for **armed robbery** see also *R v Sullivan* [2005] VSCA 286; *R v PSA, PSB & PSC* [2006] VSC 91; *R v Dickson & Ryan* [2007] VSC 59; *R v Benton* [2007] VSCA 71; *R v Ozbec* [2008] VSCA 9; *R v Carmichael* [2008] VSCA 10 at [22]-[24]; *R v Harrison* [2008] VSCA 65; *R v Kitson* [2008] VSCA 77; *R v TG* [2008] VSCA 83; *DPP v Rizkalla* [2010] VSC 535; *R v Raccosta* [2012] VSCA 59; *DPP v Rancie* [2012] VSCA 258; *Mendelle v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 204; *DPP v Hodgson [*2019] VSCA 49, esp. at [70], [72] & [76]-[77]; *DPP v Heyfron* [2019] VSCA 130; *DPP v Roberts (Sentence)* [2022] VSC 532; *Garipoli v The King* [2022] VSCA 260; *Castillo (a pseudonym) v The King* [2023] VSCA 150; *Dabaja v The King* [2023] VSCA 209; *Cao Thien Nguyen v The King* [2023] VSCA 212; *Tokarahi v The King* [2023] VSCA 293 at [48]-[53]; *Tuarae v The King* [2023] VSCA 303 at [36]‑[51]; *Sabitovic v The King* [2024] VSCA 66 at [45]-[53]; *Baxter v The King* [2024] VSCA 268; *Bower v The King* [2024] VSCA 317.

### **B ATTEMPTED ARMED ROBBERY**

In *Shrubshall v The King* [2022] VSCA 221 the Court of Appeal refused leave to the 25 year old applicant with a schizotypal personality disorder to appeal against a sentence of IMP4m with 18m CCO imposed on a plea of guilty to attempted armed robbery and intentionally causing injury to a ‘soft target’, a passenger on a train. At [36] Priest AP & Macaulay JA said:

“Rather than manifestly excessive, we consider the sentence imposed to be moderate (if not lenient). It can only be the result of the judge having weighed all mitigating features — including the applicant’s early plea of guilty (entered during the pandemic); remorse; lack of prior convictions; family support; good prospects of rehabilitation; relative youth; compliance with bail; and mental condition — properly in his favour.”

See also *DPP v Hammoud* [2023] VSC 58; *Kennett v The King* [2023] VSCA 306; *Kowski v The King* [2024] VSCA 3; *Aden v The King* [2024] VSCA 21 at [43]-[47].

### **C ROBBERY**

In *R v Kur* [2021] VSC 501 the accused who was 19 years old at the time of the offending had pleaded guilty to a charge of **robbery** carried out by him and a coffender AM. The targets were two young people waiting at a bus stop. A third offender Horton had joined in the attack upon the victims, killing one and seriously injuring the other. The accused was originally charged with murder and had spent a long period on remand. The mitigatory effect of his youth was tempered by a significant criminal history for similar offending and by the fact he was on youth parole at time of the crime. He had been assessed as unsuitable for a community correction order. He made an early offer to plead guilty to robbery. He was sentenced to IMP323 days with a corresponding declaration as to pre-sentence detention.

In *R v AM* [2021] VSC 397 the accused who was 17 years at the time of offending, pleaded guilty to a charge of robbery arising out of the same circumstances as in *R v Kur*. Like Kur, AM was originally charged with murder. He had been on remand in a YJC for 562 days with a charge of murder hanging over his head and a further 23 days in adult remand following the revocation of his bail. The prosecution conceded that the sentencing principles under the CYFA should apply. In convicting AM and releasing him on a youth supervision order for 9m, Tinney J accepted at [51] that “in light of the different regimes under which you and Kur fall to be sentenced, disparate sentences should be imposed”.

See also *Gar v The King* [2024] VSCA 96 at [82]-[87].

### **[11.2.26.2 Sentencing for aggravated carjacking](#_11.2.26.2__)/carjacking**

### **A AGGRAVATED CARJACKING**

In their majority judgment in *Jason Mammoliti v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 52, McLeish & Emerton JJA said at [8]-[11]:

[8] “In 2016, amendments were made to the *Crimes Act 1958*, the *Sentencing Act 1991* and the *Bail Act 1977* to create new offences of carjacking, aggravated carjacking, home invasion and aggravated home invasion, and to impose special sentencing and bail requirements for those offences. In Parliament, the Attorney General explained the reason for the new offences and penalties as follows:

‘The Andrews Labor government is very concerned about recent serious criminal offending, which has involved breaking into people’s homes and dragging people out of their cars. There is absolutely no place for this sort of behaviour. All Victorians should be able to feel safe and secure in their own homes. All Victorians should be able to drive around without fear of being set upon by criminals.

The government is introducing offences and penalties which appropriately reflect the terrifying nature of these crimes. In doing so, the government, and the Parliament, denounce the perpetrators of such crimes in the strongest terms and send a message to the community that such activities will not be tolerated.’

[9] In relation to aggravated carjacking, the Attorney General said:

‘The offence carries a maximum period of imprisonment of 25 years. In order to recognise the particular seriousness of this offence there is also a statutory minimum sentence of three years. This is intended to be a serious deterrent to those who plan to use weapons and violence to take another person’s vehicle.’

[10] As foreshadowed, s 79A of the *Crimes Act* prescribes a maximum sentence of 25 years’ imprisonment for aggravated carjacking. Section 10AD of the *Sentencing Act* requires the imposition of a term of imprisonment for an offence against s 79A and the fixing of a non-parole period of not less than three years, unless the court finds under s 10A that ‘a special reason’ exists.’

[11] These provisions mirror the applicable laws for aggravated home invasion.”

In dismissing the appeal of the 39 year old applicant with an extensive criminal record against a sentence of IMP6y/4y imposed on a plea of guilty to an aggravated carjacking involving an 84 year old victim who was left lying on the road for two minutes before he was attended to by a passer-by and emergency services were called, McLeish & Emerton JJA said at [61]: “Although stern, we do not consider that the sentence of six years with a nonparole period of four years is manifestly excessive. At [39]-[41] their Honours discussed some of the principles involved in sentencing where a mandatory minimum non-parole period is involved:

[39] “[W]here an offender is sentenced on a single charge or where, as here, only one charge attracts a sentence of imprisonment, the mandatory minimum non-parole period, in combination with the requirement that the term of the sentence exceed the non-parole period by at least six months, serves to create an effective ‘minimum sentence’ for aggravated carjacking of three years and six months’ imprisonment. As we have said, it may be that in this circumstance, there will be some compression of sentences for offending falling within the least serious category and offending that does not quite fall into that category, being slightly more serious. However, equally, when determining the head sentence for aggravated carjacking, the sentencing judge must steadily bear in mind that the offending attracts a maximum sentence of 25 years’ imprisonment, and the offending must be assessed using both the maximum sentence and the mandatory minimum non-parole period as guideposts. By the maximum sentence and the mandatory gaol term to be served for no less than three years, the legislature has made it clear that aggravated carjacking is a serious offence. There is no escaping a relatively long custodial sentence. Accordingly, the mandatory minimum non-parole period must be reflected in the head sentence.

[40] For these reasons, in a single-charge case, or where only one charge attracts a term of imprisonment, we accept the [following] summary of principles advanced by the applicant and broadly accepted by the respondent:

(a) the mandatory minimum non-parole period operates as a legislative yardstick: *Magaming v The Queen* (2013) 252 CLR 381, 396 [48]; [2013] HCA 40 (French CJ, Hayne, Crennan, Kiefel and Bell JJ);

(b) the imposition of a minimum sentencing regime ‘does not oust either the sentencing principles of the common law or those affected by [statute], but necessarily modifies both’: *DPP (Cth) v Haidari* (2013) 230 A Crim R 134, 144 [42]; [2013] VSCA 149, [42] (Harper JA, Weinberg and Priest JJA agreeing at [1] and [55]);

(c) although the mandatory minimum non-parole period is a yardstick, it is not necessarily reserved only for those cases falling at the lowest extreme of the spectrum. An offender may still receive the mandatory minimum non-parole period despite having relevant prior convictions and/or despite running a trial: *DPP v Hudgson* [2016] VSCA 254;

(d) the principles governing a discount for a plea of guilty do not cease to apply in cases where there is a statutory minimum term. Rather, there will be a compression of sentences towards the lower end of the range, with offences at the bottom of the range of culpability treated effectively in the same way as those which are towards the lower end, but not at the extreme lower end, of culpability: *Haidari* (2013) 230 A Crim R 134, 144 [42]; [2013] VSCA 149 [42] and *Atherden v Western Australia* [2010] WASCA 33, [42]–[43] (Wheeler JA, McLure P and Owen JA agreeing at [1] and [3]);

(e) the requirement to impose a mandatory minimum non-parole period should not be permitted to swamp the sentencing discretion.”

[41] It is not presently necessary to say more about the operation of s 10AD in cases involving multiple charges attracting terms of imprisonment. As the Court pointed out in *Hudgson* [2016] VSCA 254, [6] (Weinberg, Whelan and Priest JJA), the sentencing process becomes problematic and unorthodox if a sentencing judge has to start with the non-parole period and ‘work upwards’. That problem does not really arise in a single charge case.”

Since the mandatory minimum non-parole periods provided in relation to aggravated carjacking and aggravated home invasion are contained in ss.10AC & 10AD of the *Sentencing Act 1991* and since under s.4 that Act does not apply to the Children’s Court, *Mammoliti’s Case* is not relevant to children sentenced under the CYFA, under which there is no power to fix a non-parole period in any event. See also *Beau Buckley v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 138 {discussed in detail in **Part 11.21**}.

In *R v House* [2021] VSC 419 the offender pleaded guilty to attempted aggravated carjacking, reckless conduct endangering persons, theft, prohibited person possess firearm and handling stolen goods. The offending occurred in the aftermath of a fatal shooting during a driving sequence in which he was affected by illicit drugs and which resulted in two separate, serious collisions during a police pursuit. In sentencing the offender to a TES IMP6y3m/3y9m – including IMP5y on the attempted aggravated carjacking charge – Taylor J said at [42]:

“The maximum penalty for attempted aggravated carjacking indicates the seriousness with which the legislature treats such offending: see *Mammoliti v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 52. I note that the prosecution does not submit that the offence of attempted aggravated carjacking, which attracts a maximum penalty of 20 years, enlivens the mandatory minimum non-parole period of three years applicable to the offence of aggravated carjacking, which attracts a maximum penalty of 25 years. And, for the reasons just outlined, the entirety of your conduct was inherently dangerous to numerous persons. Although you have acknowledged this in the evidence you gave at your trial, stating that at the time you were ‘out of your head’ and in shock at what had happened to Ms Ngo, your behaviour was brazen and self-motivated.”

In *Sabbatucci v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 340, in dismissing an appeal against a sentence of IMP5y imposed on a plea to a charge of aggravated carjacking, the Court of Appeal (Maxwell P & Emerton JA) said at [35]: “As this case illustrates, the use of a weapon in aid of a carjacking will almost always heighten the objective gravity of the offence (of aggravated carjacking). This is so irrespective of the fact that the use of the weapon is the ‘qualifying’ circumstance for aggravated carjacking.”

In *Mikael v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 119 after a plea of guilty the 40 year old applicant had been sentenced to IMP4y on attempted aggravated carjacking and IMP12m on damaging property, the TES being IMP4y6m/3y. Describing the sentences as stern but within range the Court of Appeal (Priest & T Forrest JJA) said at [29]-[32]:

[29] “The applicant’s may have been – as the judge considered it to be – towards the ‘lower end’ of seriousness of the offence of attempted aggravated carjacking, but the offence itself is an inherently serious offence. By his plea, the applicant admitted that, while he had with him an offensive weapon, he attempted to steal Mr Haddara’s motor vehicle, putting him in fear that he ‘would be then and there subject to force’. The applicant’s conduct involved blocking Mr Haddara’s vehicle in with another, and demanding the keys to the vehicle whilst brandishing a weapon. Hence, it was far from a trivial offence. Moreover, the offence was committed when the applicant was on bail, so much being an aggravating feature: *R v Gray* [1977] VR 225, 229–230 (Gillard, McInerney and Crockett JJ); *R v Treloar and Butler* (1989) 43 A Crim R 75, 80 (Crockett J, Fullagar and Marks JJ agreeing); *R v Basso & Frazetto* (1999) 108 A Crim R 392, 397–8 [21]–[26] (Chernov JA), 404–5 [57]–[63] (Charles JA); *DPP v Galea & Mosut* (2000) 112 A Crim R 507; *Pop v The Queen* (2000) 116 A Crim R 398; *Georges v The Queen* [2015] VSCA 82, [31] (Priest JA, Bongiorno JA agreeing); *Samuels-Orunmwense v The Queen; Osifo v The Queen* [2015] VSCA 152, [110] (Priest JA, Maxwell ACJ and Redlich JA agreeing); *DPP v Milson* [2019] VSCA 55, [66] (Priest and Weinberg JJA); *Makieng v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 52, [45] (Priest and Kyrou JJA). See also s 16(3C) of the *Sentencing Act 1991*, which requires that every term of imprisonment imposed on a person for an offence committed while released on bail in relation to any other offence or offences ‘must, unless otherwise directed by the court, be served cumulatively on any uncompleted sentence or sentences of imprisonment imposed on that offender, whether before or at the same time as that term’.

[30] Furthermore, apart from the effects of the pandemic, there was not a great deal that mitigated the offending. As we have said, although he may have had a difficult adolescence, the applicant did not attract the kind of mitigation that he might had *Bugmy* and *Verdins* principles had work to do. That is not to minimise the utilitarian benefit to the system of justice flowing from his plea in times of the pandemic, or the added burden of imprisonment caused by it, but his plea of guilty could not be considered as early. And, although, of course, the applicant is not to be punished for rejecting the relevant sentence indication, the fact remains that about a year’s delay in finalising the applicant’s case was the result of its rejection. To that extent, the mitigating influence of delay is reduced.

[31] Given the foregoing, although we regard the sentence imposed on the first charge as stern, we consider it to be within the bounds of sound discretionary judgment. It is not so severe as to be outside the range properly open to the sentencing judge.

[32] Moreover, although the sentence on charge 2 – involving smashing the rear windshield of Mr Kanaan’s car – might also be regarded as stern, it must be remembered that the applicant has been dealt with by courts on at least seven previous occasions for damaging property. Looked at in that light, a sentence of 12 months’ imprisonment cannot properly be characterised as manifestly excessive. Nor can the extent of cumulation ordered properly be said to be beyond the available range. Plainly, the need for specific deterrence and community protection are both important.”

### **B CARJACKING**

In *Russo v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 244 the appellant had been sentenced to IMP3y having pleaded guilty to a charge of carjacking. On appeal the appellant relied on a number of comparable cases concerning carjacking. The appellant referred the Court, in particular, to the authority of *Leishman v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 270 where a sentence of four years’ imprisonment for the offence of carjacking on an offender with a prior for armed robbery was described by this Court as ‘moderate’ and *DPP v Kilpatrick* [2020] VCC 379 where the offender was sentenced to 17 months’ imprisonment with a non-parole period of 11 months for one charge of carjacking. Generally the sentences imposed for the carjacking offences in a bundle of six carjacking sentences from the County Court were less than 3 years. In 3 cases the sentence was IMP12m; in another IMP2y. However, Emerton JA (with whom Priest JA agreed) said:

* At [49]: “The offending is, on any view, serious offending. Carjacking is a serious offence and, relatively, the appellant’s offending is at least in the mid-range of seriousness.
* At [57]: “The maximum penalty for the offence of carjacking is 15 years’ imprisonment. As discussed, this offending is in the medium range. Notwithstanding the mitigating factors, having regard to the nature of the offending and the appellant’s relevant criminal history, a sentence of 3 years’ imprisonment was well open to the sentencing judge.”

See also *Tewaka v The King* [2022] VSCA 275.

### **11.2.27 Sentencing for burglary / aggravated burglary / home invasion / agg home invasion**

### **A BURGLARY**

In *DPP v Lehmann* [2005] VSCA 9 the Court of Appeal dismissed a Director’s appeal against a non-custodial sentence – an intensive correction order – imposed on a 26 year old man with a significant criminal history who had pleaded not guilty to **burglary** of a former employer’s home. At [15] Nettle JA analysed the four major factors taken into account in imposing sentences for burglary and discussed recent Victorian sentencing statistics:

“In my opinion the sentence was remarkably lenient. It looks to me to be very much towards the bottom end of the scale and, given the respondent’s antecedents and apparent lack of remorse, it is difficult to conceive of the offence as amongst the least serious examples of burglary likely to be encountered. A survey of past decisions essayed in Fox & Frieberg’s work on sentencing identifies as the four major factors that have been taken into account in imposing sentences for burglary: the amount stolen and recovered (even though strictly speaking it should be the subject of separate charge); the degree of skill involved in the planning and execution of the offence (which may encompass the element of breach of trust where the burglary has been carried out by a person who is or has been employed by the victim); the amount of damage cause to premises; and the risk of injury or violence to returning house holders or the degree to which those in occupation have been subjected to fear). It may be noted that all but one of those considerations is present in this case. The same survey suggests that the median custodial sentence for burglary ranged in the period surveyed from 10 ½ months to 18 months, and that it was only in the least serious of cases that a sentence of less than 12 months imprisonment might be expected. The mid–range was comprised in the large part of sentences of between one year and three years, and more serious cases were shown to have attracted sentences of greater than three years. Similar conclusions emerge from the most recently published sentencing statistics for superior courts in Victoria. They show a sentencing range for burglary of two months to six years with an average of 21.5 months and a median of eighteen months: Victorian Higher Courts Sentencing Statistics 2002/03 at p.33. So, other things being equal, I should have thought that the respondent’s offence warranted a sentence of imprisonment of between one year and three years and that an intensive corrections order was really not an option.”

However, at [17] His Honour was ultimately not satisfied that the sentence was manifestly excessive taking into account the fact that “respondent had undergone some sort of attitudinal metamorphosis since his marriage, and that it was of a kind and extent which rendered complete rehabilitation a real likelihood…[A]n immediate custodial sentence might so much disrupt the financial stability of the respondent’s young family as seriously to threaten and perhaps to destroy that prospect of rehabilitation.” Cummins AJA dismissed the appeal for a different reason, holding at [26]: “I do not consider that the sentence imposed was manifestly inadequate, nor do I consider that the sentence was remarkably lenient. It was at the bottom of the range.”

In *R v Glenn* [2005] VSCA 31 Nettle JA (with whom Vincent JA agreed) said at [13]: “Property invasion and assault occasioning injury are serious offences, even when they are committed by a youth of only 17 years of age, and it cannot be gainsaid that there is need for general deterrence of them. I am unable to accept that a suspended sentence of imprisonment of 15 months was manifestly excessive, even if it were stern. Cummins AJA dissented, holding at [31] & [35] that the proper sentence below would have involved no conviction being recorded: “This appellant, in my view, is a decent young man with a worthwhile future. The question is whether it should be burdened, if not afflicted, for the rest of his life by one brief error of serious, but limited, physical character.”

In *DPP v Brooks* [2008] VSCA 253 at [22] the Court of Appeal (Maxwell P, Buchanan & Vincent JJA) said:

“The violation of the privacy and safety of the home of any person, whatever be their age or situation, must be seen to be regarded as extremely serious by the Courts. As the present case demonstrates, the financial loss occasioned by the victim will often be its least serious consequence. Where the entry is effected for the purpose of violence or intimidation, or where the perpetrator engages in such behaviour whilst there, the level of criminality is clearly aggravated. Put at its simplest, the members of this community are entitled to feel and remain safe in their homes and the Courts must play their part through the sentencing process to ensure that this right is vindicated.”

In *Tyson Ralph v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 185 the Court of Appeal allowed an appeal against a TES IMP3y/18m imposed on a plea of guilty to two charges of burglary, one charge of theft, one charge of theft of motor vehicle, one charge of theft of firearm and one charge of handling stolen goods and resentenced the appellant to IMP2y2m/14m. At [37]-[57] Niall & Kaye JJA said:

[37] The burglary of a private home, the rifling through personal possessions and the theft of items of significant sentimental value is appalling. It understandably caused great pain and anguish to the victims, which is ongoing.

[38] The transgression of the private boundary of the home will often leave the victim feeling violated and unsettled. That is what occurred here. The call for punishment and redress is powerful. However, it is also necessary to take into account some other features of the offending, which, although they provide no comfort to the victims, provide important context.

[39] The offending occurred during daylight hours and, as was accepted on the plea, the applicant entered through an unlocked door. That does not mean that the victims bear any responsibility for the criminal actions of the applicant, but it does mean that there was no forced entry or damage to doors or windows to effect entry. The burglary was unplanned and unsophisticated. It was opportunistic.

[40] The purpose of the burglary was theft, and the applicant stole a number of items of varying value. As this Court said in *Chamma v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 232, [71] :

‘The objective gravity of any theft needs to be considered by reference to what was taken (including its value), from whom it was taken, and all other relevant surrounding circumstances, including the purpose for which it was taken.’

[41] On that measure, the theft of the watch and jewellery was serious. It involved the theft of items of very significant sentimental value that could not be replaced.

[42] The theft of the firearm was of a different order again. The decision to break into the firearm safe and steal the rifle sets it apart from the other items stolen from the property. It brought into play significant considerations of community protection. The applicant said that he disposed of the gun by throwing it into a river, but the judge was sceptical of that contention. On the state of the evidence, it is not possible to conclude that the firearm is in circulation, but issues of community protection and deterrence remain especially important in offending of this kind.

[43] As already noted, the burglary was opportunistic. That aspect in large part reflected the applicant’s unstable life and drug addiction. At the time of the offending, the applicant was homeless.

[44] The current offending was by no means out of character for the applicant. He has a lengthy and concerning criminal history. He has many convictions for theft, burglary and other anti-social offending. As the respondent rightly pointed out, he has eight prior convictions for burglary and some 45 prior convictions for theft. He has been given multiple Community Correction Orders, as well as several wholly suspended sentences. These were important matters to take into account. Of course, the applicant was not to be punished again for his earlier crimes, but the judge was entitled to give weight to his criminal record as an indicator of the applicant’s moral culpability, his prospects of rehabilitation, the community’s need for protection, and the increased importance of specific deterrence: *R v O’Brien & Gloster* [1997] 2 VR 714, 718.

[45] For a man with this history, and a lack of any demonstrated commitment to addressing his drug addiction, specific deterrence was a necessary feature of the sentence to be imposed. On the other hand, the applicant’s sorry life story was not entirely his own doing. As the judge accepted, the applicant had a deprived background. The judge made only minimal allowance for this in the sentence she imposed on the basis that the applicant’s counsel had submitted that his deprived background did not leave him without ‘a moral compass’. We take from that observation that the judge did not consider that the applicant’s capacity for moral judgment was impaired by reason of his deprived background.

[46] It will be recalled that in *Bugmy*, the High Court noted profound childhood deprivation may compromise the person’s capacity to mature and to learn from experience, result in impulsive behaviour and that this inability to control behaviour may reduce the offender’s moral culpability. This latter aspect was not relied on by the applicant in this case. That did not mean that his deprived background had no role to play.

[47] Neither the fact that offending took place under the influence of drugs nor that it was motived to fund a drug habit mitigated sentence. But the reason that the applicant had succumbed to drug addiction and his isolation from positive influences during his formative years did place his offending in a particular context. It is not merely a question of whether the applicant did or did not have ‘a moral compass’. Moral culpability is not binary and any assessment of moral culpability involves a variety of factors and degree.

[48] As this Court said in the *Director of Public Prosecutions v Drake* [2019] VSCA 293, [32] per Maxwell P, Priest, Kaye, T Forrest and Emerton JJA:

‘In particular, the profound dysfunction, disadvantage and abuse experienced by the respondent during his formative years were relevant to an appropriate evaluation of his moral culpability. As recognised by the High Court in Bugmy, those experiences, none of which were of his making, all played a significant role in shaping the respondent’s personality and his responses. As a consequence, his subjective culpability, for the offending in which he engaged, could not be equated with that of a person who committed the same offence but had had the advantage of a normal, stable and regular home environment during his or her childhood years. In that way, those factors constituted an important mitigating circumstance in the determination of the respondent’s sentence.’

[49] Although not the subject of specific error, and with respect to the judge, we would regard the applicant’s childhood deprivation as deserving of a significantly greater level of mitigation than the judge was prepared to afford it.

[50] The plea of guilty was also a significant matter. Although his criminal history meant that any assertion as to remorse and any assessment of rehabilitation required close scrutiny, there were at least some more favourable aspects, including that he had done well in prison and, according to his counsel, was drug free.

[51] Importantly, having regard to the additional burdens imposed on the court system by the pandemic, the utilitarian value of the plea was heightened. It is necessary that there be a perceptible impact on the sentence imposed.

[52] In accordance with the orthodox approach, the judge was required to impose the appropriate sentence on each charge. It was also necessary for the judge to ensure that, through the process of applying cumulation or concurrency, a proportionate and just total effective sentence was imposed having regard to the overall level of criminality involved. Unless care is taken, a stern individual sentence may lead, through cumulation, to a manifestly excessive total sentence.

[53] Charges 1 to 4 all arose out of a single incident. Plainly, the applicant fell to be punished for both the burglary and the associated thefts, however, as the judge recorded by her order for total cumulation in respect of charge 2, there was a clear overlap between the charges. It is notable that the judge ordered no cumulation on charge 2, which covered the theft of the items of sentimental value and which caused the most grief to the victims, but ordered 50 per cent of the sentence on charge 3 (theft of the motorbike) be served cumulatively. Both in the sentence imposed, and in the order for cumulation, the sentence on charge 3 formed a significant component of the sentence, which, when all of the factors are taken into account, was disproportionate.

[54] Notwithstanding the attractive submission of Ms Roodenburg who appeared for the respondent, once regard is had to the plea of guilty, its particular utilitarian effect arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, and the relevant impact of the applicant’s deprived upbringing, we are persuaded that the sentence of three years’ imprisonment that was imposed in respect of the residential burglary and theft from the Broadford property was manifestly excessive. The judge was correct to regard the plea as entitling the applicant to a ‘significant discount’ and that there be a ‘solid allowance’ for the additional value of a plea in the current circumstances of the pandemic. In our assessment, when these matters are combined with the features of the applicant’s background that we have averted to, the total effective sentence was entirely outside the range. In the particular circumstances of this case, a sentence of three years’ imprisonment for the Broadford property offences, which involved a single episode of offending, was outside of the range available to the judge. That conclusion is sufficient to vitiate the sentence.

[55] We would add that, although it did not increase the total effective sentence, the term of imprisonment of 10 months in relation to the burglary at the school was manifestly excessive. At the time of the offending, the applicant was homeless and after entering the school he sought to fashion a bed. There was an element of pathos to that offending that did not warrant a term of imprisonment of the length imposed, even for a person with a very poor record.

[56] It is thus necessary to resentence the applicant. In doing so, it is necessary for this Court to impose the appropriate sentence on the material before it. In anticipation of the possibility that this Court might resentence the applicant, he relied on additional matters in mitigation that have arisen since the plea. First, the applicant had taken successful steps to return the gold watch that he had taken from the Broadford property. That does not account for all of the stolen property but it does ameliorate, at least to some extent, the loss and is also evidence of some further remorse on the part of the applicant.

[57] Further, the applicant has completed some semi-intensive drug and alcohol treatment in prison and he has obtained a number of occupational certificates from Bendigo TAFE. The fact that the applicant is undertaking slow release drug therapy for his addiction also demonstrates a step towards rehabilitation and a willingness to address the drug addiction that has underpinned much of his offending. The applicant also relied on evidence of clear drug screens. This evidence provides some further evidence supporting a more favourable assessment of his prospects of rehabilitation but, given his lamentable past, any assessment must remain guarded.”

See also *Repac v The King* [2023] VSCA 313; *Korey Caddy v The King* [2025] VSCA 87; *Messenger v The King* [2025] VSCA 130.

### **B AGGRAVATED BURGLARY | HOME INVASION**

In *R v* *Aujla & Anor* [2012] VSC 503 T Forrest J imposed a sentence of IMP6y6m on a 40 year old man who had been found guilty of **aggravated burglary** of his estranged wife’s cousin’s house in the course of which he seriously injured the cousin. The accused Mr Aujla believed that the victim had encouraged his wife to leave him and to obtain an intervention order against him. At [14]-[15] his Honour said:

“Some years ago, Winneke P captured the essence of the crime of aggravated burglary. Offences of this type ‘strike directly at the heart of people’s domestic security and their capacity to feel safe in their own homes’: *Director of Public Prosecutions v Jovicic* (2001) 121 A Crim R 497, 507…The community has a legitimate expectation that those who intrude into private homes intending violence to the innocent occupants will be punished sternly. That punishment must deter others from similar conduct and it must express the community’s denunciation of the impugned conduct.”

In *R v Ray & Vella* [2014] VSC 165 T Forrest J imposed sentences of IMP3y/2y & IMP2y9m/1y9m on accused who were aged 20 & 23 at the time of the offending and who had been found guilty of aggravated burglary and false imprisonment but not guilty of manslaughter. Described by his Honour as a “serious example of the offence of aggravated burglary”, this was a confrontational aggravated burglary in the context of a dispute concerning stolen property. His Honour found that remorse and the prospects for rehabilitation of both accused were high.

In upholding a sentence of 18 months imprisonment on a count of aggravated burglary in *R v McCarthy* [2010] VSCA 87, Buchanan JA (with whom Maxwell P agreed) said at [11]:

“In my opinion the sentence imposed upon the appellant was appropriate, even lenient. The invasion at night of Stewart's home and the cowardly assault upon him in company were serious crimes. In cases of this kind general deterrence is a significant aim. Home invasion and unprovoked violence occasioning serious injury are not to be countenanced. The appellant's record discloses a continuing disregard for the law. Notwithstanding the pleas of guilty, I am of the opinion that no less a sentence should be imposed.”

In *R v Saltalamacchia* [2010] VSCA 83 the appellant, who had no prior convictions, pleaded guilty to offences involving the invasion of his ex girlfriend’s home and was sentenced to 2 years imprisonment for aggravated burglary. On appeal the sentence was partly suspended. At [26] Maxwell P said:

“[W]e are imposing, as her Honour did, a sentence of two years for the aggravated burglary. In my view, counsel for the Crown was right to describe that as a lenient sentence, though as the Court pointed out (and as may be gleaned from the table of sentences for this offence set out in the judgement of the Court in *DPP v El Hajje* [2009] VSCA 160), this would appear to be reflective of current sentencing practices. As the Court said in that case, there is a real question about the adequacy of current practices, having regard to the 25 year maximum and the community expectation that home invasions be severely punished.”

In his judgment in *R v Le* [2010] VSCA 199 at [37] Maxwell P responded to counsel’s submission about sentencing statistics for aggravated burglary in the period 2002/03 to 2006/07 as follows:

“Those statistics suggest that there is a very serious question to be examined about whether current sentencing practices for aggravated burglary can be justified, in view of Parliament's clear instruction to the Courts in 1997 to sentence for this offence within parameters marked out by an increased maximum of 25 years. {As to the significance of the maximum, see *R v AB (No 2)* (2008) 18 VR 391, 403–4, [40]–[41].} This Court raised the same issue, in relation to the same offence, in *DPP v El Hajje* [2009] VSCA 160, [33], decided more than a year ago.”

In *Hogarth v The Queen* (2012) 37 VR 658; [2012] VSCA 302 the Court of Appeal dismissed the prisoner’s appeal against a sentence of 4½ years imprisonment on a count of aggravated burglary, referred to by the Court as a “home invasion” or “confrontational aggravated burglary” and described as follows:

“Home invasion is a particularly nasty form of criminal conduct. For further discussion of the terror which this offence often causes its victims, see *Bonacci v The Queen* [2012] VSCA 170, [1]. Typically, a home invasion involves multiple offenders entering a person’s home, carrying weapons, intending to rob or injure the victims in revenge for some actual or perceived wrong. The entry of the offenders — acting in anger and often fuelled by alcohol — is itself a terrifying experience for the householder(s), irrespective of what may occur after entry.”

Annexed to the judgment are two tables. Table A is a compilation of 23 cases from the Court of Appeal and the County Court (the latter cases selected by the DPP) dealing with sentences for this species of the offence since 2005. Table B is a compilation prepared by the DPP of all sentences for aggravated burglary in the superior courts in 2011. The tables show that a sentence of greater than 5 years imprisonment has been “quite exceptional”. The Court of Appeal said at [61]-[62]:

“To insist upon appropriate relativities between individual sentences and the maximum is to recognise that the maximum is to be treated as a sentencing yardstick, as explained by the High Court majority in *Makarian v The Queen* (2005) 228 CLR 357, 372 [31]. For the reasons we have given, current sentencing practices for confrontational aggravated burglary do not adequately reflect that yardstick. As this Court has said previously, where there is a conflict between the guidance afforded by the maximum penalty and that afforded by current sentencing practices, it is the maximum which must prevail: *CPD*  (2009) 22 VR 533, 550–1 [74]; *DPP v DDJ* (2009) 22 VR 444, 461 [70]; *AB (No 2)* (2008) 18 VR 391, 405–6 [47]–[49]. It follows, in our view, that current sentencing for this form of aggravated burglary can no longer be treated as a reliable guide.”

In *DPP v Meyers* [2014] VSCA 314 the Court of Appeal granted a DPP appeal against a total effective sentence of IMP 3y6m/1y6m on charges [including IMP 3y on a charge of aggravated burglary – referred to by the DPP as an “intimate relationship aggravated burglary”] and substituted a total effective sentence of IMP 5y6m/3y [including IMP 4y on the aggravated burglary charge]. At [25]-[46] the Court of Appeal discussed the case of *Hogarth v The Queen* (2012) 37 VR 658 and stressed the need to avoid debate about classification of various types of aggravated burglary. The Court also referred with approval to recent cases of *Gale* [2014] VSCA 168 [offender breached intervention order by entering home of former wife in the early hours of a Sunday morning, shouted abuse at both of them and threatened her new partner with a cattle prod], *Filiz* [2014] VSCA 212 & *Anderson* [2014] VSCA 255 [both with facts broadly similar to *Gale*]. In *Filiz* the Court of Appeal (Maxwell P & Redlich JA) had said at [23]:

“*It is a shameful truth that family violence is a leading cause of illness, disability and death among Victorian women aged between 15 and 44. It is also sadly true that there are a great number of women who live in real and justified fear of the men who are, or were, their intimate partners*.”

It had also said at [21] – citing *Felicite v The Queen* (2011) 37 VR 329 and *DPP v Pasinis* [2014] VSCA 97 – that general deterrence was of particular significance where violence was used against a former domestic partner and where a family violence intervention order was in place. In *DPP v Meyers* Maxwell P, Redlich & Osborn JJA said at [45]:

“We would wish to endorse the remarks in *Filiz* about the particular seriousness of offending involving former domestic partners. Violence of this kind is alarmingly widespread, and extremely harmful. The statistics about the incidence of women being killed or seriously injured by vengeful former partners are truly shocking. Although the cases under consideration do not fall into that worst category, they are symptomatic of what can fairly be described as an epidemic of domestic violence.”

## See also *DPP v Kurtaj* [2025] VSCA 203 at [104]-[133] & [6]-[11] (summarised in **subsection 11.2.36.1**) where the Court of Appeal increased the sentence for aggravated burglary from IMP2y2m to IMP4y.

In *Tseros v The King* [2023] VSCA 179 the 31 year old applicant with a relevant prior criminal history had been sentenced to TES IMP5y/3y on a plea of guilty to multiple charges. The TES included IMP4y for aggravated burglary, IMP18m/9m CUM for recklessly causing injury, IMP6m/2m CUM for theft and IMP6m/CUM 1m for possessing two or more firearms. The applicant had entered the premises of a blind and vulnerable man and had inflicted a gratuitous injury. On the appeal counsel for the applicant contrasted *DPP v Meyers*, noting that the following factors are ordinarily relevant to an assessment of the gravity of a particular instance of aggravated burglary: the offender’s intent at the point of entry; the mode of entry; whether the offender was armed; whether the offender was alone or in company; the time of day; what the offender knew or believed about who would be inside; and whether the offender was someone of whom the victim was particularly frightened. In this case, many of these factors of aggravation were absent. The present case, counsel submitted, should be considered less serious than one where entry was forced and did not warrant a sentence of IMP4y. In refusing leave to appeal the Court of Appeal (Priest JA & J Forrest AJA) said at [28]-[30]:

[28] “We are not persuaded that the sentence under challenge is manifestly excessive.

[29] Although the applicant’s aggravated burglary was not accompanied by a number of the aggravating features identified in *Meyers*, it was nonetheless serious. He was able to accomplish entry through trickery due to the extreme vulnerability of the occupant. Indeed, at the time that he attempted to gain entry to the victim’s home, the applicant knew that Mr Zammit was frail and vulnerable.

[30] Moreover, the recklessly causing injury perpetrated after entry was a nasty offence. It was a gratuitous, disturbingly callous and cowardly crime, perpetrated on a very vulnerable victim in the sanctity of his own home. Aptly, the judge described the applicant’s conduct as ‘reprehensible’. Plainly, it was a serious example of the offence of recklessly causing injury. The applicant, without any provocation, viciously struck the victim — who, because of his blindness, was truly defenceless — to the head, and left him unconscious in a pool of blood. Given the circumstances in which that offence was committed, including the extreme vulnerability of the victim who was entitled to feel safe in his own home, and the applicant’s very considerable moral culpability, the individual sentence of 18 months’ imprisonment on that charge was lenient. Furthermore, the order for cumulation of a mere nine months of that sentence on the aggravated burglary demonstrates that the judge had an eye on totality, and was astute not to inflict double punishment on the applicant. It was also a significant aggravating feature that the applicant was on bail at the time that he committed the present offences: *DPP v Milson* [2019] VSCA 55, [61]; *R v Gray* [1977] VR 225, 229–230 (Gillard, McInerney and Crocket JJ); *R v Treloar and Butler* (1989) 43 A Crim R 75, 80 (Crocket J, Fullagar and Marks JJ agreeing); *R v Basso & Frazetto* (1999) 108 A Crim R 392, 397–8 [21]–[26] (Chernov JA), 404–5 [57]– [63] (Charles JA); *DPP v Galea and Mosut* (2000) 112 A Crim R 507; *R v Pop* (2000) 116 A Crim R. 398; *Georges v The Queen* [2015] VSCA 82, [31]; *Samuels‐Orumnwense v The Queen; Osifo v The Queen* [2015] VSCA 152, [110] (Priest JA, Maxwell ACJ and Redlich JA agreeing); *Makieng v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 52, [45] (Priest and Kyrou JJA). See also s 16(3C) of the *Sentencing Act 1991*.”

In *Jamie Fisher v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 222 the Court of Appeal dismissed an appeal against a sentence of IMP 6y3m/4y3m on a charge of aggravated burglary. The appellant – aged 23 at the time of the offending and 26 at the time of sentence – had originally been charged with murder but was discharged at committal. He was then charged with manslaughter but after three trials he was acquitted of that charge. Hollingworth J had summarised the offending in the following terms [2017] VSC 21 at [32]:

“This is a serious example of the offence of aggravated burglary. The offending took place at night, in a suburban house, where its occupants were entitled to feel safe. Thirteen men, similarily dressed in intimidating clothing, carrying a range of dangerous and frightening weapons, swiftly and unexpectedly invaded the property as a united force, noisily smashing things as they pursued the occupants into and through the house. Although the entire episode only lasted around two minutes, it caused your victims to fear for their lives, and left two people physically injured. It must have been an absolutely terrifying ordeal for those who were present at the house at the time. The ‘run through’ had been pre-planned, and all of the offending that occurred was within the scope of the enterprise which you had helped to orchestrate (presumably as some sort of retaliation for what members of the L group were understood to have done to Mr P’s cousin).”

Referring to *Hogarth v The Queen* (2012) 37 VR 658, Whelan, Beach & Kaye JJA said at [32]-[34]:

“This was a very serious aggravated burglary. It was undertaken by a large group of men, armed with weapons, in ‘uniform’, consequent upon a ‘call to arms’ by Mr P and by the appellant. The confrontation was pre-meditated and planned. It was motivated by an intention to confront, to intimidate and to injure. It occurred at a residential property at night. An armed group, of which the appellant was one of the organisers and one of the participants, determined that they would, in effect, take the law into their own hands, and visit their form of justice on their adversaries. Conduct of this kind is intolerable and strikes at the foundations of a law abiding civil society. It demands a stern response. In such cases, general deterrence and denunciation are most important. The appellant’s own role in this offending was a serious one…The appellant had been involved in prior violent offending in company less than two years before the aggravated burglary.”

Describing the sentence as “a moderate one”, Whelan, Beach & Kaye JJA dismissed the appeal, concluding at [36]: “The appellant was youthful at the time of the offending but, as the sentencing judge observed, in accordance with authority [of] *DPP v Lawrence* (2004) 10 VR 125, 132-3, the weight to be given to youthfulness is significantly reduced in relation to offending of this kind.”

In *Sovolos v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 148 at [43] Priest JA upheld a sentence of IMP 7y on a charge of aggravated burglary, saying “[T]he applicant’s offending was extremely grave. I recall having encountered no other case of aggravated burglary where an offender has fired seven rounds from a firearm, at or near the innocent occupants of a residence. As far as ‘home invasion’ cases of aggravated burglary are concerned, this is, to say the least, a very serious example.”

In *Comensoli v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 2 the Court of Appeal upheld a sentence of IMP3y3m/1y8m on 11 charges including one count of aggravated burglary. At [3]-[5] Maxwell P & Whelan JA said:

“The sentencing judge was right to treat this as a serious instance of aggravated burglary. The applicant entered the premises by force, at night, aware that someone was likely to be at home. The householder lived there with her two young children. She was in bed when she saw a shadow near the door. She then saw the applicant with her purse in his mouth and screamed. As his Honour said, the applicant’s actions ‘resulted in what would have been a very frightening experience for the victim’.

This was, in many respects, the archetypal aggravated burglary. The offender makes a forced entry to premises at night, intending to steal, well aware that there are likely to be persons present. It is the kind of offending which strikes terror into the hearts of members of the community.

The sentence of 3 years’ imprisonment must be regarded as lenient, in our view, given what was said in *Hogarth v The Queen* (2012) 37 VR 658; [2012] VSCA 302 and *Director of Public Prosecutions v Meyers* (2014) 44 VR 486; [2014] VSCA 314 about the need for increased sentences for aggravated burglary. Furthermore, specific deterrence and community protection were very important considerations in this case, as the applicant was on bail at the time and — as part of an extensive history of drug–related offending — had a prior conviction for aggravated burglary.”

In *Hill v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 220, in refusing leave to appeal against a sentence of IMP4y – which the Court of Appeal described as ‘moderate’ – on a charge of aggravated burglary in which the applicant had broken into the house of her ex-husband and violently attacked him and his new partner, Maxwell P & Niall JA said at [1]-[2]:

“As this Court said in *Hogarth v The Queen* (2012) 37 VR 658, 659 [1]; [2012] VSCA 302, home invasion is ‘a particularly nasty form of criminal conduct’. The present case illustrates, yet again, just how devastating a home invasion can be. The applicant armed herself with weapons — a length of pipe and a knife — and smashed a window to gain entry to a house occupied by her ex-husband (Paul Hill) and his new partner (‘S’). The applicant’s daughter (‘AD’) was also present. Once inside, the applicant attacked S first and then Mr Hill, stabbing them both.

In the view of the sentencing judge, this was ‘a very serious example of [aggravated burglary]’. His Honour described the offending as ‘an act of anger and punishment’ directed at Mr Hill and S. He considered that the forced entry and the ‘relentless’ knife attacks would have been ‘an absolutely terrifying experience for those involved’.

In *Brown v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 204 the Court of Appeal dismissed an appeal against a sentence of IMP6y4m/4y3m on a 21 year old offender on 6 charges, including a base sentence of IMP5y6m on a charge of aggravated burglary. The applicant had made a violent entry, after midnight, to steal drugs in the context of a vigilante action and in the company of a co-offender with the knowledge or expectation that the victim would be present. At [38] Maxwell P & Sifris JA said: “In our opinion, the sentence on [the charge of aggravated burglary] and the total effective sentence were reasonably open to the sentencing judge in sentencing this offender for this offending. That conclusion is reinforced by an examination of post-*Hogarth* sentences.” In the judgment there followed a detailed analysis of a large number of aggravated burglary sentences, including the following cases:

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| --- | --- |
| *DPP v Hogarth* (2012) 37 VR 658 | *DPP v Meyers* (2014) 44 VR 486 |
| *Bux v The Queen* [2017] VSCA 70 | *Robinson v The Queen* [2017] VSCA 304 |
| *Hi v The Queen* [2017] VSCA 315 | *Maslen v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 90 |
| *Till v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 122 | *Sovolos v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 149 |
| *Lim v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 182 | *Dughetti v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 217 |
| *Fisher v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 222 | *DPP v Simmonds* [2019] VSCA 288 |
| *Comensoli v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 2 |  |

See also *R v Davis* [2006] VSCA 8; *R v Stanbury* [2010] VSCA 49; *R v Secombe and Butkovic* [2010] VSCA 58; *R v Denman* [2012] VSCA 261; *DPP v Bonacci and Vasile* [2012] VSCA 170*; Saxon v The Queen* [2014] VSCA 296; *Kargar v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 148; *Wood v The Queen; Bell v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 39 at [90]-[93]; *DPP v Tuite* [2019] VSC 159; *Zhen Jiang v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 126; *Frost & Deen v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 53; *Hill v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 220; *Jiaming Gui v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 273; *Bava v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 34 at [50]-[68]; *Balshaw v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 55 & [2021] VSCA 78; *Alexander v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 140 at [28]; *Hope v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 177 at [38] & [53]; *Newton v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 207; *Stevens v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 218; *Konidaris v the Queen* [2021] VSCA 309; *Lucas v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 314 at [16]-[18]; *Schembri v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 40 at [87]-[94]; *Stowers v The King; Phillips v The King* [2022] VSCA 203; *DPP v Hammoud* [2023] VSC 58; *DPP v Rahman* [2023] VSC 87; *Potter v The King* [2023] VSCA 104; *R v Scriven* [2023] VSC 652; *Seualuga v The King* [2024] VSCA 7 {attempted aggravated burglary}; *Deng v The King* [2024] VSCA 19; *Wang v The King* [2024] VSCA 97; *DPP v Ristic* [2024] VSCA 251; *DPP v Tiba* [2024] VSC 509; *Al Qassim v The King* [2024] VSCA 302 at [32]-[52]; *Al-Bab v The King* [2025] VSCA 22; *Battye v The King* [2025] VSCA 89; *Lind v The King* [2025] VSCA 110 at [41]-[56]; *Thomson v The King* [2025] VSCA 111; *DPP v Perry* [2025] VSCA 217 at [32]-[40].

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### **C AGGRAVATED HOME INVASION**

In *Makieng v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 52 the 18 year old offender had pleaded guilty to charges of aggravated home invasion [IMP 5y2m] and armed robbery [IMP 4y/14m cumulation] and had been sentenced to a TES IMP 6y4m/3y9m. Holding that the sentence was not manifestly excessive, the Court of Appeal described the offending as “outrageous and disturbing in its audacity”. At 7.10am the 4 offenders, aged 18 & 19, had smashed a glass door with a shovel and entered the home of a family with whom they had no prior association. All were wearing hoodies and 2 were masked. Inside all 4 offenders demanded the family’s phones, wallets, money and car keys while threatening them with the shovel, knives and screwdrivers. One offender raised a knife and placed it to the mother’s throat, demanding the password to her phone. The offenders stole 3 cars together with other property valued at $9,980 and caused $2,480 damage to the property. At [43] Priest & Kyrou JJA said:

“He may have been a youthful offender, but the applicant’s offending was nothing less than shocking…[I]t involved a wantonly violent invasion of a family home – where the occupants were entitled to feel safe – by disguised and armed intruders, in circumstances that must have been absolutely terrifying for the…family.”

In *Xian v The King* [2024] VSCA 227 the appellant – who was aged 18 at the time of the offending and had no prior criminal history – had pleaded guilty to aggravated home invasion, damaging property, aggravated burglary and attempted aggravated burglary. The offending was against the backdrop of violent incidents involving two youth gangs. The appellant was sentenced to TES IMP5y6m/3y, of which IMP4y was imposed on the charge of aggravated home invasion. Subsequent to being sentenced the Adult Parole Board had transferred the appellant to a youth justice centre. In dismissing the appeal, the Court of Appeal (Boyce & Orr JJA) said at [93]:

“In all of the circumstances, we are not persuaded that a lesser sentence should be imposed: see Criminal Procedure Act 2009 s 281(1)(b) and *Kentwell v The Queen* (2014) 252 CLR 601, 617–19 [42]–[43]; [2014] HCA 37. As the respondent submitted, the appellant’s offending was especially grave. It was committed in a large group in the early hours of the morning, with the intention of terrorising the occupants of three separate homes. The appellant was wielding a metal baseball bat. The attacks were committed with ferocity and callousness. During the attacks on the first and second houses, there were young children at home. The victims have undergone significant and lasting trauma as a result of the offending. As we have said, offending of this kind strikes at the foundation of a civilised society, and considerations of general deterrence and denunciation must loom large.”

See also *DPP v Wol* [2019] VSCA 268; *Brendan Lowell (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 134 where the offending is detailed at [4] and described as ‘grave’, ‘an extremely serious example of aggravated home invasion’ and ‘dreadful’; *Everett v The King* [2025] VSCA 96 at [55].

### **11.2.28 Sentencing for rape / other sexual offences**

### **11.2.28.1 Sentencing for rape**

In *DPP v Mokhtari* [2020] VSCA 161 the Court of Appeal (Maxwell P, Beach & Weinberg JJA) said at [41]:

“The very act of rape is inherently serious, simply by virtue of the invasion of the victim’s bodily integrity without consent. It is, quite simply, an act of violence, whether or not accompanied by other violent conduct. The violation is physical, emotional and psychological. It follows that, aggravating features apart, all acts of non-consensual penetration are objectively serious, irrespective of the form and the extent of the penetration.”

In *R v Daniel Roy Simon* [2010] VSCA 66 at [60] Bongiorno JA said:

“The crime of rape, like many other crimes in the criminal calendar, covers a very wide spectrum of criminal culpability. A sentence which is clearly appropriate in one case of rape will be manifestly excessive in a different case and even manifestly inadequate in another.”

In *DPP v Avci* [2008] VSCA 256 the respondent had pleaded guilty to 13 charges arising out of attacks on six separate women, four of whom he had raped. The plea was to seven counts of rape, two counts of indecent assault, three counts of robbery and one count of aggravated burglary. The respondent had turned 19 just before the first of the offences. He was sentenced to 16 years imprisonment with a non-parole period of 9 years. The Court of Appeal allowed a Director’s appeal and increased the non-parole period to 11 years. At [26]-[27] Maxwell P (with whom Buchanan & Redlich JJA agreed) set out the principles governing sentencing for rape in Victoria:

“In his submissions, the Director rightly emphasised the fact that Parliament has fixed a maximum penalty of 25 years’ imprisonment for rape. As to the significance for sentencing purposes of the maximum penalty, see *R v AB (No 2)* [2008] VSCA 39. This is the highest maximum provided for by the *Crimes Act*. (The same maximum is provided for armed robbery, aggravated burglary and trafficking in a commercial quantity of a drug of dependence). The fixing of such a high maximum reflects the community’s abhorrence of this crime. [In *R v Hall* (1994) 76 A Crim R 454, 475 (Crockett and Southwell JJ)] the Full Court in 1994 expressed the view that, in the 14 years which had passed since an earlier decision in *R v Vaitos* (1981) 4 A Crim R 238, community concern about ‘the prevalence and seriousness of rape and like crimes’ had undoubtedly hardened, and there was a greater need for salutary sentences to punish those who committed such crimes. Difficult though it is to generalise about community attitudes, I have little doubt that community concern about rape and like crimes, and the need for salutary sentences to punish and to deter, are stronger than ever.

This point was forcefully made in 2006 by Vincent JA (with whom Buchanan and Neave JJA agreed) in *DPP v FHS* [2006] VSCA 120 at [42]:

‘The courts, when dealing with [rape] cases, must have regard to the vindication of the community’s social values, pre-eminent among which are the protection of the personal integrity and physical safety of its citizens. They must punish, justly, those whose criminal conduct causes harm to others, and, through the sentencing process, endeavour to deter potential offenders from acting in this fashion … [W]hen [these considerations] cannot be seen to be reflected in the responses of the courts, not only … does the individual victim justifiably feel betrayed and devalued, but the criminal justice system itself fails to achieve its objectives.’”

In *R v Brown* [2009] VSCA 23 at [31] the Court of Appeal (Neave & Weinberg JJA) cited with approval the above dicta of Maxwell P in *DPP v Avci* and the following dicta of Crockett & Southwell JJ in *R v Hall* (1994) 76 A Crim R 454, 475 on which it was based:

“[C]ommunity concern about the prevalence and seriousness of rape and like crimes has undoubtedly hardened. And the need for salutary sentences to punish offenders has undoubtedly increased. This change of attitude is reflected in the increase in the maximum sentence that from time to time has been fixed for the crime of rape. Whilst not giving way to public clamour for revenge, the courts in turn are expected to recognise clearly defined and rational community expectations by the sentences that they impose.”

In *R v Brown* their Honours continued at [33]:

“Sex workers are no less entitled to be protected from rape than anyone else. The victims in this case were both vulnerable. Each was subjected to what must have been a horrifying ordeal. These were cowardly attacks, committed at night against different women on different occasions. There appears to have been some measure of premeditation. Obviously, they warranted severe punishment.”

In *R v Gill* [2010] VSCA 64 in approving a 16 year sentence of imprisonment on a count of rape, Ashley, Bongiorno & Harper JJA said:

[52] “The rape was perpetrated by the appellant upon a person unknown to him. He was larger than she. She was, in substance, dragged off the street late at night whilst going peaceably about her own business. The incident took place over some time. The rape itself was unarguably savage. The injuries which the appellant inflicted upon EO were life-threatening. She suffered the physical and emotional sequelae to which we have referred. Her victim impact statement, reserved in tone but the more eloquent for that, highlighted her suffering.

[53] The circumstances to which we have referred explain why this rape fell into the category of extremely serious rapes. But this does not mean that matters relied upon for the appellant, to the extent that they are valid, can be disregarded.

[54] The maximum penalty for the offence of rape is 25 years’ imprisonment.

[55] The maximum penalty should be reserved for the very worst cases of rape: See, for instance, *Markarian v The Queen* (2005) 228 CLR 357, 372 [31], *R v Sibic* (2006) 168 A Crim R 305 [14] (Redlich JA) and *R v AB* (No 2) (2008) 18 VR 391, 403 [40](Nettle JA).

[56] Counsel for the appellant submitted that a rape involving violence similar to that used in the present case would have been worse if – (1) committed in company; (2) planned; (3) committed by a man with prior convictions for sexual offences; (4) committed by a ‘serious sexual offender’ (this term has a particular meaning in the criminal law in this State. It did not apply to the appellant.); (5) the offender had pleaded not guilty, and had been convicted after trial; (6) there had been a multiplicity of rapes; (7) gross injuries had been inflicted upon the victim in addition to any injuries inflicted in the course of the rape. Cases involving one or more of those circumstances are *DPP v Devaldez* [2003] VSCA 29, *R v WCE* [2004] VSCA 243 and *R v Welsh* [2005] VSCA 285.

[57] We agree with that submission. To that list may be added the case of a revenge rape attended by violence such as was here used; and, arguably also, rapes involving invasion of the sanctuary of the victim’s home, or the use or threatened use of a weapon.

[58] It follows from what we have thus far said that this rape, serious though it was, was not a rape which, other things being equal, could attract the highest of penalties.”

In *Hasan v The Queen* (2010) 31 VR 28; [2010] VSCA 352 the Court of Appeal allowed an appeal against a sentence of 6y/4y on one count of rape. The victim had been asleep and the rape was unprotected penile intercourse. A DNA match had been obtained and the offender had fled the jurisdiction for two years. The offender had no prior convictions, had been intoxicated and had pleaded guilty. He was resentenced to 4y/3y. In the course of their joint judgment Maxwell P, Redlich & Harper JJA said:

[40] “Rape is a very serious offence, as the maximum of 25 years fixed by Parliament indicates. As Winneke P said in *R v Mason* [2001] VSCA 62 at [8]:

‘It should not be forgotten that the crime of rape is an intensely personal crime which, for sentencing purposes, cannot be divorced from its effects on the victim. But the effects include not only those which flow from the physical invasion of the victim’s person and security, but also those which flow from the violation of the more intangible intellectual properties of the victim’s rights and freedoms.’

[41] This case was far from the most serious of its kind. It involved no violence, no threats and no weapon. The victim’s home was not invaded. On the other hand, advantage was taken of a sleeping woman. She was subjected not merely to an invasion of her body but to an invasion by way of unprotected penile penetration followed by ejaculation. While far from the worst, it was nevertheless a very bad case.”

In its judgment at [48] the Court of Appeal stated – with reference to dicta of Mason J in *Lowe v The Queen* (1984) 154 CLR 606, 611 and Gleeson CJ in *Wong v The Queen* (2001) 207 CLR 584, 591 – that “it is contrary to the rule of law for there to be unjustified inconsistency of sentencing between offenders in comparable circumstances”. It went on to detail at [56]-[58] a large number of cases illustrating current sentencing practice for the offence of rape. These included *DPP v Maynard* [2009] VSCA 129; *DPP v Patterson* [2009] VSCA 222; *DPP v Moses* [2009] VSCA 274; *R v Schubert* [1999] VSCA 25; *R v Brown* (2002) 5 VR 463; *R v Mason* [2001] VSCA 62; *DPP v Fellows* [2002] VSCA 58; *Nous v The Queen* [2010] VSCA 42; *DPP v Sibanda* [2010] VCC 605; *Coulson v The Queen* [2010] VSCA 146; *Simon v The Queen* [2010] VSCA 66; *R v Yankovski* [2007] VSCA 259. At [60] the Court of Appeal said that but for the constrains of current sentencing practice and the requirement for consistency, it would have dismissed the appeal. It went on to stress “the need for a review of current sentencing practices for rape”.

In *Bradley Webster (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2016] VSCA 66 the 17 year old offender had been found guilty of seven charges of rape arising from a single episode. A number of other charges were dismissed. BW was sentenced in the Children’s Court to a 12 month youth supervision order. On a Director’s appeal – in which BW pleaded guilty – he was sentenced in the County Court to 2 years YJC detention. In the Court of Appeal the majority allowed BW’s appeal and sentenced him to a 12 month youth attendance order. In dissent, Beach J granted leave to appeal but dismissed the appeal. Extracts from the majority judgment are set out in **section 11.1.3** above.

In *Wheeldon v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 344 the offender had pleaded guilty to rape (4 representative charges), false imprisonment and intentionally causing injury to the same victim in Victoria. After a trial he had been found guilty of aggravated sexual intercourse without consent (3 counts), indecent assault (2 counts) and one count of detaining for advantage involving the same victim in New South Wales. On the NSW charges he had been sentenced to IMP 11y/7y. On the Victorian charges he was sentenced to IMP13y4m of whch 4y4m was concurrent with the NSW sentence. A new non-parole period of 14y was set. The Court of Appeal said at [2]: “Apart from their extended duration, these offences are unusual for the degree of torment and degradation which the applicant inflicted on B. There is a strikingly sadistic quality about his treatment of B, whom he had got to know when she took him in as a boarder. As will appear, his offending was an ‘overwhelmingly aggressive’ response to her rejection of his sexual advances.” Describing the sentence as “lenient” and applying dicta from *Mill v The Queen* (1988) 166 CLR 59, the Court of Appeal refused leave to appeal.

In *James Forbes (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 341 the 38 year old accused had been found guilty of a number of offences – including 3 counts of rape – against his former domestic partner. He received a total effective sentence of IMP10y10m/7y3m which included a sentence of IMP7y on each of the counts of rape. Refusing leave to appeal, the Court of Appeal emphasized the importance of general deterrence in relation to offences committed in the context of domestic violence, saying at [41]-[42]:

[41] “As to the total effective sentence and the non-parole period, counsel for the applicant rightly accepted that the three rape offences were serious because they occurred in the context of domestic violence and because of the other features of the offending which the respective counsel highlighted. It is true that certain of the features referred to in *Jurj* are absent. The offender did act alone, no weapon was used, and no injuries were inflicted apart from the temporary unconsciousness and the inevitable psychological impact of offending of this kind. But the features set out by this Court in *Jurj*, as the judgment in that case itself explained, are ‘descriptive’, rather than ‘prescriptive’: *Jurj* [2016] VSCA 57 [81]. The gravity of each offence must be considered in the totality of the circumstances which relate to that particular offence.

[42] In our view the offending here was very serious for the reasons set out by counsel for the respondent when describing the sequence of the offences. The context of domestic violence is also very important. This Court in *Pasinis* [2014] VSCA 97 [53] said:

‘Historically perpetrators of family violence were rarely prosecuted. Even when offenders were convicted of such offences, they often received lenient sentences. Fortunately the criminal law now gives greater recognition to the devastating effects of family violence. It has also been recognised that women who are killed by their husband, boyfriend or de facto partner have frequently been assaulted by them many times previously. This makes both specific and general deterrence very important factors in sentencing men who assault their partner.’

The importance of general deterrence in this context, and its application to offending by former domestic partners, was again emphasised by this Court in *Filiz* [2014] VSCA 212 [21].”

In *DPP v Jayadev Patil (a pseudonym)* [2020] VSCA 337 the Court of Appeal allowed a Crown appeal against a TES of IMP9y7m/6y7m imposed on a 33 year old accused who had been found guilty of 10 charges of rape in an arranged marriage which had lasted only 6 months, 3 charges of assault and one charge of threat to kill. The rapes were categorized as “Forcible rapes with violence – Humiliating and degrading treatment – Breach of trust – Vulnerable victim – Severe victim impact”. Holding that the individual rape sentences and the TES were manifestly inadequate the Court of Appeal substituted a TES of IMP14y/10y6m.

In *Braddock v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 201 a single mother then aged 38 was asleep in the bedroom of her home in 1990 when the appellant and a still unidentified male co-offender broke into her home and subjected her to a horrifying attack, during which each assailant raped her. The appellant’s role was not discovered until a ‘cold case’ examination of a seminal stain located on one of the bed sheets matched the appellant’s. He ultimately pleaded guilty to one charge of burglary and two charges of aggravated rape and was sentenced to TES 12y2m/9y. The Court of Appeal dismissed his appeal, Priest JA saying at [37]: “The appellant’s was…a horrifying crime. It was premeditated and disturbingly callous. I am unable to see that the sentence imposed can properly be characterized as disproportionate to its gravity.”

In *Lawrence (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 291 the applicant had been sentenced to IMP8y6m on a charge of rape, the applicant having pleaded guilty to the digital-vaginal rape of a sleeping adult female. Counsel for the applicant had cited 36 cases – referenced by the Court of Appeal at [16] – in support of the proposition that the sentence of IMP8y6m “does not sit comfortably within current sentencing practices for the offence of rape”. After referring to *Ibbs v The Queen* (1987) 163 CLR 447, *R v Brown* (2002) 5 VR 463, *DPP v Dalgliesh* (2017) 262 CLR 428 at [9] and *Hasan v The Queen* (2010) 31 VR 28; [2010] VSCA 352 at [55]-[57], Priest & T Forrest JJA concluded at [27] that 8y6m was “wholly outside the range open in the sound exercise of the sentencing discretion” and substituted a sentence of IMP5y6m.

In *DPP v Sharp* [2024] VSCA 24 the 32-year old respondent had been sentenced to a TES IMP3y of which 2y was suspended for 3y on charges of rape (IMP3y), false imprisonment (IMP8m) and common law assault (IMP2m) which he had committed at the age of 19. The Court of Appeal allowed the Director’s appeal and re-sentenced the respondent to a TES IMP5y4m/3y comprised of IMP5y on the charge of rape and ordering that 3m of the IMP on false imprisonment and 1m of the IMP on common law assault be cumulative. At [45]-[48] Niall JA, Boyce & T Forrest JJA said:

[45] “As already noted, a partially suspended sentence was a legal option here, so long as the length of the total sentence did not exceed three years. But was it really ever open in this case to impose a total-effective term of no longer than three years? Given that the sentence imposed on the rape charge was three years’ imprisonment, and in light of the fact that all the other sentences were ordered to run concurrently with the rape sentence, this question may be answered simply by asking whether it was reasonably open to the sentencing judge to impose a three-year term for the respondent’s commission of the rape.

[46] Quite simply, we do not think that it was. Affording the respondent all the benefit that must accrue to him on account of delay, achieved rehabilitation {*R v MWH* [2001] VSCA 197, [18]}, the Crown concession concerning the respondent’s lack of responsibility for delay, totality, as well as the respondent’s age at the time of the crime’s commission {*R v Boland* (2007) 17 VR 300, 303-4 [15]–[16]}; where the legislature has set an applicable maximum penalty of 25 years’ imprisonment and where the respondent could claim no mitigation on account of remorse or a plea of guilty, it seems to us that a sentence of three years’ imprisonment for this rape entirely fails to reflect the objective seriousness of the offending and the consequent need for general deterrence and denunciation.

[47] The rape in this case came at the tail-end of what must already have been a terrifying ordeal for the complainant. The complainant was bundled against her will, at night, into a van and driven away from her home by three men. Along the way she was assaulted. She was taken, ultimately, to a place of relative seclusion. There she was raped by the respondent, over a not insignificant period of time, and also made to suffer the indignity of being told that she might at least sound like she were enjoying herself. The other two men stood by the van while this was happening. The complainant was 17. She was, in fact, in Year 11.

[48] In our view the sentence of three years’ imprisonment imposed on the respondent for the offence of rape was wholly outside the range of sentences reasonably open to be imposed in this case and thus must be seen as manifestly inadequate. Because the rape sentence was correlative with the total effective sentence, the total effective sentence is also manifestly inadequate. The appeal must therefore be allowed and the respondent re-sentenced.”

In *Stanford v The King* [2024] VSCA 35 a County Court jury had found the applicant guilty of 3 of 4 charges of rape, 1 of 3 charges of making a threat to kill, a charge of false imprisonment and a charge of indecent assault. The complainant in relation to all of the charged offences was the applicant’s then domestic partner. The applicant had been sentenced to TES IMP19y/13y made up as follows:

CHARGE/OFFENCE ORIGINAL SENTENCE SUBSTITUTED SENTENCE

Charge 12 – Rape 12y Base 10y Base

Charge 13 – Rape 10y Cumulation 2y 10y Cumulation 2y

Charge 9 – Rape 8y Cumulation 4y -------------

Charge 7 – Threat to kill 2y Cumulation 1y 2y Cumulation 1y

Charge 11 – Indecent assault 2y Concurrent 2y Concurrent

Charge 10 – False imprisonment 2y Concurrent 2y Concurrent

The respondent conceded that the verdict on charge 9 was unreasonable or could not be supported having regard to the evidence. The Court of Appeal duly resentenced the applicant to TES IMP13y/9y6m made up as shown above. At [75] Boyce, Whelan & T Forrest JJA listed in footnote 40 a number of recent cases “involving offences of rape within an existing relationship, some of [which] involved degrading and humiliating conduct similar to that which occurred here” and at [76] in footnotes 41-45 discussed some “relevant individual sentences for rape after a plea of not guilty”. At [77]-[78] their Honours said:

[77] “Comparable cases may illustrate the possible range of sentences but they cannot define it: *DPP v OJA* (2007) 172 A Crim R 181, 196 [30]–[31]; [2007] VSCA 129; *DPP v Dalgliesh (a pseudonym)* (2017) 262 CLR 428, 445 [50]–[52] & 453–4 [82]–[83]; [2017] HCA 41. In 2019, this Court observed that sentences for rape have increased somewhat in recent years, which accords with and respects community expectations: *DPP v Lian* [2019] VSCA 75, [60]. When sentencing men who violently offend against female domestic partners, specific and general deterrence are very important factors: *Pasinis v The Queen* [2014] VSCA 97, [53], quoted in *Forbes* [2018] VSCA 341, [42]. See also *Filiz v The Queen* [2014] VSCA 212, [21].”

[78] Of the two rape offences here, the matters which seem to us to be significant are:

* the importance of specific and general deterrence in this context;
* the absence of remorse, the poor prospects of rehabilitation, and the lack of insight, as particularly demonstrated by the subsequent offending concerning the complainant;
* the appellant’s criminal history, recognising that most of that offending is old;
* the delay between the offending and the charges, and some positive changes made by the appellant in that period; and
* the seriousness of the appellant’s conduct, involving penetration with objects, injury to the complainant requiring hospitalisation, pleas and distress which were unheeded, and humiliating and degrading treatment.”

In *Hu v The King* [2025] VSCA 60 – described by the Court of Appeal at [2] as “one of the most serious cases of multiple sexual assaults ever seen in this state” – the 40 year old applicant had pleaded guilty to 16 charges (some of which were ‘rolled up’) of rape, sexual assault, intentionally causing injury and recklessly causing serious injury in which the complainants were his partner and 6 other women. In each case the applicant had drugged the complainant, rendering her unconscious. The applicant was diagnosed with a somnophilic disorder but conceded that the disorder did not reduce his moral culpability. He had been sentenced to TES IMP29y/22y. In refusing leave to appeal against the sentence Walker, Boyce & Kaye JJA held:

* The judge had not failed to moderate need for general deterrence due to applicant’s somnophilic disorder and did not err in requiring a ‘realistic connection’ or ‘causal link’ between the disorder and the offending.
* The judge was correct to conclude that no moderation of general deterrence was appropriate.
* Given the nature and extent of the offending and the importance of general deterrence, denunciation and community protection, the TES and NPP were not manifestly excessive.

In *Gao v The King* [2025] VSCA 88 the applicant, a 47 year old Chinese national, had pleaded guilty to rape, aggravated burglary and make threat to kill. The rolled-up rape charge encompassed three penetrations. The offending occurred in the context of an extended campaign of coercive behaviour by applicant towards the victim – his landlady with whom he had an occasional sexual relationship – for the purposes of having her withdraw a family violence complaint and assist him with application for permanent residency. He was sentenced to TES IMP14y6m/11y made up as follows: Rape IMP12y; Aggravated burglary IMP6y, 18m cumulative; Threat to kill IMP2y, 1y cumulative. In refusing leave to appeal Taylor & T Forrest JJA held that the sentence for rape, the orders for cumulation and the non-parole period were not manifestly excessive.

In *Russo v The King* [2024] VSCA 291 the nexus which sometimes occurs between childhood deprivation and protection of the community was also commented on by the Court of Appeal in refusing leave to appeal against a TES IMP20y4m/17y on multiple charges including 2 counts of rape imposed on a 30 year old offender who had previously been sentenced to IMP5y/3y for a similar rape. At [34] Priest & T Forrest JJA, citing *Bugmy v The Queen*, noted that “an inability to control violent responses to frustration, borne of exposure to violence and substance abuse, may increase the importance of community protection as a feature in sentencing”. Compare *Ji v The King* [2025] VSCA 113, esp. at [4] & [44]-[54].

See also *R v Balassis* [2010] VSCA 296; *DPP v Sibanda* [2011] VSCA 285 at [90]-[106]; *R v Werry* [2012] VSCA 208; *DPP v Roberts* [2012] VSCA 313; *Hayden Samuels (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 251; *Hayden Samuels (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 14; *Bolton v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 21; *DPP v Elfata* [2019] VSCA 63; *DPP v Za Lian & Hlawnceu* [2019] VSCA 75; *DPP v Drake* [2019] VSCA 293; *Mush v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 307f; *Julian Lockyer (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 321 at [66]; *DPP v Beck* [2021] VSCA 88; *Wright v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 243; *DPP v Daniels (a pseudonym)* [2021] VSCA 272; *Lawrence (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 291 at [16] & [21]-[27]; *Thornton v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 325; *DPP v Keller (a pseudonym)* [2021] VSCA 334; *Keith Clarke (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 89; *Landale (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 121; *Babar v the Queen* [2022] VSCA 122; *Stafford v The King* [2022] VSCA 229; *Avalos (a pseudonym) v The King* [2023] VSCA 117 esp. at [10]-[14]; *DPP v Holland* [2023] VSC 510; *Watkins (a pseudonym) v The King* [2023] VSCA 203 esp. at [31]-[75]; *DPP v Merryful; DPP v Bloomfield* [2023] VSC 244; *Basile v The King* [2023] VSCA 308; *De Haas v The King* [2024] VSCA 141; *DPP v Ierardo* [2024] VSCA 181 esp. at [113]-[115]; *Butcher v The King* [2024] VSCA 322; *Vassallo v The King* [2025] VSCA 7; *Ortisi v The King* [2025] VSCA 42; *Barton (a pseudonym) v The King* [2025] VSCA 74; *Malbeal v The King* [2025] VSCA 71.

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### **11.2.28.2 Sentencing for other sexual offences**

In *AS v The Queen* [2019] VSC 260 the appellant – aged 17 at the time of the offending – had pleaded guilty to charges including **assault with intent to commit a sexual offence** and aggravated burglary. At approximately 9.30am he had entered a residential premises with intention to steal. He had been living with his uncle next door but he did not know the victim, a 19 year old female who was asleep in one of the bedrooms. The appellant got a large cooking knife from the kitchen, entered the victim’s bedroom and stood beside her be pointing the knife towards her. He was wearing a black mask that covered the bottom half of his face. He said: “Get your clothes off now.” The victim refused. The appellant placed the knife on her left leg and moved it up and down. The victim was on her back and continued to move away, saying, ‘Please, no’. The appellant rolled her onto her stomach using his hands, reached down to pull her pants up her left leg and grabbed at her top to pull it up. The victim began crying and repeating ‘no, please’. The appellant continued to attempt to take off her clothes. He reached for her from behind and positioned his right arm around her neck so that she was in a headlock. He tightened his grip, putting pressure on and squeezing her neck. The victim struggled and the appellant continued squeezing and pushing against her left shoulder. She was very fearful, believing the appellant would rape her and that she may die. The victim is unsure if she lost consciousness, but next found herself alone on the floor, with the appellant no longer in the bedroom. She was dizzy, scared and confused. AS had had issues with the abuse of drugs. He smoked marijuana in New Zealand while at high school, which escalated to daily use once he moved to Australia. He had also abused methamphetamine and alcohol. He had been referred to a mental health nurse after an episode of self-harm whilst in detention.

At [38] & [40] Champion J described the aggravated burglary and associated theft charges as “being in the mid-range of seriousness” and the assault with intent to commit a sexual offence as “very serious”. Nevertheless his Honour allowed AS’ appeal against an aggregate sentence of YJC30m and re-sentenced him to YJC24m with a base sentence of YJC18m on the assault charge and a cumulative sentence of YJC6m on the aggravated burglary charge.

In *Andrews v The King* [2025] VSCA 26 the 43 year old applicant had pleaded guilty to assault with intent to commit a criminal offence, threat to inflict serious injury, sexual assault and threat to commit a sexual offence and had been sentenced to TES IP7y/5y. The victim, who was unknown to the applicant, was vulnerable and was walking alone in the early hours of the morning with few people in the vicinity. In refusing leave to appeal against this sentence Kaye & T Forrest JJA said at [58] & [64]:

[58] “This was dreadful offending that demanded condign punishment. There was a level of premeditation by the applicant; his offending was not spontaneous. It involved an outrageous and vicious attack upon a vulnerable, isolated young woman. True it is that there were some mitigating factors, all ably recognised by counsel and all considered by the sentencing judge. That said, the applicant had no remorse, nor any relevant psychiatric or psychological impairment that might mitigate his subjective culpability for the offending.

[64] Every member of our community has an unconditional right to free and safe passage in public spaces. They are entitled to travel confidently and fearlessly in any circumstance at any time. It is a matter of singular regret that this right has become no more than an aspiration. It is the court’s duty to punish severely those who encroach upon that unconditional right. We have a duty to protect insofar as we can, the members of our community (principally female) from predatory sexual attacks of the kind that was perpetrated in this case.”

See also *Guirguis v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 48, esp. at [33]-[37].

### **11.2.29 Sentencing for offences against the person committed on public transport**

In *DPP v Eli* [2008] VSCA 209 the Court of Appeal (Vincent & Weinberg JJA and Mandie AJA) allowed a DPP appeal and increased the sentence on a charge of intentionally causing serious injury from 2y to 4y6m. The defendant and the victim, who were strangers to each other, were passengers on a train. Without provocation the defendant had struck the victim to the face about ten times with his fist and a glass beer bottle. In attempting to escape the victim forced the train doors open and jumped out of the moving train. In the incident the victim sustained an extremely serious permanent injury. At [32] the Court of Appeal said:

“The rights and safety of the members of this community who travel on the public transport system must be protected. It cannot be accepted that they will be exposed to abuse, violence or the threat of personal injury as they go about their ordinary activities using these facilities. Those who physically or verbally interfere with or endanger them must anticipate that the response of the courts will be stern. In short, there must be no doubt in anyone’s mind that conduct of the kind in which the respondent engaged will simply not be tolerated. General deterrence is an important sentencing consideration in cases of the present kind for this reason.”

### **11.2.30 Sentencing for attempting to pervert the course of justice / perjury**

### **A ATTEMPTING TO PERVERT THE COURSE OF JUSTICE**

In *R v Tognolini* [2011] VSCA 113 the Court of Appeal allowed an appeal against a sentence of 6 years imprisonment on a charge of attempting to pervert the course of justice and replaced it with a sentence of 4 years imprisonment. In an annexure to the judgment the Court set out the following research by counsel for the applicant into sentences imposed in the previous 10 years for the offence of attempting to pervert the course of justice.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **CASE** | **CITATION** | **INDIVIDUAL TERM** |
| *DPP (Cth) v Fincham* | (2008) 75 ATR 545 | 6 months’ imprisonment |
| *DPP v Aydin and Kirsch* | [2005] VSCA 86 | 2 years’ imprisonment |
| *DPP v Josefski* | (2005) 13 VR 85 | 15 months’ imprisonment |
| *R v Aydin* | (2005) 11 VR 544; [2005] VSCA 85 | 15 months’ imprisonment |
| *R v Aydin and Flett* | [2005] VSCA 87 | 2 years & 2½ years’ imp’ment |
| *R v Briggs* | (2000) 117 A Crim R 114 | 12 months’ imprisonment |
| *R v Carey* | [2007] VSCA 319 | 2 years’ imprisonment |
| *R v Coombe* | [1999] VSCA 94 | 4 months’ imprisonment |
| *R v Davis* | [2007] VSCA 276 | 18 months’ imprisonment |
| *R v Dunmall* | [2008] VSCA 22 | 9 months’ imprisonment |
| *R v Galea* | [2001] VSCA 115 | 4 years’ imprisonment |
| *R v Johns* | [2010] VSCA 63 | 2 years’ imprisonment (reduced from 2 ½ years) |
| *R v Matheas* | [2003] VSCA 221 | 6 months’ imprisonment |
| *R v Redmond & Anor* | [2006] VSCA 75 | 3 months imprisonment & 4 months’ imprisonment |
| *R v Ripper* | [2008] VSCA 40 | 2 years’ imprisonment |
| *R v Rodden* | [2005] VSCA 24 | 18 months’ imprisonment |
| *R v Rogers* | [2008] VSCA 114 | 15 months’ imprisonment |
| *R v Stevens* | [2009] VSCA 81 | 12 months’ imprisonment |
| *R v Walsh* | [2002] VSCA 98 | 3 years’ imprisonment |
| *R v Yacoub* | [2006] VSCA 203 | 2 years’ imprisonment |
| *R v Zaydan & Ors* | [2004] VSCA 245 | 4 years’ imprisonment |

In *R v Godfrey* [2011] VSC 179 Coghlan J imposed a sentence of 3 years imprisonment, suspended for all but the 51 days already served, on a 28 year old woman who had pleaded guilty to a charge of attempting to pervert the course of justice in circumstances where she had provided a false alibi for her then boyfriend who had strangled and dismembered another woman.

In *R v Buscema* [2011] VSC 206 Nettle JA also reproduced the above list of cases and said at [6]:

“Offences of attempting to pervert the course of justice are conceived of as striking at the heart of the justice system and, therefore, as ordinarily necessitating a custodial disposition. The offence is broadly defined, however, and so may be committed in a wide range of circumstances, and the particular circumstances of each case inform the gravity of the offending. Circumstances which bear upon the assessment of the nature and gravity of particular offending, and so upon the sentence to be imposed, have been identified in *Ranford v Western Australia (No 2)* (2006) 166 A Crim R 451, 462 as including the following:

a) The consequences which the offending was calculated to avoid;

b) The time for which the deception was maintained and whether it was actively repeated or persisted in or merely allowed to continue;

c) Whether the deception involved some other person, either as an accomplice or as a victim;

d) Whether there was any threat or violence involved;

e) Whether the offence was spontaneous or premeditated;

f) Whether the deception resulted in the deception of the court or the creation of false public records and, if so, the extent and consequences of that.

Nettle JA said at [7] that judged by reference to these criteria the accused’s offence (of providing false alibis to help a person avoid detection for drug trafficking activities) was relatively serious, albeit falling well short of the most serious category of cases. His Honour imposed a wholly suspended sentence of IMP 2.5y.

In *Alexandra Hill v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 349 the applicant had pleaded guilty to one charge of attempting to pervert the course of justice and had been sentenced to IMP6m + 18m CCO. The offence occurred in the context of the presentation of a forged letter of employment to a sentencing judge in the County Court. In refusing an application for extension of time to appeal Priest & McLeish JJA referred to the cases of *Zotos v The Queen* [2014] VSCA 324; *DPP v Honan* [2021] VCC 409; *DPP v Ceylan* [2021] VCC 788 and *DPP v Constable* [2020] VCC 1439 and concluded at [36]:

“Offending such as the present ‘strikes at the heart of the administration of criminal justice, and is designed to erode the confidence that should exist between the Bench and those appearing for sentence’: *Saleem v The Queen* [2014] VSCA 190 [35] (Redlich and Priest JJA). In our view, the sentence imposed was well within the bounds of the discretion open to the judge.”

In *Qayyum v The King* [2025] VSCA 14 the appellant who had been charged with family violence offences had made telephone calls from prison instructing his brother to pressure his wife’s friend into making a statement in his favour and omitting any reference to him having arguments with his wife or beating her. The Court of Appeal dismissed his appeal against a sentence of IMP2y/1y on a charge of attempting to pervert the course of justice. At [96] Emerton P & J Forrest JA said:

“This Court has on a number of occasions stated, as a matter of principle, that an attempt to pervert the course of justice in a family violence context ‘is always a grave matter’: *Shiryar* [2022] VSCA 96, [38]; see also *Carter v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 156, [70]. In *Baker (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 158, [37] this Court said as follows:

An attempt by a perpetrator of family violence to prevent a victim from seeking the full protection of the law and their physical and emotional safety is a very serious matter which calls for general deterrence and denunciation. While warranting distinct punishment, however, care must be taken not to punish the offender again for the offending which it was sought to conceal.”

In *DPP v Kurtaj* [2025] VSCA 203 (summarised in **section 11.2.36**) the Court of Appeal discussed at [140]-[148] the question of sentencing for the offence of attempting to pervert the course of justice. Their Honours described the sentence of IMP18m imposed on the 33 year old offender as “low” but “not…manifestly inadequate”. At [141]-[144] Boyce JA (with whom Priest & Taylor JJA agreed) said:

[141] “…Speaking of the offence of attempting to pervert the course of justice, Kyrou JA, in *Director of Public Prosecutions v Oksuz* (2015) 47 VR 731; [2015] VSCA 316 at [95], observed that:

The offence is serious because the conduct that constitutes it strikes at the heart of the administration of justice. It does so because it involves an offender seeking to deter witnesses from giving evidence — or giving truthful evidence — in court proceedings. Where the offence is committed in the context of a criminal proceeding, the aim of the offending conduct is to undermine the Crown’s ability to secure a conviction against an accused person and thus bring him or her to justice. The serious harm to public safety and the rule of law resulting from such offending conduct is obvious.

[142] As Kyrou JA made clear in *Oksuz* at [97], the seriousness of any particular instance of attempting to pervert the course of justice may be gauged by reference to the seriousness of the offence that is sought to be avoided. In this case it would appear that the respondent was seeking to avoid being punished for the particularly serious offence of aggravated burglary.

[143] This Court has, in recent years, considered sentencing for the commission of the offence of attempting to pervert the course of justice when the offence is committed in circumstances of family violence; such as where an alleged perpetrator of family violence has sought to dissuade a witness — including the victim of such violence — from giving evidence. Thus, in *Qayyum v The King*, [2025] VSCA 14 at [96] it was observed that:

This Court has on a number of occasions stated, as a matter of principle, that an attempt to pervert the course of justice in a family violence context ‘is always a grave matter’. In *Baker (a pseudonym) v The Queen*, this Court said as follows:

An attempt by a perpetrator of family violence to prevent a victim from seeking the full protection of the law and their physical and emotional safety is a very serious matter which calls for general deterrence and denunciation. While warranting distinct punishment, however, care must be taken not to punish the offender again for the offending which it was sought to conceal.

[144] In *Fusca v The King* [2024] VSCA 297 this Court noted at [51] that:

“As the applicant accepted, the decision in *Oksuz* reveals that there are other cases that might properly inform the identification of current sentencing practices for the offence of attempting to pervert the course of justice. In that case Kyrou JA pointed out that sentences of between 2 and 4 years’ imprisonment have commonly been imposed for this offence.”

See also *DPP v Thymiopoulos* [2012] VSCA 220*; R v Pantazis & Ors* [2012] VSCA 160; *Mercer (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 132; *Johnie Baker (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 158; *Dieni v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 16; *Shiryar v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 96; *Wasif v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 182 at [63] & [66]; *DPP v Rowson* [2022] VSC 510; *Bamblett v The King* [2023] VSCA 184; *Colleen Treloar v The King* [2023] VSCA 214; *Dragovic v The King* [2024] VSCA 95 at [35]-[36]; *O’Neal v The King* [2024] VSCA 129; *Fusca v The King* [2024] VSCA 297 at [42]-[57].

### **B PERJURY**

In *Harre v The King* [2024] VSCA 278 the applicant, then aged 42 and for whom there were some *Verdins* considerations, had pleaded guilty to charges of stalking a male DA aged 23 with whom he had had an intimate relationship and a female EW aged 24 with whom DA had developed an in intimate relationship. The applicant had also pleaded guilty to one charge of perjury in connection with an application for a personal safety intervention order against EW. He had been sentenced to IMP3y on each of the charges of stalking of which 18m was cumulative and IMP2y on the charge of perjury of which 12m was cumulative, resulting in TES IMP5y6m/3y6m. The Court of Appeal refused leave to appeal, Priest & Beach JJA saying at [83]-[84]:

[83] “As to the perjury charge, rather than being manifestly excessive, if anything we regard the individual sentence of two years’ imprisonment imposed to be lenient. The applicant’s perjury was used to obtain an intervention order against an entirely innocent victim. General deterrence and denunciation were prominent features which had to be reflected in the sentence. Perjury such as the applicant’s strikes at the heart of the administration of justice. In that regard, we express our complete agreement with the observations of Vincent JA (with whom Winneke P and Charles JA agreed) in *R v Schroen* [2001] VSCA 126, [14]:

It is apparent that the integrity of the operation of the system of courts upon which, it must be remembered, our community depends for the proper determination of matters of fact in both civil and criminal proceedings, may be seriously compromised and the achievement of the ends of justice thwarted by the deliberate making of false statements on oath. It is not always easy or even possible to establish that perjury has been committed. Sometimes, unfortunately, the lie may not be exposed and the injustice which has been occasioned remain unrectified. Not only can this have a serious effect upon those with a direct interest in the outcome of the particular matter, but it may also engender a reduction of confidence in the community in the reliability of court decisions generally. For these and a number of other good reasons, the crime of perjury, particularly when committed in a curial setting, is regarded very seriously indeed. The sentencing judge correctly indicated that the principle of general deterrence will, in consequence, normally possess a high degree of significance as a sentencing consideration. As Charles JA pointed out in *R v Patniyot and Dailakis* [2000] VSCA 55, [54], this offence can strike at the very foundation of the legal process and it would be a wholly exceptional case where the giving of false evidence on oath would not warrant an immediate custodial sentence.

[84] We also consider cumulation of 12 months’ of the sentence for perjury upon the sentences for stalking [as to which see **section 11.2.37** below] to be unremarkable. It properly reflected the distinct criminality constituted by the applicant’s deliberately false evidence.”

### **11.2.31 Sentencing for property damage / arson / arson with intent to endanger life**

In *Grajewski v Director of Public Prosecutions (NSW)* [2019] HCA 8 a protestor G had harnassed himself to a ship loader which was then shut down due to safety concerns and was inoperable until G was removed. There was no alteration to physical integrity of ship loader. The High Court held that the ship loader had not been damaged within the meaning of s.195(1)(a) of the *Crimes Act 1900* (NSW). Kiefel CJ, Bell, Keane & Gordon JJ [Nettle J dissenting] held at [53]:

“The physical element of the offence created by s 195(1) is conduct that ‘destroys or damages’ some article of tangible property. A person does not damage a thing by conduct which does not bring about any alteration to the physical integrity of the thing. The alteration may be relatively minor and temporary as in letting the air out of a tyre, which physically alters the tyre and renders it imperfect: see *Director of Public Prosecutions (NSW) v Lucas* [2014] NSWSC 1441 at [187]. By contrast, unless the attachment of a wheel clamp to the tyre causes some physical alteration to the tyre it has not damaged the tyre even though the vehicle may be inoperable while the clamp remains in place.”

In *DPP v Eade* [2012] VSCA 142 the accused, Mr Eade & Mr Vanstone, had pleaded guilty to one count of arson and one count of criminal damage and had been sentenced to 2y4m youth detention on the first count and 3m concurrent youth detention on the second count. After having drunk bourbon and coke all evening, they broke into the heritage-listed Camperdown Milk and Cheese Factory and lit the plastic wrapping on some milk crates on the floor of the factory. They then went to the next door dairy where they gained entry by smashing a window with a metal pole. Subsequently the fire destroyed the Milk and Cheese Factory. However, it was common ground that the accused had not intended to destroy the building. The Court of Appeal held that on the uncontested evidence as to their state of mind, the accused could not have been convicted of intentionally destroying the factory. At [16]-[18] Maxwell P, Neave JA & Lasry AJA analysed the nature of the offence of arson as follows:

[16] “Arson is a sub-category of the offence of intentionally destroying or damaging property, under s.197 of the *Crimes Act 1958*. Section 197(1) provides:

‘A person who intentionally and without lawful excuse destroys or damages any property belonging to another or to himself and another shall be guilty of an indictable offence and liable to level 5 imprisonment (10 years maximum).’

Section 197(6) provides:

‘An offence against this section committed by destroying or damaging property by fire shall be charged as arson.’

[17] The element of intention is dealt with exhaustively by s.197(4), which provides:

‘For the purposes of subsections (1) and (2) a person who destroys or damages property shall be taken as doing so intentionally if, but only if-

(a) his purpose or one of his purposes is to destroy or damage property; or

(b) he knows or believes that his conduct is more likely than not to result in destruction of or damage to property.’

[18] This subsection makes clear that proof of the offence depends on showing that the offender had turned his/her mind to the likely destruction or damage of property, either because that was his/her conscious purpose or because (s)he was aware that destruction or damage was ‘more likely than not to result’. Of these alternatives, only the first is what would ordinarily be understood as intentional conduct. The second alternative is a statutory form of recklessness: cf. *The Queen v Crabbe* (1985) 156 CLR 464, 469-70; see *R v Stephenson* [1979] 1 QB 695 (CA). As the Director’s submission noted, the subsection does not incorporate any concept of negligence.”

The accused had already been in youth detention for 4m. The Court of Appeal held that the presentments be amended to reflect the actual offence which the accused committed, namely the intentional destruction of milk crates by fire. At [2] & [58] the Court held that though the unintended consequences of their conduct were very serious, the actual offence was one of very low culpability and no further penalty was warranted. The appeal was allowed and the appellants were convicted and discharged pursuant to s.73 of the *Sentencing Act 1991*.

In *Liddell v The King* [2024] VSCA 18 the appellant had pleaded guilty to one charge of arson with intent to endanger life and two charges of intentionally causing injury and had been sentenced to TES IMP9y6m/6y6m. The base sentence for arson with intent to endanger life was IMP8y. In a premeditated attack calculated to maximise the danger to the liver of three of his former co-tenants, the appellant had lit a fire in an occupied house in the early hours of the morning using an accelerant on the staircase. In dismissing the appeal the Court of Appeal noted that the offending was at the upper end of seriousness and that the appellant had poor prospects of rehabilitation and high moral culpability. At [43], [53] & [58] McLeish & Walker JJA said:

[43] “The seven cases of arson with intent to endanger life to which the parties referred on the appeal reveal a disparate array of sentences, offending and personal characteristics of the offenders: *DPP v Wang* [2021] VCC 1570; *Islam* [2019] VCC 217; *Maher* [2011] VSCA 136; *BBA v The Queen* [2010] VSCA 174; *DPP v Roberts* [2006] VSC 122; *DPP v Hayman* [2003] VSC 295; *R v Matheas* [2003] VSC 221. The cases range over approximately 20 years, with only two in the last decade. Several involved suspended prison sentences and community based orders, but four were cases of imprisonment alone, for periods of between four and eight years for each charge of arson.”

[53] “Arson is a very dangerous crime and fire can be notoriously indiscrimate and devastating in its impact. This makes arson with intent to endanger life an especially serious offence, even though it carries the same maximum penalty as arson itself. There is a general need to deter offending of this kind, and the present appellant has shown himself to be a person from whom the community needs particular protection.”

[58] “It is not necessary, of course, to be able to rationalise all these sentences so that they are consistent with each other. But when we take account of them, along with the features of this case which we have mentioned and those to which the sentencing judge drew attention, we conclude that the sentence for this instance of arson with intent to edanger life, toward the upper end of the range of seriousness, was well within the range of sentences open to the judge.”

See also *Davies v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 66 where the 40 year old applicant was sentenced to IMP12y3m/10y3m on 5 counts of arson of public buildings; *Beevers v The Queen* [2016] VSCA 271; *McPadden v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 57; *Maddocks v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 47 where the 29 year old applicant with a significant criminal record was sentenced to IMP6y/4y; *Andrew Nolch v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 195 at [26]-[27]; *Salmi v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 250 at [41]-[45]; *Biricik v The Queen* [2023] VSCA 47 at [38]-[41]; *Khoshaba v The King* [2023] VSCA 65 at [31]-[32]; *Whitten v The King* [2023] VSCA 181; *Korey Caddy v The King* [2025] VSCA 87.

### **11.2.32 Sentencing for child homicide**

In *R v Rowe* [2018] VSC 490 the accused had pleaded not guilty but at a second trial had been found guilty of one count of child homicide arising from an isolated incident in which he had shaken his three month old baby daughter. He was otherwise a caring and devoted parent. He had no prior criminal history and excellent prospects for rehabilitation. Although he had grieved for his daughter that did not translate into remorse in circumstances where for nearly 3 years he had denied his role in her death. In sentencing him to IMP 9y/6y T Forrest JA said:

[19] “I remarked to your counsel during the plea hearing that Child Homicide is a very serious offence. Its victims are always defenceless. The community trusts adults charged with the care of children to do so responsibly and conscientiously. You have breached that trust and the effects of that breach have been profound. They will be felt in the [mother’s] family, and probably in yours, for a lifetime. The Victim Impact Statements expose the suffering and emotional rawness that members of [the child’s] family still feel nearly three years after her death.”

[28] “I must give significant weight to the sentencing aspects of general deterrence, denunciation and punishment. Whilst I consider that your objective moral culpability is lower than some examples of child homicide (for example, protracted courses of cruelty, stomping or punching), it is still grave offending and demands exacting punishment.”

In *R v Vinaccia* [2019] VSC 683 the 22 year old accused was found guilty of killing his girlfriend’s infant son aged 3½ months by violent shaking/handling. The offence classifiable as either unlawful and dangerous act or criminal negligence or both. The objective gravity was held to be lower than many other instances of child homicide or manslaughter of young/infant children. The accused had made extensive admissions in a record of interview in which remorse was apparent. The accused had a history of positive behaviour towards the deceased. There was a delay of 3y9m between offence and sentence and the acccused had used the delay wisely. The accused was likely to suffer hardship in prison and beyond via odium and fear. He had good prospects of rehabilitation. At [72] Croucher J referred to dicta of Vincent J in *R v Dempsey* [2001] VSC 123 and said:

“This particular offence is also serious because a totally helpless 3½ month-old child has lost his life at the hands of an adult entrusted with his care. The law has a special duty to protect the very young and vulnerable, and to hold to account adults who cause harm to children entrusted to their care.”

In imposing a sentence of IMP 8y6m/5y6m, Croucher J said at [124]:

“In my view, general deterrence, just punishment and denunciation are important considerations in this case of child homicide. The community should understand that behaviour of the type engaged in by Mr Vinaccia is denounced by the courts and will result in a substantial term of imprisonment that reflects that a very young and vulnerable child’s life has been taken by the unlawful and dangerous act or criminal negligence of a person entrusted with his care, and that the lives of the deceased child’s loved ones have been marred forever.”

See also *R v Kesic* [2001] VSCA 171; *DPP v Arney* [2007] VSCA 126; *DPP v McMaster* (2008) 19 VR 191; [2008] VSCA 102; *R v Hughes* [2005] VSC 312; *DPP v Woodford* [2017] VSCA 312; *DPP v McDonald* [2020] VSC 845 [PG, IMP9y/6y8m]; *DPP v Staples* [2020] VSC 683 [PG, IMP9y/7y] – appeal dismissed [2021] VSCA 307.

### **11.2.33 Sentencing for terrorism offence**

In *R v Shoma* [2019] VSC 367 the accused had pleaded guilty to a charge of intentionally engaging in a terrorist act. Within 8 days of arrival in Australia with the express purpose of committing a terrorist act in the name of Islamic State, she stabbed the sleeping victim in the neck using a knife that she had brought to Australia for that purpose. The attack was done with the intention of advancing a political, religious or ideological cause, and with the intention of coercing or influencing by intimidation a government of this country or another, or part of this country or another, and/or intimidating the public or a section of the public. She had expressed no remorse and had made no renunciation of ideology. On the contrary she had expressed the hope that the victim would die. Considering her to have poor prospects of rehabilitation Taylor J sentenced her to IMP42y/31y6m. At [103]-[104] her Honour held that *Guden v The Queen* (2010) 28 VR 228 – which establishes that the prospect of deportation is a factor which may bear upon the impact of a sentence of imprisonment – was not well demonstrated in this case. In *R v Shoma (No 2)* [2021] VSC 797 the accused had pleaded guilty to engaging in a terrorist act (involving cutting the thumb of a coprisoner) and being a member of a terrorist organisation. Jane Dixon J sentenced her to TES IMP12y – of which 6y was cumulative on the 42y sentence imposed by Taylor J in 2019 – and fixed a new non-parole period of 36y.

In *R v Mohamed, Chaarani & Moukhaiber* [2019] VSC 498 the 3 accused were found guilty of engaging in and attempting to engage in a terrorist act. The three were Sunni Muslim adherents to the ideology of Islamic State who had destroyed a Shia mosque at Fawkner by fire, after earlier unsuccessful attempts by two of them. The crimes were carried out to advance the ideology of Islamic State and to intimidate Shia Muslims. There was no acceptable evidence of de-radicalisation. Mohamed & Chaarani were sentenced to IMP22y/17y, Moukhaiber to IMP16y/12y. At [1] Tinney J said:

“[M]otivated by hatred, intolerance, malevolence, and misguided piety, the three of you went by cover of night into a place of religious worship in a suburb of Melbourne, intent on destroying it by fire. You comprehensively achieved your aim, deriving, so it seems, great satisfaction from the outcome. The crime you committed on that morning was motivated by a strong belief in extreme views which have no place in this or in any civilized society. Your particular purposes were to advance what to most sensible people can only be seen as being a perverse ideology, and more particularly, to strike a blow against, and to intimidate and cause terror to, Shia Muslims. Stated thus, your crime was a heinous one. However, there is more to it than that. What you did reflected an attack upon a fundamental value in our society, namely, religious freedom, an attack upon the conventions and beliefs that all Australians hold dear, and indeed, an attack upon this society itself, a society under whose protection and sharing whose benefits you have lived throughout your lives in Australia. Looked at rationally, your crime is very difficult to understand, and quite impossible to excuse.”

Several months later in a separate trial the offender *Mohamed* was found guilty by a jury of one charge of conspiring to do acts in preparation for, or planning, a terrorist act. He was subsequently sentenced by Beale J to IMP26y of which 16y was to be served cumulatively on the 22y sentence imposed by Tinney J, resulting in a TES IMP38y/28y6m: see [2019] VSC 775. Ultimately he did not pursue an appeal against either of the individual sentences but appealed the order for cumulation made by Beale J. In *Ahmed Mohamed v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 136 the Court of Appeal (Maxwell P, Emerton & Sifris JJA) allowed the appeal and substituted a TES IMP32y/24y. Subsequently, in light of the judgment of the NSW Court of Criminal Appeal in *Totaan v The Queen* [2022] NSWCCA 75 requiring family hardship to be considered, he sought in *Ahmed Mohamed v The King [No 2]* [2022] VSCA 177 to re-instate the abandoned appeal against the 22y sentence imposed by Tinney J. In refusing leave to appeal, the Court of Appeal (Emerton P, Niall & T Forrest JJA) said at [30]-[31]:

[30] “…we are strongly of the view that whilst the first sentence failed to take into account a mildly relevant fact to sentencing, the total effective sentence of 32 years imprisonment with a non-parole period of 24 years is modest indeed for the overall criminality exhibited by the applicant.

[31] The approach proposed by the applicant is, in our view, quite artificial. The applicant has been convicted of three grave terrorism offences. These are offences that are inimical to the safety and good order of our community and which call for sentences that demonstrate to all prospective terrorists that their criminal actions will be met with severe penalties. The applicant succeeded in the first appeal because he was able to demonstrate that the total effective sentence, which incorporated both the first and second sentences, would be crushing upon him in all the circumstances. Those circumstances included his positive steps towards deradicalisation, his prospects for rehabilitation, his age and prior history, and a modest allowance for non-exceptional family hardship. Had this appeal been heard with the first appeal no greater deduction would have been granted to the cumulation imposed. Further the Tinney J head sentence would not have been reduced in a way that required a different total effective sentence.”

In *Chaarani v The King* [2023] VSCA 275 the Court of Appeal (Emerton P, Niall & Kaye JJA), noting that–

* family hardship had not been taken into account by the sentencing judges; and
* a co-offender’s sentence and non-parole period were reduced on appeal on the ground that the sentence was ‘crushing’–

allowed the appeal by applying the principle of parity and substituted a TES IMP32y/24y. See also *Abbas v The King* [2025] VSCA 116.

In *DPP (Cth) v Ali* [2020] VSCA 330 the Court of Appeal allowed a Director’s appeal against a sentence of IMP10y/7y6m imposed on the respondent who had pleaded guilty before Champion J to a single charge of intentionally doing an act in preparation for, or planning, a terrorist act contrary to s.101(6) of the *Criminal Code* (Cth). The respondent who was 20 years old at the time of the offence and 23 years old at the time of sentence had planned a mass murder of civilians and the taking of hostages in Federation Square Melbourne on New Year’s Eve in 2017. The core features of the planned attack were the killing of civilians, targeting a crowd of people to maximise casualties and the respondent’s eventual death, to achieve martyrdom. The respondent planned to repeatedly shoot into the crowd moments before midnight using a rapid fire assault rifle, before taking hostages in a neighbouring bar and making one of the hostages hold the Islamic State (‘ISIS’) flag up to a window. The respondent had attempted to arrange the purchase of a rifle. His plan was likely to have been carried out but for his arrest. At [68]-[70] Maxwell P, McLeish & Weinberg JJA said:

[68] “[I]t cannot be doubted that the terrorist act for which the respondent planned and prepared was of the most terrible kind. He intended to inflict mass casualties on random members of the public, gathered together at a time of annual civic celebration. An additional sinister element, involving the taking of hostages, was calculated to subject a smaller group of victims to a more intimately terrifying encounter. The whole plan was designed with the objective of instilling widespread fear in the community, and to inspire others by the respondent’s example. If the planned events had come to fruition, they would have left an indelible stain on the civic and national consciousness.

[69] The gravity of the acts, and the respondent’s preparedness to commit them, which subsisted until his arrest, goes to both the objective gravity of the offending and the respondent’s moral culpability. Both were of the highest level. As in *MHK* (2017) 52 VR 272, 291 (Warren CJ, Weinberg and Kaye JJA), the respondent’s mentality was one of ‘total callousness’. He was ‘devoid of any sense of conscience about the tragedy and suffering he was planning to inflict’. He spoke of his plan with enthusiasm.

[70] The case can be distinguished from others where the planning or preparation was more advanced, but the truth of the matter is that, at the time of the charged acts, the respondent had little left to do in that regard other than acquire the funds and then proceed with the purchase of the weapon and ammunition he thought he had arranged with the UCOs, then wait for the date when he planned to act. This was not a case where components were yet to be assembled into an explosive device or co-offenders needed to be recruited: Cf *Lodhi* (2006) 199 FLR 364, 369 [31], where Whealy J found the planning was ‘at a very preliminary stage’ and (at 373 [51]) ‘a good deal more work and preparation would have been necessary to advance the construction of a physically assembled bomb’. The respondent had contemplated where and when to launch his attack so as to have maximum impact, including working out where he could achieve an elevated position above the crowd.”

In holding that the sentence was manifestly inadequate and fixing a sentence of IMP16y/12y in lieu, Maxwell P, McLeish & Weinberg JJA said at [90]:

“[T]he authorities are clear that that, just as youth is of diminished significance in cases of extreme violence, so mitigating factors personal to the offender may be given reduced weight in sentencing for terrorist offences, given the protective purpose of the legislature in creating those offences. It must also be acknowledged that there was a qualification attached by the judge to his findings regarding rehabilitation…derived from the fact that the respondent was not exposed to terrorist propaganda while in prison and could in future again fall under its influence.”

In the course of its consideration of the appeal the Court of Appeal discussed and analysed a number of terrorism sentences which it said at [102] “provide useful guidance when looked at comparatively in the light of the criteria of offence seriousness…; the nature of the contemplated terrorist act; the nature and extent of the preparatory conduct; the degree to which the planning/preparation had advanced towards its objective; and whether the terrorist act was likely to have occurred had the offender not been arrested”. These include:

* at [92] *Lodhi* (2006) 199 FLR 303; (2007) 179 A Crim R 470: the 33 year old offender had sought information about the availability of materials capable of being used to make explosives, and obtained maps of electricity supply systems with the intention of bombing those systems to ‘advance the cause of violent jihad’; after a trial the judge found there was no evidence the offender had renounced his fundamentalist beliefs and he had shown no remorse or contrition; in mitigation he had no prior convictions and had a strongly supportive family background; sentence IMP20y upheld on appeal, Spiegelman CJ emphasising at [32] that the main consideration in sentencing for terrorism offences is protection of the community;
* at [93] *MHK* [2016] VSC 742 (Lasry J); (2017) 52 VR 272, 289 (Warren CJ, Weinberg & Kaye JJA): offender – aged 17 at the time of the offending – having fallen under the influence of ISIS propaganda planned to build an explosive device and detonate it in the Melbourne CBD or a train or police station; sentence of IMP7y/5y increased to IMP11y/8y3m;
* at [94] *Fattal* [2011] VSC 681 (King J); [2013] VSCA 276 (Buchanan AP, Nettle and Tate JJA): 3 coffenders aged between 25 & 32 were charged with conspiracy to do acts in preparation for or planning of a terrorist act, namely for 6 people to enter Holdsworthy army barracks and shoot as many people as possible before being killed as martyrs: sentence of IMP18y/13y6m upheld on appeal, the Court noting that in *R v Kruezi* [2020] QCA 222 at [47] McMurdo and Mullins JJA observed that the offence of conspiracy to commit an offence under s 101.6 of the Codeis objectively more serious than the commission of an offence under s 101.6 by a single offender, citing *Elomar* (2010) 264 ALR 759, 775–6 [64] (Whealy J) and *Abbas (CA)* [2020] VSCA 80, [60] (Priest, Kaye and T Forrest JJA);
* at [95] *Besim* [2016] VSC 537, (Croucher J); [2017] VSCA 158 (Warren CJ, Weinberg & Kaye JJA): offender – aged 18 at the time of the offending – planned to crash a car into a police officer on Anzac Day and then behead the officer with a knife; sentence of IMP10y/7y6m increased to IMP14y/10y6m;
* at [96] *Abbas* [2016] VSC 742 (Lasry J); [2020] VSCA 80 (Priest, Kaye and T Forrest JJA): aged 22 and driven by ‘violent and extreme teachings’ he was one of 4 co-conspirators who had purchased materials to make an explosive device and had tried to make a bomb, had conducted reconnaissance of Federation Square with a view to detonating explosives or using bladed weapons or firearms there with the intention of causing maximum death, damage and fear, had detonated or attempted to detonate explosive devices in rural Victoria and had also purchased two machetes; the level of preparation was described by the sentencing judge as ‘well advanced’ and the planned attack was ‘imminent’ – sentence IMP24y upheld on appeal where the sentence was described at [68] as ‘quite moderate’;
* at [97] *Khaja* [2018] NSWSC 238 (Fagan J): 18 year old offender engaged in reconnaissance of an army barracks and court buildings as potential targets for a shooting and suicide attack involving up to 50 deaths; the planning was found to be at an advanced stage; Fagan J did not regard the plea of guilty, made very late, as evidencing remorse or contrition but regarded the offender’s denunciation of ISIS as disingenuous and was not satisfied that his support for ISIS had changed or had any foreseeable prospect of doing so; IMP19y; no appeal.
* at [98]: *Baladjam* (2018) 341 FLR 162, 172 (Bathurst CJ);
* at [100] *Elomar* (2010) 264 ALR 759, 777 (Whealy J); 5 co-offenders aged 20-39 intended at least to cause serious damage to property but envisioned the possibility of serious injury or death as a result of use of explosives or firearms; sentences IMP23-28y upheld on appeal.

See also:

* *CDPP v Galea* [2020] VSC 750 – acts in preparation for, or planning, a terrorist act and attempting to make a document likely to facilitate a terrorist act – TES IMP12y/9y;
* *DPP (Cth) v Sherani* [2024] VSC 620 – 18 year old offender radicalised on-line – plea guilty to charge of being a member of a terrorist organisation namely Islamic State and found guilty of charge of doing acts in preparation for, or planning, a terrorist act – limited acts in preparation and whole plan very short-lived and rapidly abandoned – TES IMP8y/6y.

### **11.2.34 Sentencing for firearms offences: importation, trafficking, possession & discharge**

### **A IMPORTATION OF FIREARMS**

In *DPP v Moore* [2019] VSCA 89 the 64 year old respondent had pleaded guilty to six charges involving the importation of 150 firearms – being fully automatic machine guns and semi-automatic hand guns – over a period of 3½ years. Four of the charges involved completed importations, two involved attempts. The respondent was aware that some of the weapons had been used in connection with criminal activity. Describing the offending as “persistent, planned and sophisticated” and referring to the danger to the community posed by firearms, the Court of Appeal allowed the DPP appeal, set aside the sentence of IMP10y3m/6y and resentenced the respondent to IMP15y/11y. At [97] the Court said:

“Over a period of some three and a half years, Munro engaged in persistent, planned, sophisticated offending to bring into Australia mass killing machines the only purpose of which was their use in the threatened or actual taking of human life in the course of criminal activity. The total effective sentence and non-parole period are well below what was required to reflect the aggregate criminality of the offending: See, for example, *Postiglione v The Queen* (1997) 189 CLR 295, 307–8; *Azzopardi v The Queen* (2011) 35 VR 43, 59–60 [57]–[58].”

### **B TRAFFICKING IN / POSSESSION OF / DISCHARGE OF FIREARMS**

In *Bruce v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 100 the applicant had been sentenced to a TES of IMP21y6m/15y on pleading guilty to 9 indictable offences, including trafficking in 4.8 x a large commercial quantity of methylamphetamine for which he was sentenced to IMP12y, possessing firearms in contravention of a firearm prohibition order (IMP6y), discharging a firearm at premises relating to a drive-by shooting which he instigated (IMP8y), arson (IMP3y) and possession of a traffickable quantity of unregistered firearms (IMP3y). In holding that the TES and the NPP were within range in the unusual circumstances of the case the Court of Appeal (Maxwell P & Kennedy JA) said of the rolled-up possession of firearms charge that there were three features which bore on its objective gravity: (1) they were “firearms of great lethality”: see *DPP (Cth) v Munro* [2019] VSCA 89, [5]–[6], [17], [92] (Maxwell P, Beach and McLeish JJA); (2) two of the weapons in MB’s possession had been cut down from long arms to hand guns; (3) MB acquired the first four weapons within months of being served with the FPO and shortly after the seizure of those weapons he acquired two more weapons, “circumstances closely comparable to those in *DPP v Kumas* [2021] VSCA 215”. At [38] the Court of Appeal said: “In addition to the obvious importance of community protection…both specific and general deterrence were important sentencing considerations.” At [58] the Court of Appeal endorsed the comment by the sentencing judge that MB was “a menace to our community”.

In *Tony Nguyen v The King* [2023] VSCA 217, in refusing leave to appeal a TES4y10m/3y imposed on charges including 3 charges – described by the Court of Appeal as “the most serious charges” – of being a prohibiting person possessing a firearm and several drug trafficking charges, the Court of Appeal (Walker & Macaulay JJA) quoted at [16] certain remarks made by the sentencing judge:

“Mr Nguyen, your crimes are very serious. You had a treacherous combination of drugs, firearm and cash at your home and your girlfriend's apartment. You should not have been in possession of any firearm. You had two of them, both lethal weapons, loaded and accessible for your use. They were part of the stock in trade of your drug trafficking activity. It elevates the seriousness of your possession of them. You had methylamphetamine and 1,4-Butanediol in trafficable quantities for sale. You also held substantial quantities of cash associated with your illicit trade.”

In *Haddara v The Queen* [2023] VSCA 250 the applicant had been sentenced to IMP5y6m on a plea of guilty to discharging a firearm at premises contrary to s.131A *Firearms Act 1996*, a provision which Taylor JA described at [23] as “inserted in 2018 in response to an increase in ‘drive-by’ shootings”. The core of the applicant’s submissions was that when a survey is undertaken of other cases involving offending against s.131A, it is reasonably arguable that the sentence of IMP5y6m was manifestly excessive. In her detailed judgment refusing leave to appeal, Taylor JA reviewed the cases of *Bruce v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 100; *Atkinson v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 127; *DPP v Khan* [2022] VCC 2221; *DPP v Whyte* [2018] VCC 1465; *DPP v Taylor* [2019] VCC 2220; *DPP v Doodt* [2021] VCC 1584; *DPP v Smiljanic* [2020] VCC 495; *DPP v Henderson* [2021] VCC 652 and *DPP v Chircop* [2022] VCC 1902, concluding at [46]-[47] & [51].

[46] “The applicant was, with unknown others, in a stolen car that approached the target premises without headlights in the early hours of the morning. The applicant knew that Mr Mansour, a man with whom he had a grievance, and at least one other person, was present in the house. He was sentenced on the basis that he was complicit in the shooting. Two shots were fired directly at the front window of the house with a relatively flat trajectory. Some pellets made it two rooms deep into the dwelling.

[47] Beyond those objective matters, there were factors relevant to the applicant that were absent in *Atkinson*, *Diab*, *Chircop*, *Doodt* and *Henderson*. In only one of those cases — *Doodt* — was the offender subject to a CCO at the time. Unlike the applicant, Doodt had a limited and irrelevant criminal history and realistic prospects of rehabilitation. On the other hand, the offender in *Smiljanic*, who received a term of 5 years and 3 months’ imprisonment, was on parole at the time of the offending. Like the applicant, it could not be determined if he or his co-offender had been the shooter. And, like the applicant, he had recently served a term of imprisonment for weapons offences…

[51] I am not persuaded that it is reasonably arguable that the sentence of 5 years and 6 months’ imprisonment imposed with respect to charge 3 was wholly outside the range of options available to the judge”.

The Court of Appeal subsequently affirmed the refusal by Taylor JA to grant leave to appeal. In *Haddara v The King* [2024] VSCA 269 Macaulay & Kaye JJA said at [35] & [38]-[41]:

[35] “With respect to current sentencing practices for this offence, it is difficult to improve upon the analysis of Taylor JA in her Refusal Reasons...

[38] We agree with the statement made in *Atkinson* [2021] VSCA 127, [39] that it is ‘an inherently serious offence to discharge a firearm into premises or vehicles with a reckless disregard for the safety of others’. Whether to settle a grievance, serve as a warning, vent anger, or as a sheer act of bravado, recourse to firearms to shoot at vehicles or premises cannot be tolerated in a civilised society. Doing so exhibits a mindset of lawlessness that is dangerous and frightening to the community generally. As well, it is likely to beget reprisal and escalating violence.

[39] Parliament evidently perceived that such shootings were increasing and needed to be met with stern deterrence. Courts would not be heeding Parliament’s intention, or respecting the legitimate expectation of members of the community to feel safe within their homes, if they did not give strong prominence to the sentencing purposes of general deterrence, denunciation and just punishment when sentencing those who choose to use firearms in this way.

[40] In short, it is important that sentences, in cases such as this, be sufficient to constitute a clear message that any person, who is minded to engage in the form of dangerous conduct committed by the applicant, will, on apprehension, lose his or her right to be at liberty in society for a substantial period of time. The advantage they seek to obtain, acting unlawfully, will, so far as the sentencing system can justly achieve, be met with a corresponding disadvantage by way of penalty. Further, it is necessary that the sentence imposed, in such cases, unequivocally denounce the kind of conduct engaged in by the applicant as being entirely alien to the basic principle of a peaceful, law abiding community.

[41] In the applicant’s case there must be added the purpose of specific deterrence, given his lengthy criminal history and the fact that, at the time of offending, he was a person prohibited from possessing a firearm and was subject to the conditions of a community corrections order.”

See also *Powell v The Queen* [2015] VSCA 93; *Berichon v The Queen* (2013) 40 VR 490 at [26]; *DPP v Basic* [2017] VSCA 376 at [81]; *Kelly v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 171 at [44]; *Begg v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 183 at [82]; *Sultan v The King* [2022] VSCA 205 at [37]‑[55]; *Hurst v The King* [2023] VSCA 286 at [82]-[98]; .*Alessawi v The King; Snowball v The King* [2025] VSCA 23 at [75]-[77]; *Malovski v The King* [2025] VSCA 72; *Mehrdadian v The King* [2025] VSCA 125 at [26]-[35].

### **C IN CONJUNCTION WITH DRUG OFFENCE**

In *Young v The King* [2024] VSCA 179 the appellant had pleaded guilty and been sentenced to a TES IMP3y9m/2y4m on charges including prohibited person in possession of a firearm and trafficking in methylamphetamine. The head sentence was made up of IMP2y9m on the firearms charge and IMP2y (of which 1y was cumulative) on the trafficking charge. The Court of Appeal refused an application for extension of time, holding that–

* the sentencing judge did not err by finding that the possession of the firearm was ‘incidental’ to the criminal purpose of trafficking methamphetamine; and
* the individual sentence on the firearm charge and the order for cumulation on the drug charge were not manifestly excessive.

At [22]-[24] & [29] Priest & Niall JJA said:

[22] “In our view, the offence of being a prohibited person in possession of a firearm is one where general deterrence assumes a deal of importance. It is impossible to ignore the ubiquity of illegal firearms in the community and the very great harm that they cause.

[23] Moreover, the applicant is no stranger to illegal firearms. The applicant was the ringleader of the kidnapping offence for which he was imprisoned in 2015. In the course of the kidnapping, the victim was taken at gunpoint. And significantly, the kidnapping itself appears to have been motivated by a dispute that the applicant and others had with a small-time drug dealer relating to firearms. The applicant had paid the drug dealer $13,000 for two semi-automatic pistols which he failed to deliver, the applicant suspecting he had simply stolen the money.

[24] There are many cases where the possession of a firearm in close connection with quantities of drugs and drug paraphernalia permitted the inference that the firearm was an accoutrement of the crime of drug trafficking. Dealing illicit drugs at street level is, as Gleeson CJ observed, a ‘dangerous activity’, permitting the inference that possessing firearms would be appropriate to the business of a street level drug dealer: *R v Sultana* (1994) 74 A Crim R 27, 29-30. As was the case in *Acciarito v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 264 [52], we consider that the circumstances of the present case ‘support a conclusion that the judge was correct to sentence the applicant for a more serious instance of the firearm offence because it was associated, albeit incidentally, with the commission of other criminal offending’, so much fitting what Redlich JA described in *Berichon v The Queen* (2013) 40 VR 490, 496 as the more serious form of the firearm offence.

[29] As we have indicated, we agree with the judge that the ‘possession of firearms by prohibited persons is a serious offence that must attract stern consequences’.”

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### **11.2.35 Sentencing for theft & deception offences**

### **A THEFT, THEFT OF FIREARMS & THEFT OF MOTOR VEHICLE**

In *Barry v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 94, in refusing leave to appeal against a sentence of IMP 2y imposed on the 24 year old applicant for theft of firearms, the Court of Appeal (Priest & Beach JJA) said at [15]‑[16]:

“[T]he sentencing decisions relied upon by the appellant (*Holt* [2016] VCC 2079, *Clark* [2018] VCC 583, *Spur* [2018] VCC 1709 and *Cotchin* [2018] VCC 1894) are of little assistance to the appellant. While they are examples of cases involving the theft of firearms, the circumstances of the offending and offenders are significantly different in each case. Those cases merely show that lesser sentences might be imposed in different circumstances. Of critical relevance, however, was that in those cases one, some or all of the firearms were recovered, and in some cases with the assistance of the offender.

That said, other sentencing decisions show that a sentence of two years’ imprisonment for the theft of a firearm is not out of the ordinary: see eg, *DPP v Fulham* [2018] VCC 2186; *DPP v Duguid* [2019] VCC 713; *DPP v Edwards* [2019] VCC 1906. As was said by this Court in *Benkic v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 34 at [18], the theft of a firearm is a particularly serious species of the offence of theft. It thus carries a maximum penalty of 15 years’ imprisonment — as opposed to the maximum sentence of 10 years’ imprisonment for theft simpliciter. Of particular concern in relation to the theft of firearms is the fact that the theft of firearms can increase the illegitimate flow of firearms in the community and lead to very serious criminal activity.”

In *Chamma v The Queen; El Houli v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 232 the Court of Appeal (Priest, Beach and T Forrest JJA) said at [71]:

“Underlying the submissions of each applicant was a contention that thefts of motor vehicles are somehow less serious forms of thefts than other thefts. That contention is incorrect. The objective gravity of any theft needs to be considered by reference to what was taken (including its value), from whom it was taken, and all other relevant surrounding circumstances, including the purpose for which it was taken. It simply does not follow that because the theft concerned a motor vehicle, then necessarily the theft is in some lower category of the offence.”

See also *Everett v The King* [2025] VSCA 96 at [58]-[59].

### **B DECEPTION**

In *Sakipon v The King* [2025] VSCA 93 the applicant (aged between 47 & 49 when he committed the offences and 55 on the day of sentencing) had pleaded guilty to 7 charges of obtaining a financial advantage by deception and 4 charges of obtaining property by deception. The offending occurred over a period of 16 months and involved 10 victims. The total value was $110,610. He was sentenced to TES IMP7y7m/6y. At the time of some of this offending the applicant was on parole in relation to 32 counts of obtaining property by deception and 17 counts of obtaining a financial advantage by deception for which he had received a TES IMP7y/5y. He also had other relevant prior convictions including two earlier sentences of imprisonment for offences including deception.

The Court of Appeal dismissed the applicant’s appeal, holding that the sentencing judge had not erred in concluding that the applicant’s prospects of rehabilitation were poor and that the sentence, although stern, was not manifestly excessive. At [103]-[106] Beach & Kaye JJA said:

[103] “...In our view, there is no basis for any suggestion that any of the individual sentences imposed in this case were manifestly excessive. It may be accepted that, given the total quantum of the applicant’s offending (some $110,000), the total effective sentence produced by the orders for cumulation is somewhat stern. That said, other than the significant utilitarian benefit from the applicant’s pleas of guilty, there was little the applicant could rely upon by way of mitigation in this case.

[104] Although the amounts involved in the individual offences were not, in the main, substantial, nevertheless, the offending itself was objectively serious, and the applicant’s subjective culpability for that offending was high. The offending was premeditated and predatory. The applicant preyed on the vulnerability and trust of his innocent victims, in some cases repeatedly beguiling them with his deliberately false representations. In particular, his conduct in exploiting the naivety and inexperience of the young victim of charges 2 and 3 was particularly egregious. Moreover, as already discussed, the applicant has evinced no remorse for, or recognition of, the wrongfulness of his actions.

[105] In those circumstances, the sentencing purposes of general deterrence, denunciation and specific deterrence were of particular importance in this case. It is important that other persons, who might be minded to engage in the kind of dishonesty practised by the applicant, must understand that, upon apprehension, they will lose their right to remain at liberty and within our society for a substantial period of time. In addition, it is particularly important that the sentences imposed in cases such as this appropriately denounce the criminality of the offending, and make plain that the kind of dishonestly practised by the applicant is entirely alien to the most fundamental values of our society. Finally, in view of the applicant’s recidivism, and his lack of remorse, the sentencing purpose of specific deterrence was of paramount importance, to drive home to the applicant that any further such offending will be met with a lengthy period of imprisonment.

[106] Synthesising for ourselves the circumstances of the applicant and his offending, and giving full mitigatory effect to the circumstances and utilitarian value of his pleas of guilty, we are unable to accept that the total effective sentence imposed by the judge was wholly outside the permissible range of sentencing options available to her. The fact that the sentence might be described as somewhat stern in all the circumstances is not sufficient to establish that it was manifestly excessive.”

In *DPP v Charisiou* [2024] VSC 303 the 63 year old accused with no prior criminal history had pleaded guilty to 2 charges of obtaining a financial advantage by deception and two charges of using false documents in circumstances where he had engaged in business transactions with Korean companies in relation to purported supply of National Disability Insurance Scheme approved housing.

In imposing a sentence of IMP12y/8y Champion J said at [105]: “As to the objective gravity of your conduct, yours was an example of grave offending. The monetary amounts involved are extremely high when compared to past cases involving the commission of similar offences”.

At [140]-[153] his Honour discussed a number of other deception cases – including *Kenyeres v The King* [2023] VSCA 25; *Mao & Niu v The King* [2022] VSCA 211; *Gonzalez v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 110; *DPP v Bulfin* (1998) 4 VR 114 and *Koch v The Queen* [2011] VSCA 435 as well as three NSW cases referred to in paragraph [152] – noting however at [143] & [153]:

[143] “As a starting point, it must be stated that the amounts defrauded in the table of cases provided by the prosecution do not approach the $38 million the subject of the charges 1 and 2 in this matter, and the scale of monies associated with the use of false documents connected to charges 3 and 4 on the indictment. The scale of your fraudulent activity whilst breathtaking, must however, be kept in perspective.”

[153] “Whilst none of the above cases are completely analogous to the present circumstances, I have taken them into account in my sentencing decision. I accept the submission of your counsel that when having regard to the decisions of past cases, whilst a matter of significance, a sentencing court should not place undue emphasis on quantum as the predominant or sole factor in assessing the gravity of your conduct.”

See also *Kenyeres v The King* [2023] VSCA 25 at [13], [24] & [75]; *DPP v Lapatis; DPP v Stakic* [2025] VSCA 105 at [87]-[107].

### **[11.2.36 Sentencing for offences involving family violence](#_11.2.36_Sentencing_for)**

In *Rankine v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 27 the 29 year old applicant had pleaded guilty and was convicted of 15 offences, including:

* common assault of his former partner in which he grabbed her by the throat, pushed her against a concrete wall and headbutted her to the forehead;
* 4 x persistent contravention of a family violence intervention order [FVIO] which related to his former partner;
* trespass and contravention of a FVIO.

He was sentenced to TES IMP2y4m/14m of which on a charge of persistent contravention of an FVIO he was sentenced to IMP12m as a base sentence and on each of the other 3 charges of persistent contravention he was sentenced to IMP12m of which 4m was cumulative on the base sentence. On the charge of common assault he was sentenced to IMP10m of which 4m was cumulative on the base sentence. His ground of appeal was that the orders for cumulative on the persistent contravention offences and the resultant TES were manifestly excessive. In refusing leave to appeal T Forrest & Walker JJA said:

* at [27]: “His Honour recognised the serious nature of the persistent contravention offences, describing ‘a good deal’ of the offending as ‘aggressive, oppressive and intimidating’”;
* at [31]: “[W]e do not accept the submission that the [persistent contravention offences were] but a single course of criminal conduct that had been artificially fragmented into four discrete offences. The legislature has resolved that the persistent contravention offence under s 125A of the *Family Violence Protection Act* relates to a period of 28 days. The result is that if a person contravenes a family violence protection order over a period longer than 28 days, they commit more than one offence. Each offence involves different acts and distinct criminality. It is not appropriate, in those circumstances, for a court to sentence a person on the basis that they committed only a single offence.”

In *DPP v Reynolds (a pseudonym)* (2022) 71 VR 336; [2022] VSCA 263 the respondent had been sentenced to a TES IMP 9m42d + CCO 970d on charges of intentionally causing injury and threat to kill x3 in which the victim was the respondent’s wife. By a majority of 2:1 the Court of Appeal allowed the Director’s appeal and substituted a TES IMP3y3m/18m. At [71]-[87] T Forrest JA & Kidd AJA said:

*Family Violence Sentencing Principles*

[71] “Regrettably, this is yet another example of appalling family violence which has come before the courts. Family violence is a blight on society, which this Court ‘has been at pains to denounce’: *Edward-Hayes v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 76 [29] (McLeish JA), citing *Pasinis v The Queen* [2014] VSCA 97 [57] (Neave and Kyrou JJA).

[72] It is convenient to restate what this Court has said about family violence, and how this informs the sentencing process.

[73] This Court in *Pasinis* at [57] held that the key to protecting victims of family violence:

…lies in deterring the violent conduct by sending an unequivocal message to would‑be perpetrators of domestic violence that if they offend, they will be sentenced to a lengthy period of imprisonment so that they are no longer in a position to inflict harm.

[74] Soon afterwards, and in a similar vein, this Court said in *Mercer (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2015] VSCA 257 [54] (Maxwell P and Beach JA):

This Court has said on many occasions that domestic violence will not be tolerated, and that general deterrence is a very important sentencing principle in the sentencing disposition which must be, and must be seen to be, condemned by the courts. To borrow from what this Court said recently in *Filiz v The Queen*, offending of this nature is too often perpetrated by men whose response to conflict with a partner is one of violent rage. Such a response is utterly unacceptable. This Court has made it clear, and will continue to make it plain, that offending of this kind will attract serious consequences.

[75] And again in *Kalala v The Queen* (2017) 269 A Crim R 1 at [59]:

The trial courts of this State are imposing sentences for family violence offences with increasing frequency. This Court has repeatedly emphasised the need to condemn family violence, in line with community expectations. In *Filiz v The Queen*, the Court acknowledged the ‘shameful truth that family violence is a leading cause of illness, disability and death among Victorian women aged between 15 and 44.

[76] More recently, in *DPP v Evans* [2019] VSCA 239 this Court (Maxwell P, T Forrest and Weinberg JJA) stated at [84]:

Violence of this kind is alarmingly widespread, and extremely harmful. It is never justified. The sentences imposed must convey that message strongly.

[77] As these authorities make plain, general deterrence, public denunciation, just punishment and community protection must be the prominent sentencing factors when sentencing for family violence offending.

*Objective gravity of this offending*

[78] As the learned sentencing judge recognised, ‘this was a violent, protracted and vicious assault’.

[79] The catalogue of his violent acts makes for disturbing reading involving, as it did, multiple punches to the complainant’s face and her head, kicking her, banging her face into the dashboard of a vehicle, and dragging her by her hair.

[80] The assault involved two instances of choking to the point of a loss of consciousness, once by the respondent’s hands, and the second time with a belt. Choking another person into unconsciousness is a pernicious and dangerous form of violence. The risk which such conduct entails cannot be ignored when assessing its gravity. It is potentially life-threatening. Within the context of domestic or family violence, choking represents a chilling exploitation of physical power or dominance.

[81] The offending also involved an element of degradation, exemplified by the respondent dragging the complainant into the house and removing her clothing (leaving in her underwear) whilst he continued with his assault.

[82] This violence lasted nearly 90 minutes and was perpetrated over multiple locations.

[83] Consistent with multiple applications of blunt force trauma, the complainant suffered two facial fractures, altered vision, paraesthesia, dizziness, some temporary cognitive difficulties and extensive bruising to her chest, arms, neck, head, back and legs.

[84] Blunt force trauma applied to the head and face carries obvious risks to the brain and eyes. In this case, it did result in a facture around the complainant’s right eye socket. While the injury was managed conservatively (without surgical intervention), this should not imply that the injury was insignificant. Based upon the medical evidence tendered on the plea, this was described as a vision-jeopardising injury requiring close monitoring.

[85] Although the complainant has made a physical recovery from her injuries, the injuries were sufficiently substantial that the complainant remained in hospital for nine days.

[86] While keeping firmly in mind that the respondent fell to be sentenced for the offence of intentionally causing injury, not serious injury, the injuries she sustained were nevertheless extensive and significant.

[87] When regard is had to the nature of the injuries caused, and to the manner in which the injuries were inflicted (including the family violence setting), it becomes apparent that the sentencing judge’s finding that this offence sits ‘at the high end of the scale of objective gravity’ for intentionally causing injury was clearly correct. With that characterisation in mind, it is timely to recall that this offence carries a maximum of 10 years imprisonment.”

However, Priest JA dissented and would have dismissed the appeal. At [1]-[5] his Honour said (emphasis added):

[1] “Conscious that the Court ought not countenance a sentence that is ‘weakly merciful’ (see *R v Radich* [1954] NZLR 86, 87; *R v Williscroft* [1975] VR 292, 298 (Adam and Crockett JJ); see also *R v Miceli* [1998] 4 VR 588; Richard G Fox, When Justice Sheds a Tear: The Place of Mercy in Sentencing, (1999) 25 Monash University Law Review 1, 3), after much reflection I have concluded that this appeal against sentence should be dismissed…

[2] Several things in this appeal have given me pause, principal among them being the lengthy delay in the matter being finalised; the very significant reformation undergone by the respondent in the meantime; **and the attitude of the respondent’s victims, who will be subjected to significant additional trauma flowing directly from the respondent’s imprisonment**. Ultimately, I have concluded that, notwithstanding the very serious nature of the respondent’s offending, the imposition of an effective term of imprisonment of almost 10 months in length, coupled with concurrent community correction orders of a duration of two years and eight months, was within the range of sentences open to the sentencing judge in the sound exercise of the sentencing discretion.

[3] In *Williscroft*, a prosecution appeal, Starke J (in dissent as to result) observed at 303-4:

It cannot be, I think, that in all cases and as to all crimes the element of deterrence is the main consideration and the element of reformation or rehabilitation subsidiary to it. Depending on the circumstances and the nature of the crime, sometimes more weight will be given to the reformatory element than to deterrence, and sometimes the opposite will be the case. Deterrence, of course, has two aspects; one is deterrence of the actual offenders, and the other is deterrence of other people who might be minded to commit similar crimes. For practical purposes the only other element of punishment remaining today is, I think, a consideration of the protection of the public at large, or prevention. Retribution as an element of punishment has by now, in my opinion, disappeared, or practically disappeared, from our criminal law. It is often taken for granted that if leniency for the purpose of rehabilitation is extended to a prisoner when the judge is passing sentence, that this leniency bestows a benefit on the individual alone. Nothing, in my opinion, is further from the truth. Reformation should be the primary objective of the criminal law. The greater the success that can be achieved in this direction, the greater the benefit to the community.

[4] On one level, the underlying purpose of all criminal law — and, as an aspect of it, sentencing — is the protection of the community. As to that, one often sees it suggested (at least by implication) that community protection is promoted only by lengthy, punitive sentences of imprisonment. With respect, however, the views expressed by Starke J have much to commend them. Leniency extended to an individual in sentencing to promote his or her rehabilitation may often be of greater benefit to the community and offer greater protection to the public at large — than a sentence that has a largely retributive component. Indeed, those experienced in the criminal law know that leniency extended at a particular stage of an offender’s life may pave the path to reform.4 This appears to me to be such a case.

[5] The provisions of s 5(1) of the Sentencing Act 1991 make it clear that the ‘only purposes for which sentences may be imposed’ are to: punish an offender (to an extent and in a manner which is just in all of the circumstances); deter him or her or others from committing offences of the same or a similar character; facilitate his or her rehabilitation; denounce his or her conduct; protect the community; or a combination of two or more of those purposes. Although those purposes will often pull in different directions, there will be occasions — as I have indicated, I consider this to be one — where a sentence fostering rehabilitation will be more effective in promoting community protection than a relatively lengthy sentence of imprisonment.

His Honour continued at [13]-[19]:

[13] “Given the judge’s findings, it was, as I have said, plainly open to her to give full weight to the supportive statements made by the respondent’s wife and children, the principal victims of his offending. They made it clear that the respondent had turned his life around, and that they had forgiven him because he had demonstrated ‘remorse, reflection and reformation’.

[14] Notwithstanding that forgiveness, an unhappy ramification of the orders proposed in the joint reasons is that the respondent’s wife and children will endure additional suffering through being deprived of their husband and father. No doubt that suffering will be exacerbated by the knowledge that the sentence that will be imposed by this Court will almost inevitably result in the respondent’s deportation to New Zealand, the family then being faced with the unpalatable choice of following him, or remaining in Australia — where they have made their lives — without him.

[15] By reason of ss 501(3A), (6)(a) and (7)(c) of the Migration Act 1958 (Cth), the Minister for Immigration must cancel a person’s visa if the person has been sentenced to a term of imprisonment of 12 months or more. Under ss 500(1)(ba) and 501CA, however, the Minister may revoke the cancellation if satisfied that there is a reason to do so and the person may seek a merits review of a decision not to revoke the cancellation. Even though the current state of this country’s migration laws is such that the respondent’s deportation after serving the sentence proposed by the majority is a near certainty the Court cannot take that into account, since to do so would be to take into account executive action in circumstances where there remains a possibility — no matter how remote that possibility is — that the respondent will not, in fact, be deported. The Court can only take into account the prospect of deportation as a factor which may increase the impact which a sentence of imprisonment will have upon the respondent, both during the currency of his incarceration and upon his release: see *Matamata v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 253, [28]–[31]; see also *Guden v The Queen* (2010) 28 VR 288; *Da Costa v The Queen* (2016) 307 FLR 153; *Konamala v The Queen* [2016] VSCA 48; *Akot v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 55. I assume, without deciding, by analogy, it would be impermissible for the Court to take into account the deleterious effect that the respondent’s likely deportation will have on his wife and children, and the additional suffering that they will endure as a result.

[16] In my view, for the purposes of a case such as the present, it is incumbent upon this Court to pay more than mere lip-service to *Boulton v The Queen* (2014) 46 VR 308 (Maxwell P, Nettle, Neave, Redlich and Osborn JJA). In that case, it was made clear at [2] & [186] — in a joint judgment of a bench of five — that a community correction order (‘CCO’) might in given circumstances accommodate all of the applicable sentencing considerations, including proportionality, and the need for general and specific deterrence, and could be used ‘to rehabilitate and punish simultaneously’:

It follows from what we have said that a CCO may be suitable even in cases of relatively serious offences which might previously have attracted a medium term of imprisonment (such as, for example, aggravated burglary, intentionally causing serious injury, some forms of sexual offences involving minors, some kinds of rape and some categories of homicide). The sentencing judge may find that, in view of the objective gravity of the conduct and the personal circumstances of the offender, a properly-conditioned CCO of lengthy duration is capable of satisfying the requirements of proportionality, parsimony and just punishment, while affording the best prospects for rehabilitation.

[18] One cannot ignore the fact that the respondent’s offending was extremely serious…In particular, choking his wife into unconsciousness on two occasions was very grave conduct. All other things being equal, a sentence of imprisonment of the order proposed by the other members of the Court would clearly be within the appropriate range. In the present case, however, the respondent’s victims had forgiven him. Most importantly, they had forgiven him because he had undertaken a process of radical reformation. In my view, no sentencing principle — including the need to uphold proper sentencing standards (see *R v Clarke* [1996] 2 VR 520, 522) — requires that process of rehabilitation to be impaired (if not obliterated). I consider that the judge was correct when she made the following observations:

I have concluded that the purposes for which sentence is to be imposed in your case can be best accommodated by a combination sentence which will involve you serving a term of imprisonment and then being released on a lengthy CCO with a number of onerous conditions. I consider that a combined sentence can provide substantial specific and general deterrence. The CCO component is capable of being very punitive but will also allow you to continue in your rehabilitative efforts, which is in your and your family’s interest and in the long term, best protects the community.

[19] It is clear that the judge took great care in exercising the discretion reposing in her. Albeit that it is very lenient — if not merciful — I consider the sentence that the judge imposed to be just and appropriate. It is not manifestly inadequate. Plainly, the judge recognised that this was a case where the greater good would be promoted by a sentence which continued to foster the respondent’s rehabilitation. In my view, it was open to her to impose the sentence that she did in order to do so. As to that, it is worthwhile remembering what King CJ said in *R v Osenkowski* (1982) 30 SASR 212, 212–3:

It is important that the prosecution appeal should not be allowed to circumscribe unduly the sentencing discretion of judges. There must always be a place for the exercise of mercy where a judge’s sympathies are reasonably excited by the circumstances of the case. There must always be a place for the leniency which has traditionally been extended even to offenders with bad records when the judge forms the view, almost intuitively in the case of experienced judges, that leniency at that particular stage of the offender’s life might lead to reform.”

In concluding his dissenting judgment Priest JA sounded a note of caution at [21]-[22] about dicta in *Pasinis v R* [2014] VSCA 97:

“Counsel for the appellant relied on a passage from *Pasinis*… to the effect that the key to protecting victims of family violence

lies in deterring the violent conduct by sending an unequivocal message to would-be perpetrators of domestic violence that if they offend, they will be sentenced to a lengthy period of imprisonment so that they are no longer in a position to inflict harm.

On one view, the cited passage is capable of suggesting that in cases of family violence a sentence of imprisonment might be imposed as a form of preventative detention — offenders ‘will be sentenced to a lengthy period of imprisonment so that they are no longer in a position to inflict harm’. If that is what the passage from *Pasinis* is intended to convey, it is wrong in principle. A sentence must be proportionate to the gravity of the offence. It is not permissible to impose a sentence as a form of preventative detention: *Veen v The Queen (No 2)* (1988) 164 CLR 465, 472–3 (Mason CJ, Brennan, Dawson and Toohey JJ).”

In *James Clarke (a pseudonym) v The King* [2023] VSCA 103 the applicant had been sentenced to TES IMP5y2m/3y1m on 9 charges including threat to kill, common law assault and intentionally damaging property, the offences occurring in the context of family violence towards his wife, her parents and a friend of hers. In refusing leave to appeal – including on the ground of manifest excess – the Court of Appeal (Niall & Hargrave JJA) concluded at [63]:

“We conclude our assessment of the manifest excess ground by emphasising that the conduct of the applicant in this case amounted to a sustained course of very serious offending in the context of family violence. Such cases deserve stern punishment. Like the judge, we adopt the statement of Vincent JA in *Director of Public Prosecutions v Derby* [2007] VSCA 92 at [2]. The employment of violence, almost invariably by disappointed males, whether directed against the person or property of a former or desired partner to express anger or as a form of retribution in consequence of a relationship failure or perceived rejection simply cannot be tolerated. Insofar as they are able to do so, through the sentences handed down for such conduct, the Courts must endeavour to deter those who may be motivated to act in this way. Accordingly, those who engage in such behaviour must, save in the most unusual of circumstances, anticipate the imposition of condign punishment.”

In *Giudice v The King* [2023] VSCA 105 the applicant had been sentenced to TES IMP8y/5y6m on 5 charges including IMP78m on a charge of intentionally causing serious injury to his ex-partner, the offences occurring in the context of family violence. In refusing leave to appeal, the Court of Appeal (Ferguson CJ, Emerton P & Osborn JA) said at [11]:

“The offending required denunciation and just punishment, and raised issues of general and specific deterrence and protection of the community. In our view, the sentences imposed cannot be said to be disproportionate to the objective seriousness of the offending or to offend the principle of totality.”

Comments to similar effect about the impact of family violence on the victim and the need for significant punishment were made by the Court of Appeal in *DPP v Avalos (a pseudonym)* [2023] VSCA 117, albeit in dismissing a Crown appeal against a TES IMP25y5m/20y10m imposed on the respondent after two separate trials in which he was convicted of 9 charges of rape, 10 charges of intentionally causing injury, 3 charges of making a threat to kill, 1 charge of common law assault and 1 charge of false imprisonment. The victims were four women who had been in domestic relationships with the respondent. At [10]-[14] Ferguson CJ, Priest AP & T Forrest JA said:

[10] “The sentencing judge remarked that the courage of the four women, in surviving the abuse and coming forward to tell their stories, ‘is quite remarkable’. With respect, we agree. They were the subject of sustained cross-examination, each occupying several days, yet each retained their dignity and composure throughout. The judge noted that each woman, at times in evidence, revealed ongoing fear of the respondent.

[11] The judge then observed:

[184] Your treatment of each one of them is deserving of condign punishment. The sentence I impose must announce to you the community’s denunciation of your treatment of them. It must signal to others the community’s absolute disdain of such violence behind the closed doors of a relationship. It must deter others and particularly other men from committing such acts and it must seek to protect the community. That includes specifically any other woman who may come into contact with you, as well as sending a message to any other man prone to such violent abuse against a partner.

[185] In more recent times, higher Courts, like the community they represent, have looked more closely at intimate partner violence. They have recognised that it has been a secret scourge on our community, that it is crippling to the women abused and traumatic for any children, that it carries a risk of more and more serious injury and death.

[186] Higher Courts have universally stated that this type of offending warrants significant punishment. The sinister nature of intimate partner violence is exacerbated by the fact that it is often hidden, usually happening in private most often with only two people present. According to the expert evidence of Professor Kelsey Hegarty, given during these trials, research has shown women are less likely to report the violence of their intimate partners than an offence committed by a stranger. The capacity to report it can be complicated by feelings of emotional attachment to the perpetrator.

[187] There is usually a reluctance on the part of victim to seek help – either because of threats, or fear of repercussions, or fear of not being believed, or a concern that the authorities will not be able to contain the offender. That reluctance is often the result of psychological abuse. It is often due to the feelings of shame, humiliation and embarrassment caused to a victim.

[188] There is cumulative impact of intimate partner abuse. Due to the ongoing and repeated nature of violence victims often suffer from self-loathing and survivors are afflicted with a range of mental health conditions including anxiety, depression, suicidal ideation, as well as alcohol and substance misuse.

[189] It is often, as here, complicated by the presence of children. It is exacerbated when the victim has limited resources or other supports or means of escape. And it is often because those victims are told the abuse is their fault. The complexity of escaping such a relationship and seeking help cannot be underestimated.

[190] For these reasons, any sentencing Court must send a strong message to offenders and the community at large.

[12] These statements of principle are entirely apposite. The judge then emphasised the importance of the sentencing principle of general deterrence in domestic violence type cases and referenced the statements of this Court in *Pasinis v The Queen* [2014] VSCA 97 and *Kalala v The Queen* [2017] VSCA 223.

[13] Under the heading of Objective Gravity the judge set out the factors considered relevant to this assessment in respect of the offences of rape, intentionally causing injury, making a threat to kill and false imprisonment. The judge noted that with the exception of the false imprisonment charge, the offences were more accurately described as spontaneous than premeditated. Whilst that may be ‘somewhat mitigating’ the judge correctly observed that sudden unprovoked violence in a relationship has its own kind of menace.

[14] We agree with these observations. Sudden unprovoked eruptions of violence in this case were usually against a background of physical, verbal and often financial control over the victims. The judge said:

[202] Almost without exception each charged act here is accompanied by other physical and or verbal violence. That immediate setting is an aggravating feature of those offences.

[203] In addition to the charged offences and their immediate setting, I also take into account the broader context of the relationship and the nature of a number of uncharged acts.

[204] Neither of those matters are aggravating features of the individual offences for which you will be sentenced. The relevance of those other acts of violence as well as the aspects of psychological, at times financial and physical control you exerted over each woman, including the intimidating feature of your frequent possession of weapons, as context is that it places your offences in their true setting. It demonstrates that your offences are not isolated examples but are committed against a backdrop of your extreme jealousy and control.”

In *DPP v McDonough* [2023] VSC 352 [summarized in 11.2.22.1] the offender had entered an early plea to manslaughter of his domestic partner who was attempting to leave the relationship. In imposing a sentence of IMP11y6m/8y6m Fox J said at [48]:

“Serious violence continues to be committed by men against their female partners, or former partners. It is prevalent and deeply shocking. Through sentencing, the courts must send a message to other would-be offenders that if you commit such crimes, you should expect to receive a substantial term of imprisonment. It is necessary to publicly denounce your crime, and punish you for causing the death of [your partner].”

In *DPP v Al-Hasan* [2023] VSC 376 the 50 year old accused man had pleaded guilty to a rolled-up count of making a threat to inflict serious injury, conduct endangering life, conduct endangering persons and damaging property constituted by the accused driving his motor vehicle at his wife’s brother and then into the front of the house. The victims of the crimes were the accused’s wife and members of her family. The accused had no prior convictions and was ‘stateless’ with a refugee background. He suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder. The risk of deportation constituted significant extra-curial punishment. He had “at least reasonable prospects of rehabilitation”. In imposing a sentence of IMP4y3m/2y10m, Fox J said at [46]:

“The most serious aspect of all your offending is that it arose in circumstances of family violence. The courts are all too often faced with serious crimes committed by men because they are angry with their partner or former partner. Your offending impacted your young children, your wife and many members of her family. Through sentencing, the courts must try to send a message to other would-be offenders that if you commit crimes of family violence, you should expect to receive stern punishment.”

In *Skeates (a pseudonym) v The King* [2023] VSCA 226 the Court of Appeal refused leave to appeal a TES IMP10y/7y imposed on the year old applicant who had a significant history of family violence offending and who had pleaded guilty to threats, various assault offences, rape and breach of family violence intervention orders, the offences having been committed against four intimate partners. The Court held that the individual sentences and the orders for cumulation were not manifestly excessive, noted the importance of the family violence context in assessing the gravity of the offending and stated that general deterrence, specific deterrence and community protection were of paramount importance. At [55]-[62] Emerton P, Niall and Taylor JJA said:

[55] “In 2014 this Court in *Pasinis v The Queen* [2014] VSCA 97, [53], [54] & [57] sent ‘an unequivocal message’ {*DPP v Smith* [2019] VSCA 266, [35]} as to the prominence deterrence must achieve in sentencing criminal conduct in the context of family violence. It was in the following terms:

Historically perpetrators of family violence were rarely prosecuted. Even when offenders were convicted of such offences, they often received lenient sentences. Fortunately the criminal law now gives greater recognition to the devastating effects of family violence. It has also been recognised that women who are killed by their husband, boyfriend or de facto partner have frequently been assaulted by them many times previously. This makes both specific and general deterrence very important factors in sentencing men who assault their partner.

The effects of family violence are now well documented. They are not confined to physical injury. Victims often feel responsible for the violence and ashamed that they were not able to prevent the perpetrator from offending. As occurred in this case, it is common for victims to deny or conceal that their partners have assaulted them until the violence becomes unbearable. … Victims who have been dominated, controlled and beaten by their partners over a significant period experience serious and long-lasting psychological trauma. As in the present case, the physical effects of the violence and its erosion of the victim’s confidence can also affect their ability to participate in paid work and have other serious financial effects.

…

General deterrence is of fundamental importance in cases of domestic violence. The victims of such violence are often so enveloped by fear that they are incapable of either escaping the violence or reporting it to the authorities. The key to protection lies in deterring the violent conduct by sending an unequivocal message to would–be perpetrators of domestic violence that if they offend, they will be sentenced to a lengthy period of imprisonment so that they are no longer in a position to inflict harm.

[56] Since then this Court has made repeated statements that sentences imposed for family violence should be ‘set at a level which will send a message to those — predominantly men — who might offend violently against domestic partners or former partners or family members’ {*Uzun v The Queen* [2015] VSCA 292, [48]} and reaffirmed that the ‘fundamental importance’ {*Kalala v The Queen* (2017) 269 A Crim R 1, 18 [61]} of the need for condign punishment to denounce and deter family violence is because of its prevalence and the seriousness of its consequences.

[57] In *Marrah v The Queen* [2014] VSCA 119, [25] the Court said:

Offending of this nature is too often perpetrated by men whose response to difficulties in a relationship is one of possessive, violent rage. It goes without saying that such a response, to what is a common human situation, is utterly unacceptable. The sentences must convey the unmistakeable message that male partners have no right to subject their female partners to threats or violence. The sentences must be of such an order as to strongly denounce violence within a domestic relationship.

[58] And in *DPP v Meyers* (2014) 44 VR 486, 497-498, [45]-[46] the Court stated:

Violence of this kind is alarmingly widespread, and extremely harmful. The statistics about the incidence of women being killed or seriously injured by vengeful former partners are truly shocking. Although the cases under consideration do not fall into that worst category, they are symptomatic of what can fairly be described as an epidemic of domestic violence. General deterrence is, accordingly, a sentencing principle of great importance in cases such as these. Those who might, in a mood of anger or frustration or bitterness, contemplate this kind of violent entry into the home of a former spouse or partner must realise that, if they do so, they will almost certainly spend a long time in prison.

[59] The Court has ‘made it clear that acts of violence in a domestic setting, and in particular by men towards women, are utterly abhorrent and unacceptable’: *DPP v Meyers* (2014) 44 VR 486, 497-498 [45]-[46]. The strength of the language used in these statements is not accidental. Family violence is contemptible. It warrants both condemnation and appropriate punishment.

[60] As is plain from these authorities, the fundamental importance of general deterrence in arriving at the appropriate punishment does not diminish the value of specific deterrence and protection of the community as sentencing considerations: see generally, *Uzun* [2015] VSCA 292, [33]; *Smith* [2019] VSCA 266, [35]; *Nolan v The Queen* [2017] VSCA 240, [31]. And, the gravity of family violence offending will be aggravated if it breaches an extant FVIO {*Marrah* [2014] VSCA 119, [25]; *Filiz v The Queen* [2014] VSCA 212, [21]} or is committed in front of children: *Nolan* [2017] VSCA 240, [31]; *Laa* [2020] VSCA 136, [52].

[61] Further, the seriousness of family violence and the harm it inflicts is not to be simply equated with physical injury: *Pasinis* [2014] VSCA 97, [54]. Family violence is now understood — and defined in law in s.5 FVPA — to encompass behaviour that is physically, sexually, emotionally, psychologically and economically abusive or threatening or coercive, even if such behaviour does not constitute a criminal offence. That kind of behaviour produces situations where people, disproportionately women, live in ‘real and justified fear of men who are, or were, their intimate partners’: *Filiz* [2014] VSCA 212, [23]. It produces a domestic atmosphere steeped in dread. It robs victims of capacity and agency and also engenders shame.

[62] It follows that in assessing the totality of the circumstances that pertain to any offence committed in the context of family violence, the surrounding behaviours of the offender must be considered to assess the true gravity of the offending and for ‘the sentence to vindicate the dignity of [the] victim’: *Marrah* [2014] VSCA 119, [16].”

In *Njovu v The King* [2025] VSCA 85 the applicant had pleaded guilty to charges of criminal damage, intentionally cause injury, attempt to pervert the course of justice and persistent contravention of a family violence safety notice and had been sentenced to TES IMP2y9m/1y10m. In refusing leave to appeal and rejecting the applicant’s submission that time served together with a lengthy Community Correction Order was the only sentencing option open to the sentencing judge, Taylor JA said at [42]‑[43]:

“In *Skeates (a Pseudonym) v The King* [2023] VSCA 226 at [55]-[62] this Court reviewed the many statements previously made as to the seriousness of offending that occurs within the context of family violence. In such circumstances general deterrence and denunciation assume prominence in the sentencing exercise. Offending which is in breach of an extant family violence order is particularly aggravated. The sentencing judge must have regard to the impact of the offending on the victim. The judge correctly approached this case on that basis.”

In *Dhal v The Queen* [2023] VSCA 289 the Court of Appeal (Osborn & Whelan JJA), in refusing the 31 year old offender leave to appeal against a sentence of IMP11y on a charge of intentionally causing serious injury to his former partner, said at [67]-[69]:

[67] “The fact that the victim was the former partner of the applicant, and the fact that the applicant has prior convictions for assaults on a partner or former partner, were significant. As this Court said in *Smith v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 159, [7], male violence against women is a ‘scourge of our society’, and those who engage in it ‘should be in no doubt that offending of this kind will attract very heavy sentences’.

[68] The offending in this case visited horrific injuries on a 21 year old former partner. The applicant was motivated by jealousy and revenge. He used a boning knife. As a result of his work as a butcher, he was familiar with the effect of the use of such a knife. He made three attempts to strike the victim, injuring his friend, who was attempting to protect her in the course of one of those attempts. He has relevant prior convictions. There is a significant risk of reoffending. Both specific and general deterrence are very important. There is little evidence of significant genuine remorse. His prospects of rehabilitation are guarded.

[69] In these circumstance, there is no basis for a conclusion that the sentences are manifestly excessive.”

In *Dragovic v The King* [2024] VSCA 95 the applicant had pleaded guilty to to one charge of criminal damage, six charges of common assault, one charge of persistent contravention of a family violence intervention order, one charge of attempting to pervert the course of justice and the related summary offence of committing an indictable offence whilst on bail. He was sentenced to TES IMP2y/1y. In refusing leave to appeal the Court of Appeal (Kennedy & T Forrest JJA) said at [31]-[33]:

[31] “We agree entirely for the reasons stated by the sentencing judge, that the applicant involved himself in serious violence against his intimate partner. Violence towards an intimate partner can never be justified but in this case, there seems little if any reason for this sustained course of violence. The applicant’s apparent grievance seems to be that the complainant, having cared for him during his illness, called an ambulance against his wishes. She then had the temerity to leave his presence for a few hours.

[32] Recently, in *DPP v Reynolds (a pseudonym)* (2022) 71 VR 336, 352 [71]-[77], this Court restated and emphasised established sentencing principles in cases of intimate partner violence citing *Pasinis v The Queen* [2014] VSCA 97, [57]; *Mercer (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2015] VSCA 257, [54]; *Kalala v The Queen* (2017) 269 A Crim R 1, 18 [59]; [2017] VSCA 223; *DPP v Evans* [2019] VSCA 239, [84]. In *Kalala v The Queen*, the majority observed at [59] that ‘[t]his Court has repeatedly emphasised the need to condemn family violence, in line with community expectations’. A decade ago, in *Feliz v The Queen* [2014] VSCA 212 this Court remarked at [23] (citations omitted):

‘It is a shameful truth that family violence is a leading cause of illness, disability and death among Victorian women aged between 15 and 44. It is also sadly true that there are a great number of women who live in real and justified fear of the men who are, or were, their intimate partners.’

[33] Those (mostly) men who elect to engage in violent activity within the home can expect little sympathy from sentencing courts. As noted by the Court in *DPP v Reynolds (a pseudonym)* (2022) 71 VR 336 at [77], the authorities make plain that ‘general deterrence, public denunciation, just punishment and community protection must be prominent sentencing factors when sentencing for family violence offending’. Never have these observations been more resonant than now. The community is rightly distressed at the tragic prevalence of intimate partner violence. The Court joins in that distress. Those inclined to this type of emotional and physical violence must understand that they will be held to account.”

## In *DPP v Kurtaj* [2025] VSCA 203 the respondent (who was 33 years old at the time of the offending) had pleaded guilty to two charges of contravening a family violence intervention order intending to cause, or knowing that his conduct would probably cause, apprehension or fear in a protected person for her own safety or that of any other person contrary to s 123A(2) of the *Family Violence Protection Act 2008* [FVPA], two charges of making a threat to kill, one charge of aggravated burglary, one charge of persistent contravention of a family violence intervention order contrary to s 125A FVPA, and one charge of attempting to pervert the course of justice contrary to common law. The primary victim of the respondent’s offending had been in an intimate relationship with the respondent, on and off, since 2012. She was 28 at the time of the offending and had a son aged three. Another of the respondent’s victims was the complainant’s 69-year old grandmother. The respondent had been sentenced by a County Court judge to TES IMP3y4m/2y2m. The Court of Appeal (Priest, Taylor & Boyce JJA) allowed the DPP appeal and resentenced the respondent to TES IMP 5y6m/3y6m. In relation to sentencing for the family violence offending – and in particular the judgments in *Skeates (a pseudonym) v The King* (2010) and *Pasinis v The Queen* [2014] VSCA 97 [57] – see the judgment of Boyce JA at [100]-[104] and the observations of Priest JA at [3]-[5]. In relation to the aggravated burglary charge see the judgment of Boyce JA at [104]-[133] and in relation to the attempt to pervert the course of justice charge see the judgment of Boyce JA at [140]-[148].

In *DPP v Lindemann* [2024] VSC 220 the accused engaged in a frenzied, prolonged attack on his partner using six knives. The attack took place at home in the presence of the partner’s 10-year old twins and her frail mother. In the process the accused caused knife injuries to one of the twins who was trying to defend her mother. The accused had entered an early plea and had no prior convictions but no genuine remorse. He was sentenced to IMP30y on the charge of murder of his partner and IMP3y on the charge of recklessly causing injury to his partner’s daughter. One year of the 3y sentence was directed to be cumulative with the 30y sentence resulting in TES IMP31y/25y. At [96]‑[98] Hollingworth J said:

[96] “All too frequently, courts are faced with male offenders like you, who are unable or unwilling to accept that their relationship is over, or that their partner has a right to move on with their life, and who respond with anger, jealousy and violence. The murder of a domestic partner is the most extreme form of family violence.

[97] Family violence is a complex problem, which needs to be addressed in multiple ways; there is no single, simple solution.

[98] As appeal courts have repeatedly stated, the principles of general deterrence, denunciation and just punishment will ordinarily be given primacy in sentencing for the murder of a partner in a domestic setting, even where there are circumstances of provocation or great emotional stress.”

In *DPP v Pualic* [2024] VSC 817 the 44 year old offender had pleaded guilty at the earliest possible opportunity to the stabbing murder of his 46 year old ex-partner who was the sole parent of a son and three daughters aged 20, 8 & 6. The offending was witnessed by the deceased’s 8 year old daughter. The offender had diagnoses of Complex PTSD and Schizotypal Disorder and was intoxicated at the time of the offending. In imposing a sentence of IMP24y/19y Incerti J said, *inter alia*:

[55] “...[T]here is a degree of casual connection between your Complex PTSD and your offending. However, the degree of mitigation requires consideration of the nature and severity of both the impairment and the offending behaviour: *R v Verdins* (2007) 16 VR 269, 275 [25]-[26].”

…

[57] “I have also had regard to your significant history of trauma, including an unstable and unsettled childhood and adolescence. The law states that in light of this, your moral culpability could not be equated with that of a person who had the advantage of a normal, stable, and regular upbringing: *Bugmy v The Queen* (2013) 249 CLR 571.

[58] For the reasons set out above, I am prepared to accept that your mental impairment and your disturbed childhood are relevant factors that mitigate your moral culpability for Ms Osias’ murder. I repeat, however, that the extent to which they do so must be limited. Taking these matters into account, I nevertheless consider that your moral culpability can only be characterised as high.

[59] You offered to plead guilty at the earliest possible opportunity, fully acknowledging responsibility for your actions not long after your admission into custody. Your plea is of great utilitarian value, and has spared the witnesses, including young X [the deceased’s 8 year old daughter], from giving evidence at a trial. This is an important matter in mitigation. I am also satisfied that your plea is reflective of genuine remorse, which again manifested at an early stage.”

…

[69] “It is necessary that the sentence that I impose on you adequately express the condemnation by the Court, and by the community, of your offending, and to vindicate the value of each individual life.

[70] The sentence must send a clear message to all men. Ms Osias’ death is yet another example of the murder of a woman at the hands of an enraged male partner. This type of crime has become distressingly familiar. In the last two months alone, this Court has sentenced three other men for murder in the context of family violence: *DPP v Barbaro* [2024] VSC 667; *DPP v Lo Bianco* [2024] VSC 681; *DPP v Kurera* [2024] VSC 809. Women are being killed by their male partners at a disproportionate and utterly terrifying rate. Ms Osias should have been free to remain in or leave her relationship with you as she saw fit. Her life was precious to her, her children, her family, her friends, and to the community as a whole.

[71] At the time she was murdered, an intervention order was in place to safeguard Ms Osias. Yet, the full force of the law was still not enough to protect her. Your offending undermines our confidence in the ability of the law to adequately protect women and children. The ripple effect is wide-reaching: it impacts first responders; it creates fear for other women and children protected by intervention orders; it leaves each of us with a feeling of helplessness. The message must be heard loud and clear: committing serious violence in a domestic setting, and taking the life of another, will be met with extraordinarily strong punishment.”

## As discussed in **Part 11.19** a Director’s appeal was dismissed by the Court of Appeal: *DPP v Pualic* [2025] VSCA 178.

See also *Stanford v The King* [2024] VSCA 35 at [75]-[78].

### **11.2.36.1 Sentencing considerations for contravention of an intervention order**

The material in this subsection is taken from the National Domestic and Family Violence Bench Book.

Sentencing a contravention of an intervention order [IVO] can be an extremely complex task. The following matters may be important to consider, especially in sentencing adult offenders:

**The Purposes of sentencing an offender for contravention of an IVO**

* Appropriately balancing the purposes of sentencing is a delicate task in family violence cases, where measures intended to protect the victim can place them at increased [risk](https://dfvbenchbook.aija.org.au/dynamics-of-domestic-and-family-violence/factors-affecting-risk/), and sentences designed to punish the offender may indirectly punish the victim.
* As the function of an IVO is to protect the victim from future harm, an important purpose of sentencing for breach of an order should be to deter non-compliance with the order or future orders to ensure the safety and protection of the victim. The protection of the community, which encompasses protecting the victim, is an important consideration.
* Denunciation and punishment are also important purposes in sentencing for contravention of an IVO. The integrity of an intervention order system relies on there being serious consequences if orders are breached.
* Some sentences which are intended to punish the offender may have an unintended consequence. The dynamics of domestic and family violence may mean the imposition of a fine can also punish the victim. Sentences which are structured to ensure that it is the offender who is punished may be more effective in achieving this sentencing purpose (for example orders that require the offender comply with conditions such as completing community work).
* Another sentencing purpose which can be compatible with protecting the victim (particularly in the long term) is rehabilitation. There will be occasions where a sentence with coercive rehabilitation requirements (such as mandatory attendance at a [behavioural change course](https://dfvbenchbook.aija.org.au/perpetrator-intervention-programs/)or parenting course) as well as a punitive element (such as community work, a financial condition or a jail term) strikes a better balance between the purposes of sentencing than a sentence such as a fine.

**Sentencing factors**

1. **Factors relating to the victim include**:
2. Nature of the breach and its impact on the victim

Regard should be had to the fact that the damage caused to [victims  who have suffered years of domestic and family violence](https://dfvbenchbook.aija.org.au/dynamics-of-domestic-and-family-violence/)may make them particularly vulnerable to conduct that in another context would seem relatively innocuous.

Breaches not involving physical violence can have a significant impact on the victim and should not necessarily be treated as less serious than breaches involving physical violence.

Where an offence has taken place in or in the vicinity of the victim’s home, thereby depriving the victim of any feeling of safety or sanctuary, the breach may be regarded as more serious.

Consider whether, if there is no victim impact statement, the judicial officer should enquire as to whether the victim has been given the opportunity to make such a statement. It is however important not to insist on the provision of a victim impact statement and judicial officers should not underestimate the effect of the breach on the victim in the absence of a victim impact statement. Victims may feel it is not safe for them to provide a VIS (see (iv) below).

1. Abuse of power

People in family relationships generally have ongoing emotional, legal or financial ties, which can also include the [joint care of children](https://dfvbenchbook.aija.org.au/vulnerable-groups/people-with-children/). They are therefore in a position to commit the kind of breach that could more seriously affect a family member, not merely physically, but so as to cause mental anguish.

1. Presence of children

When sentencing breaches of protection orders, information about  the [exposure of any children](https://dfvbenchbook.aija.org.au/understanding-domestic-and-family-violence/exposing-children/)to family violence may be relevant.  Where the original order was imposed to protect [children](https://dfvbenchbook.aija.org.au/vulnerable-groups/children/), whether or  not alongside another victim or victims, any breach of this order will  generally be more serious. This will be so whether or not the children are direct victims or were exposed to the breach behaviour.

1. Attitude of the victim

Generally, the views of the victim should not significantly influence the appropriate sentence for a particular offence. Because victims of  family violence may be placed in danger of further violence if they  are  regarded by the perpetrator as being responsible for the sentence,  a court should be mindful as to whether the victim has provided any  views on sentence free of pressure or coercion. This may require some consideration of the dynamics of the relationship between the victim and the offender.

1. Contribution of the victim

It may be relevant that the conditions of the order were breached following contact initiated by the victim. However, in assessing the  degree to which this may mitigate the seriousness of the offence it is  important to consider the history of the relationship between the  parties, the nature of the contact and the victim’s motivation in making  contact (and in particular whether the victim was acting under any  pressure pressure or coercion). Again, this may require some consideration of the dynamics of the victim/offender relationship.

Some victims have reported that they feel safer if they maintain  contact with the offender so they can monitor their [level of risk](https://dfvbenchbook.aija.org.au/dynamics-of-domestic-and-family-violence/factors-affecting-risk/).

1. Vulnerability of the victim

The particular circumstances of the victim, including any [special vulnerability](https://dfvbenchbook.aija.org.au/dynamics-of-domestic-and-family-violence/vulnerable-groups/), are relevant to the nature and impact of a breach.  Victim vulnerability may aggravate the seriousness of a breach of an IVO such that a higher penalty is justified.

1. **Factors relating to the offender include**:

Nature of the breach

Depending on the dynamics of the relationship even apparently ‘minor’, ‘trivial’, ‘technical’ or ‘low level’ breaches can have a serious impact on the victim.

Culpability

In considering the offender’s culpability in a breach of IVO offence, the court should consider whether the offence was committed intentionally, recklessly or negligently and the offender’s level of understanding of the order.

Generally, the fact that the offender was not present in court when the original order was made, and the consequences of breach explained, should not mitigate culpability. However, there may be situations in  which the offender has not properly understood the  conditions of the  order (for example, where the offender has [poor English skills](https://dfvbenchbook.aija.org.au/vulnerable-groups/people-with-poor-literacy-skills/), an  [intellectual disability](https://dfvbenchbook.aija.org.au/vulnerable-groups/people-with-disability-and-impairment/)or a [mental illness](https://dfvbenchbook.aija.org.au/vulnerable-groups/people-with-mental-illness/)).

Prior convictions and other offending behaviour

A court should take into account information about prior convictions in particular any that relate to the victim in question, or other family violence offences, where that information is available.

Previous good character

If there is a proven pattern of domestic and family violence, any evidence of the offender’s ‘good behaviour’ and reputation in society   generally should be considered in light of the proven pattern.

Timing of the breach

Where an order is contravened only a short time after the making of the protection order or there has been an earlier breach, this may be an aggravating factor.

1. **Where a criminal offence is charged in combination with a breach of an IVO**

If the facts which formed the basis of both charges are the same, consideration must be given to the question of ‘double punishment’ [see **section 11.2.7** above].

## 

### **11.2.36.2 Some relevant cases**

Most of the following judgment extracts and judgment summaries – which are relevant to sentencing in family violence cases – have been assembled by Magistrate Tim Gattuso from the Judicial College of Victoria’s Family Violence Bench Book.

***Pasinis v R*** [2014] VSCA 97

“General deterrence is of fundamental importance in cases of domestic violence [involving adult offenders]. The victims of such violence are often so enveloped by fear that they are incapable of either escaping the violence or reporting it to the authorities. The key to protection lies in deterring the violent conduct by sending an unequivocal message to would-be perpetrators of domestic violence that if they offend, they will be sentenced to a lengthy period of imprisonment so that they are no longer in a position to inflict harm.” [57]

But note the caution about the above dicta expressed in the dissenting judgment of Priest JA in *DPP v Gregory Reynolds (a pseudonym)* [2022] VSCA 263 at [21]-[22] quoted in **section 11.2.36** above.

***Laa v The Queen*** [2020] VSCA 136

“Confrontational aggravated burglaries, in the setting of an underlying domestic dispute, are all too prevalent in our society. They are calculated to cause lasting and serious physical and emotional harm to the victim. By their nature, such offences have the potential to escalate into incidents that result in serious harm and, on occasion, human tragedy. For that reason, general deterrence is a sentencing purpose of particular significance in such cases. It is important that the courts, by sentences imposed in such cases, make it clear that those persons who contemplate indulging in such a form of conduct will, upon apprehension, lose their right to be at liberty in society for a substantial period of time.” [50]

***Hardwick (a pseudonym) v The Queen***[2021] VSCA 67

In relation to aggravated burglary in a Family Violence context, the Court of Appeal said:

*“The fact that the incident arose in the context of a failed family relationship and the victim had earlier sought the protection of the law by obtaining an intervention order made the aggravated burglary more serious.  Physically overpowering a person to facilitate entry to their home with intent to assault the person once inside is obviously a serious offence.  It is not self-evident that it is less serious than smashing a window or door. [38]*

*In my opinion, it was open to the judge to have significant reservations in relation to the appellant’s remorse and insight.  In turn, those matters underpinned the need for a sentence that sufficiently addressed specific deterrence.  Further, general deterrence is an important factor in the context of family violence. [49]*

*The false imprisonment extended over a period of time and involved physical restraint. The imprisonment in her own home, in the context of family violence would have been extremely distressing to the victim. It deserves powerful denunciation. [51]*

***DPP v Paulino***[2017] VSC 794

In the context of a man who murdered his former partner, Bell J said:

“As King J has said in several cases and specifically so in *R v Mulhall*, ‘the law will do all it can to protect women from violent domestic partners’. Therefore, the court condemns family violence in the strongest possible terms and stresses that general deterrence, denunciation and just punishment are strong sentencing considerations in this case.” [6], [19]

***Baker (a pseudonym) v The Queen***[2021] VSCA 158

Involved a series of serious FV offences, including pushing the AFM’s head into a pot of boiling water, followed by an attempt to pervert the course of justice by threatening to destroy their stillborn child’s ashes and to distribute intimate images of her unless she told police she made everything up and inflicted facial scalding and other injuries on herself...all whilst subject to an IVO and on a CCO for ‘similar offending’ with prior convictions for violence.

Despite the accused being young and had pleaded guilty, had a traumatic upbringing, and had an intellectual disability, these considerations whilst “*suggestive of some diminution in moral culpability and some moderation of general and specific deterrence*” had to be “*tempered against the role that methylamphetamine abuse had in this case”* as that significantly aggravated his impairments. [31]

*In all the circumstances, the infliction of such horrific violence against a woman at the hands of her domestic partner in their own home called for denunciation, just punishment and general deterrence, especially in the context of persistent defiance of a family violence intervention order and bearing in mind the applicant’s criminal history.  In that context, specific deterrence also remained a relevant consideration.* [32]

In relation to the attempt to pervert the course of justice charge: *“An attempt by a perpetrator of family violence to prevent a victim from seeking the full protection of the law and their physical and emotional safety is a very serious matter which calls for general deterrence and denunciation.”* [37]

***Carter v The Queen***[2020] VSCA 156

This case was in relation to a series of threatening and abusive Arunta calls made by the appellant from prison to his on again/off again partner, telling her to withdraw her statement following his remand for recklessly causing her an injury (amongst other offences). The Court of Appeal said [at 70]: “*An attempt to pervert the course of justice is a substantive, and not an inchoate offence, notwithstanding the use of the term ‘attempt’. Self-evidently, any conduct that meets this description must be viewed seriously and denounced appropriately.”*

***Edward-Hayes v The Queen*** [2022] VSCA 76

The 21 year old applicant with a disadvantaged background had been sentenced to IMP2y6m/1y8m having pleaded guilty to charges of contravening a family violence intervention order intending to cause harm or fear for safety, recklessly causing injury, making a threat to kill and to damage property. Holding that the sentence as not manifestly excessive and refusing leave to appeal McLeish JA said at [29]: “[T]he case is a sorry example of the scourge of family and domestic violence which this Court has been at pains to denounce: *Pasinis v The Queen* [2014] VSCA 97, [57] (Neave and Kyrou JJA). The applicant subjected his former partner to a violent and terrifying ordeal in her home and in the presence of her infant. It was aptly described by the judge as ‘brutal and repulsive’. He was on bail at the time, and had an extensive criminal record, including criminal damage, aggravated burglary and dishonesty offences, as well as previous instances of offending while on bail and contravening a family violence intervention order respectively. The judge rightly described general and specific deterrence as predominant sentencing considerations and noted the applicant’s guarded prospects of rehabilitation.”

**Relevance of attitude of victim to offender to sentence**

***Hester v R*** [2007] VSCA 298, at [27] per Neave JA

It has been suggested that any evidence to suggest that a victim has forgiven the offender in a case involving offences committed in the context of family violence should be treated extremely carefully. This is because:

*It is a common pattern of behaviour for perpetrators of domestic violence to express penitence and persuade their victims to reconcile. For a number of complex reasons…many victims are assaulted on several occasions before they summon the courage to leave an abusive relationship. Often they require considerable support in order to do so. In my view, these are matters which should be given considerable weight by a judge who is considering the weight that should be given to a victim impact statement made by a person who has been the victim of domestic violence … evidence of forgiveness of the victim of domestic violence should be treated with extreme caution.*

The principles stated in *Hester*are relevant both to sentencing and in bail applications where the victim is supportive of bail.

***Ivanov v The Queen*** [2019] VSCA 219

Despite this, in an exceptional case, the supportive attitude of the complainant, who appears to be fully independent, gives credible evidence that the offending is isolated, and wants to move ahead with her life with the offender, can be relevant as a powerful mitigating factor.

***Packard (a pseudonym) v The Queen***[2021] VSCA 56

The Court of Appeal considered the principles of mercy and the weight to attach to a Victim Impact Statement, where the victim accepts the offender is remorseful. These considerations may extend to a reference by the victim in support of the accused.

The applicant stabbed his wife of nine years five times after an argument. At the time of the stabbing, the couple’s two young children were at home and saw their injured mother. After the stabbing, the applicant blamed his wife as he suspected she was having an affair (which was not true). The injuries to the wife were potentially life threatening without medical intervention. The applicant called an ambulance straight away and pleaded guilty at the first opportunity. The applicant had never been violent towards his wife and had no relevant prior convictions. At the time of the offending, he was using cocaine heavily and had gambling problems. He pleaded guilty to one charge of intentionally causing injury serious injury and was sentenced to 7 years’ imprisonment, with a non-parole period of 4 years and 6 months.

On appeal he argued that the sentencing judge did not take into account that the  victim  had made a full recovery; had forgiven the offender; had made a VIS asking  for mercy for her husband and knew he was remorseful; and argued that the sentence was manifestly excessive in light of the fact  that he called emergency services, had confessed, his very early guilty  plea, his lack of relevant prior convictions, his lack of history of violence, and the fact  that he was said to be of no risk of reoffending.

Leave to appeal was refused. Justice Kaye held that the judge had correctly characterised the applicant’s offending and his moral culpability as serious. His Honour noted at [30]:

*“…the applicant physically overpowered his wife in her own home, and violently stabbed her five times with the knife. In doing so, he penetrated her vital organs, and he inflicted injuries on her that were potentially life-threatening. The attack occurred in the family home where she was entitled to feel safe and protected. As her husband, it was the duty of the applicant to care for and protect her. The attack took place in the presence of her (and applicant’s) two young children, and three other children, who were also present in the home. Notwithstanding that, fortunately, the victim has made a good recovery both physically and emotionally from the violent assault upon her, nevertheless it could not be gainsaid that this was a serious example of the offence of causing serious injury, and that the applicant’s moral culpability for that offending was high.*”

His Honour quoted Justice Neave in the case of ***Hester***, noting that evidence of forgiveness by a victim of domestic violence should be treated with caution. Justice Kaye noted that the extension of mercy is at the discretion of the sentencing judge [at 43], and held [at 46] that simply because Her Honour had inferred the victim may have been persuaded by male family members to express forgiveness, she had not erred by failing to exercise her discretion to extend mercy to the applicant.  The judge correctly took into account that the victim’s forgiveness would motivate the applicant to rehabilitate in order to have a better relationship with her.

Justice Kaye held the sentence imposed was not outside the range, stating at [56]:

*“Taken together, that combination of mitigating circumstances was certainly particularly cogent. However, as I have noted, in the absence of mitigating circumstances, the head sentence and the non-parole period would be properly characterised as being lenient. In that way, the sentence reflected that the judge gave material weight to the mitigating factors relied on by the applicant. In light of the gravity of the offending, and the important weight to be given to the sentencing purposes of general deterrence and denunciation, I do not consider that it is reasonably arguable that the sentence imposed on the applicant was wholly outside the range of sentencing options available to the judge.*”

See also *DPP v RC (No 2)* [2023] VSC 422.

### **11.2.37 Sentencing for stalking**

In *Harre v The King* [2024] VSCA 278 the applicant, then aged 42 and for whom there were some *Verdins* considerations, had pleaded guilty to charges of stalking a male DA aged 23 with whom he had had an intimate relationship and a female EW aged 24 with whom DA had developed an in intimate relationship. The applicant had also pleaded guilty to one charge of perjury in connection with an application for a personal safety intervention order against EW. He had been sentenced to IMP3y on each of the charges of stalking of which 18m was cumulative and IMP2y on the charge of perjury of which 12m was cumulative, resulting in TES IMP5y6m/3y6m. The Court of Appeal refused leave to appeal, Priest & Beach JJA saying at [5], [76] & [80]-[82]:

[5] “Significantly, the stalking...extended over a protracted period of 11 months, between 2 July 2020 and 2 June 2021. In the course of her sentencing remarks, the judge said that the applicant had

invested considerable time and energy in deviously trying to undermine the relationship between [DA] and [EW], as well as almost every significant relationship which [the applicant’s] victims had with other people, including those with their family, their housemates and even their employer. [The applicant] also entered their home on a number of occasions and engaged in creepy and disturbing conduct calculate to un-nerve them and cause them serious distress.”

[76] “The respondent’s counsel drew attention to the judge’s characterisation of the offending conduct. Hence, the judge described the conduct the subject of [the stalking charges] as of a ‘grave nature’. It was ‘premeditated, vindictive and gratuitous’, ‘very intricately planned’, and ‘calculated to deeply disturb and hurt’ the victims. The conduct was ‘deliberately cruel, malicious, defamatory and of an insidious nature’; and its scope was ‘very persistent, pervasive and protracted’. The conduct was neither spontaneous nor impulsive, and its impact on the victims (and their mothers) was significant. Moreover, the conduct comprising [the perjury charge] was ‘seriously brazen’, acted to undermine the integrity of the criminal justice system, and underscored the ‘extent to which [the applicant was] prepared to go to try to harm’ EW.”

[80] “We consider the individual sentences on the two charges of stalking to be well-justified. Drawing on our experience of other cases of stalking, we consider the applicant’s to represent one of the most grave examples of stalking this Court has encountered, given the persistence, intricacy, intrinsic nastiness and wanton sadism of the applicant’s conduct. The adjectives that the judge used to describe the applicant’s offending were entirely apt. It was truly vindictive, gratuitous, cruel and malicious in nature, calculated to deeply disturb the victims.

[81] Moreover, the various and diverse aspects that constituted the applicant’s behaviour were far from spur of the moment aberrations. The applicant intricately planned and meticulously executed the campaign of terror unleashed upon DA and EW. And, so it appears, at no time during the 11 months that the applicant tormented DA and EW did the applicant pause and reflect upon the enormity of the harm being inflicted on the victims. Indeed — whether or not it can be explained by the applicant’s personality disorder — we can detect no shred of remorse prior to, or following, the offending’s detection.

[82] We consider the order for cumulation of 18 months between the sentence on [the stalking charges] to be entirely justified. Although much of the offending conduct overlapped, both DA and EW were subjected to separate and distinct incidents of stalking, which had to be reflected in the individual sentences imposed on each charge and the order for cumulation between them.”

### **11.2.38 Sentencing for servitude offences**

In *DPP (Cth) v Kannan & Anor* [2021] VSC 439 a husband and wife were found guilty after a 49 day trial of two slavery offences – involving slavery by domestic servitude – laid under laid under s.270.3(1) of the *Criminal Code Act 1995* (Cth) and were sentenced to IMP6y/3y (husband) and IMP8y/4y (wife). The Court of Appeal subsequently refused the applications of the husband and wife to extend time to appeal: see *Kannan & Kannan v The King* [2023] VSCA 58.

In *DPP v Miller (a pseudonym)* [2025] VSC 164 the 26 year old offender had pleaded guilty to an offence of aggravated servitude under ss 270.5 and 270.8 of the *Criminal Code Act 1995* (Cth) which was based on cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment of his former wife, the victim MK, when both he and MK were aged between 21 & 24. This is understood to be the first case relating to servitude (aggravated or otherwise) in the context of sexual servitude to be prosecuted and heard by an Australian court. The offender had begun dating MK 4 months after she had arrived in Australia on a student visa in early 2020 in order to study graphic design and photography. Within the period of MK’s servitude the offender subjected her to physical, psychological and sexual abuse and deprived her of autonomy and freedom of movement in her ordinary daily activities. His mistreatment of MK escalated even after the birth of their daughter and subsequent to his marriage to MK. By the time MK was liberated from him, his cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment of her had left her in a physically fragile and psychologically demoralised state. The categories of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment relied on by the Crown in relation to the aggravated servitude offence are listed in Appendix A of the judgment. A summary of the content of 159 video and audio recordings obtained from the offender’s computer is contained in Appendix B of the judgment. Categorising the level of offending as “serious” – and noting that the offender’s prospects for rehabilitation were “fairly poor” – Jane Dixon J imposed a sentence of IMP12y/9y on the aggravated servitude charge.

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## **11.3 Some mechanics of sentencing**

### **11.3.1 “Instinctive synthesis” or “two-tiered approach”**

In recent years there has been a great deal of high-level judicial debate as to whether a sentencing judge must impose a sentence which represents his or her “instinctive synthesis” of all of the various aspects involved in the sentencing process or whether, on the other hand, he or she is entitled to adopt a “two-tiered” approach, namely first to determine what would be a proper sentence absent mitigating factors and then reducing that sentence by reference to such mitigating factors as may exist. The distinction was discussed by the Court of Appeal in *R v McIntosh* [2005] VSCA 106 at [25] where the “two-tiered” approach was described as “impermissible”. The Court of Appeal continued:

“It seems clear enough that…a two-tiered approach to the imposition of the sentence effectively constitutes sentencing error in this jurisdiction. The proper approach that must be adopted in this jurisdiction is based on the instinctive or intuitive synthesis, as that concept was explained in *R v Williscroft, Weston, Woodley and Robinson* [1975] VR 292 at 300-301 and affirmed in *R v Young* [1990] VR 951 (and in later decisions of this Court).”

In *R v Young* [1990] VR 951 the sentencing judge determined the sentence which was proportionate to the gravity of each of the charges. Then, having regard to other considerations, including factors peculiar to the particular offender such as previous convictions, he determined the actual sentence to be imposed. In their joint judgment Young CJ, Crockett & Nathan JJ disapproved this approach, holding at p.960 that “its adoption would be likely to lead either to the imposition of inadequate sentences or to injustice”. Their Honours continued:

“What is a sentence proportionate to an offence is a matter of discretion and there must in most cases be a range of sentences open to a sentencing judge which are proportionate to the offence. There cannot be said to be a sentence which is *the* proportionate sentence…Thus to attempt to fix a proportionate sentence before fixing the sentence to be imposed will only multiply the possibilities of error.”

In so holding, the Court of Criminal Appeal in *R v Young* approved and applied dicta of Adam & Crockett JJ in their majority judgment in *R v Williscroft, Weston, Woodley and Robinson* [1975] VR 292 at 300:

“Now, ultimately every sentence imposed represents the sentencing judge’s instinctive synthesis of all the various aspects involved in the punitive process. Moreover, in our view, it is profitless (as it was thought to be in *Kane’s Case* [1974] VR 759 at 764-766) to attempt to allot to the various considerations their proper part in the assessment of the particular punishments presently under examination.”

See also *R v Holder* [1983] 3 NSWLR 245 per Priestley JA at p.270; *DPP v Rose, DPP v Miller* [2005] VSCA 275 at [29]; *Brown v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 286 at [13]-[18].

Following *R v Young*, Victorian courts have continued to reject the two-stage approach {see e.g. *R v Nagy* [1992] 1 VR 637; *R v Li* [1998] 1 VR 637; *R v Ken Ha Khanh Phong* [2005] VSCA 149 at [84]} save, of course, for situations where a statute required specific identification of the extent of an adjustment to a sentence, as for instance in s.21E of the *Crimes Act 1914* (Cth).

In *Markarian v The Queen* [2005] HCA 25, a decision handed down on 18/05/2005, the High Court re-entered the debate in earnest in relation to a sentence handed down by the NSW District Court and subsequently increased on appeal by the NSW Court of Criminal Appeal. In their joint judgment Gleeson CJ, Gummow, Hayne and Callinan JJ - while noting that “identifying ‘instinctive synthesis’ and ‘transparency’ as antonyms in this debate misdescribes the area for debate” – nevertheless adopted the majority view in *Wong* (2001) 207 CLR 584 and the minority view in *AB v The Queen* (1999) 198 CLR 111 that the adoption of a two-stage approach to sentencing was wrong. In his judgment at [50]-[68] McHugh J endorsed his earlier minority view in *AB v The Queen*, strongly preferring the ‘instinctive synthesis’ approach. At [35]-[39] Gleeson CJ, Gummow, Hayne and Callinan JJ set out in detail their reasons for endorsing *Wong*:

[35] “The appellant's next submission invited the Court to reject sequential or two-tiered approaches to sentencing taking as their starting point the maximum penalty available, and to state as a universal rule to the extent that legislation does not otherwise dictate, that a process of instinctive synthesis is the one which sentencing courts should adopt.

[36] No universal rules can be stated in those terms. As was pointed out earlier, much turns on what is meant by a ‘sequential or two-tiered’ approach and, likewise, the ‘process of instinctive synthesis’ may wrongly be understood as denying the requirement that a sentencer give reasons for the sentence passed. So, too, identifying ‘instinctive synthesis’ and ‘transparency’ as antonyms in this debate misdescribes the area for debate.

[37] In general, a sentencing court will, after weighing all of the relevant factors, reach a conclusion that a particular penalty is the one that should be imposed. As Gaudron, Gummow and Hayne JJ said in *Wong* (2001) 207 CLR 584 at 611-612 [74]-[76]:

‘Secondly, and no less importantly, the reasons of the Court of Criminal Appeal suggest a mathematical approach to sentencing in which there are to be 'increment[s]' to, or decrements from, a predetermined range of sentences. That kind of approach, usually referred to as a 'two-stage approach' to sentencing, not only is apt to give rise to error, it is an approach that departs from principle. It should not be adopted.

It departs from principle because it does not take account of the fact that there are many conflicting and contradictory elements which bear upon sentencing an offender. Attributing a particular weight to some factors, while leaving the significance of all other factors substantially unaltered, may be quite wrong. We say 'may be' quite wrong because the task of the sentencer is to take account of *all* of the relevant factors and to arrive at a single result which takes due account of them all. That is what is meant by saying that the task is to arrive at an 'instinctive synthesis'. This expression is used, not as might be supposed, to cloak the task of the sentencer in some mystery, but to make plain that the sentencer is called on to reach a single sentence which, in the case of an offence like the one now under discussion, balances many different and conflicting features.

In *R v Thomson* (2000) 49 NSWLR 383, Spigelman CJ reviewed the state of the authorities in Australia that deal with the 'two-stage' approach of arriving at a sentence, in which an 'objective' sentence is first determined and then 'adjusted' by some mathematical value given to one or more features of the case, such as a plea of guilty or assistance to authorities. As the reasons in *Thomson* reveal, the weight of authority in the intermediate appellate courts of this country is clearly against adopting two-stage sentencing and favours the instinctive synthesis approach. In this Court, McHugh and Hayne JJ, in dissenting opinions in *AB v The Queen* (1999) 198 CLR 111expressed the view that the adoption of a two-stage approach to sentencing was wrong. Kirby J expressed a contrary view. We consider that it is wrong in principle. The nature of the error can be illustrated by the approach adopted by the Court of Criminal Appeal in these matters. Under that approach, the Court takes, for example, the offender's place in the hierarchy and gives that a particular significance in fixing a sentence but gives the sentencer no guidance, whatever, about whether or how that is to have some effect on other elements which either are to be taken into account or may have already been taken into account in fixing the guideline range of sentences. To take another example, to 'discount' a sentence by a nominated amount, on account of a plea of guilty, ignores difficulties of the kind to which Gleeson CJ referred in *R v Gallagher* (1991) 23 NSWLR 220when he said:

'It must often be the case that an offender's conduct in pleading guilty, his expressions of contrition, his willingness to co-operate with the authorities, and the personal risks to which he thereby exposes himself, will form a complex of inter-related considerations, and an attempt to separate out one or more of those considerations will not only be artificial and contrived, but will also be illogical.'

So long as a sentencing judge must, or may, take account of *all* of the circumstances of the offence and the offender, to single out some of those considerations and attribute specific numerical or proportionate value to some features, distorts the already difficult balancing exercise which the judge must perform.’

[38] Following *Wong* benches of five judges in New South Wales in *R v Sharma* (2002) 54 NSWLR 300 and *R v Whyte* (2002) 55 NSWLR 252 and in South Australia in *R v Place* (2002) 81 SASR 395, have sought to state general sentencing principles to be applied in those States. In the first two of these cases the Court of Criminal Appeal of New South Wales endorsed an approach of instinctive synthesis as a general rule but also accepted as a qualification that departure from it may be justified to allow for separate consideration of the objective circumstances of the crime. On occasions intermediate courts of appeal have however refused to find error where a staged approach has been undertaken. In *Place* at 424-425 the Court of Criminal Appeal of South Australia (Doyle CJ, Prior, Lander, Martin and Gray JJ) although it rejected a staged approach in general, made it clear that a reduction of penalty for a plea of guilty should be identified. This approach, their Honours held, was in conformity with the relevant sentencing legislation of South Australia.

[39] Following the decision of this Court in *Wong* it cannot now be doubted that sentencing courts may not add and subtract item by item from some apparently subliminally derived figure, passages of time in order to fix the time which an offender must serve in prison. That is not to say that in a simple case, in which, for example, the circumstances of the crime have to be weighed against one or a small number of other important matters, indulgence in arithmetical deduction by the sentencing judges should be absolutely forbidden. An invitation to a sentencing judge to engage in a process of ‘instinctive synthesis’, as useful as shorthand terminology may on occasions be, is not desirable if no more is said or understood about what that means. The expression ‘instinctive synthesis’ may then be understood to suggest an arcane process into the mysteries of which only judges can be initiated. The law strongly favours transparency. Accessible reasoning is necessary in the interests of victims, of the parties, appeal courts, and the public. There may be occasions when some indulgence in an arithmetical process will better serve these ends. This case was not however one of them because of the number and complexity of the considerations which had to be weighed by the trial judge.”

Although agreeing with the orders proposed by the other members of the Court, Kirby J was strongly in dissent on the “minor judicial controversy” on the proper approach to sentencing. His Honour had previously suggested that “some of the debates over the two-stage approach and instinctive or intuitive synthesis may be semantic, not substantive”: see e.g. *Cameron* (2002) 209 CLR 339 at 362. To that extent he agreed with what was said in paragraph [36] of the joint reasons. But a sticking point remained, his Honour being unable at [132] to “accept a *Williscroft* ‘instinct’ or a *Young* prohibition on two-stage reasoning as sentencing principles, where a more transparent course is available, appropriate and more conformable with modern legal principles governing the deployment of public power”. At [124] Kirby J stated:

“Where so many judges in Australia, experienced in criminal trials and in sentencing, have expressed their disagreement with the approaches derived from *Williscroft* and *Young*, it is undesirable, in my respectful opinion, for this Court (even in the present watered-down version) to impose those authorities on sentencing judges throughout the Commonwealth.”

And at [139] his Honour concluded:

“So analysed, the residue of this judicial debate over twenty years – in this Court over the past five years – is revealed for what it is. Australian judges must now express their obeisance to an ‘instinctive synthesis’ as the explanation of their sentencing outcomes. It might be prudent for them to avoid mention of ‘two stages’ or of mathematics. Yet in many instances (and increasingly by statutory prescription) if judges do so, no error of sentencing principle will have occurred. Such mention may, in fact, sometimes even be required. The lofty and absolute prescriptions of *Williscroft* and *Young* remain in place like the two vast and trunkless legs of stone of Ozymandias. But, with all respect, they are now beginning to look just as lifeless. One day, I expect that travellers to the antique land of this part of the law of sentencing will walk this way without knowing that the two proscriptions once were there.”

In *R v DCP* [2006] VSCA 2 two members of the Court gave cautious support to a two-tier approach in very limited circumstances. At [36] Callaway JA said: “It is usually unhelpful to speculate as to what a sentence would have been absent a plea of guilty, but there are some cases where such an argument may with due caution be permissibly advanced. See, for example, *R. v. Monardo* [2005] VSCA 115 at [4].” And at Vincent JA said:

“Like Callaway JA, I acknowledge that whilst there may be some situations in which assistance can be derived from a consideration of the sentence that would have been appropriate in the absence of mitigating circumstances, to embark upon such an exercise would rarely be helpful and, in any event, would need to be approached with care. In this case, what counsel for the appellant endeavoured to do was to ascribe to the mitigating factors a particular value measured in years of imprisonment and say that, allowing for them, a sentence of specific length would otherwise have been ordered. As Chernov, J.A. pointed out, to do so runs quite counter to the approach which has been adopted in this Court for a number of years.”

In *R v Flaherty (No.2)* [2008] VSC 270 at [8] Kaye J held that it was not the intention of s.6AAA of the *Sentencing Act 1991* [as amended] – which like s.362A of the CYFA requires a court to quantify a sentencing discount for a plea of guilty in certain circumstances – “to abrogate, in its entirety, the fundamental approach to sentencing, as an ‘instinctive synthesis’ of all relevant circumstances”. However, his Honour went on to discuss at [9]-[15] the practical difficulties of applying s.6AAA while still holding true to the concept of an “instinctive synthesis” in sentencing.

Other cases involving a discussion of instinctive synthesis include *R v Bangard* [2005] VSCA 313 at [20] per Eames JA; *R v Mladenov* [2006] VSCA 246 at [4]-[5] per King AJA with whom Ashley JA & Smith AJA agreed; *R v Eastham* [2008] VSCA 67 at [11]-[12] per Buchanan JA with whom Neave JA & Lasry AJA agreed; *R v Johnston* [2008] VSCA 133 at [16] per Nettle JA with whom Buchanan & Ashley JJA agreed; *R v Hasan* [2010] VSCA 352 at [47] per Maxwell P, Redlich & Harper JJA; *R v Trajkovski & Waters* [2011] VSCA 170 at [44]-[93] per Weinberg JA (with whom Ashley JA & Hargrave AJA agreed); *Muldrock v The Queen* [2011] HCA 39; (2011) 244 CLR 120 at [28]; *Adkins v The King* [2023] VSCA 23 at [37]-[51]; *Nuramin & Anor v The King* [2024] VSCA 117 at [57]-[58].

### **11.3.2 Use of sentencing statistics and sentencing snapshots**

In *DPP v Ross* (2006) 166 A Crim R 97, 104 Maxwell P said that consistency “in sentencing is absolutely fundamental to public confidence in the criminal justice system. It is also a basic requirement of the rule of law.” It is therefore legitimate to consider the sentences imposed in other cases: see *DPP v TY (No 3)* [2007] VSC 489 at [66] per Bell J; *Shields v The Queen* [2011] VSCA 386 at [40] per Robson AJA.

In a schedule to the judgment of the Court of Appeal in *DPP v OPQ* [2012] VSCA 115 there are two tables detailing respectively:

* + six sentences imposed for possession and attempted possession of a marketable quantity of a border controlled drug contrary to s.307.6(1) of the Cth Criminal Code; and
  + 24 sentences imposed for importation and attempted importation of a marketable quantity of a border controlled drug contrary to s.307.2(1) of the Cth Criminal Code.

Neave JA (with whom Maxwell ACJ specifically agreed) stated at [39] that the “provision of information of this kind is particularly helpful when it is claimed that a sentence falls outside the range of sentences which can be imposed for a particular offence.”

However, in *R v McIntosh* [2005] VSCA 106 the Court of Appeal sounded a note of caution in relation to the use of sentencing statistics in determining the appropriate sentence in any particular case, and specifically in that case in determining the appropriate sentence on a count of attempted murder: At [10] Chernov JA, with whom Batt & Vincent JJA agreed, said:

“It has been often said by this Court that past sentences and sentencing statistics are, at best, only a guide because ‘no two cases are the same and ... the circumstances of particular offences and particular offenders are infinitely various, especially where multiple offences ... are concerned’: see *R v Young* [1990] VR 951 at 955 per Young CJ, Crockett and Nathan JJ. And, as Callaway JA said in *R v. Adajian* [1999] VSCA 105 at [28]:‘Sentences are not precedents which must be applied unless they can be distinguished, and the paramount duty of the court is to do justice in individual cases’. Moreover, the time is long gone since there has been any serious suggestion that there is a specific practical ceiling on the period of imprisonment that may be ordered for this crime: *R v Kasulaitis* [1998] VR 224 at 233 to 234, per Batt JA, with whom Phillips CJ and Callaway JA agreed. As the learned President said in *R v. Boaza* [1999] VSCA 126 at [48]*:* ‘There are no 'benchmarks' setting binding limits for the crime of attempted murder...’ This is unsurprising given that, as I have said, each case must be decided on its own facts and given the serious nature of the offence, in respect of which the maximum custodial sentence has been raised from 20 to 25 years.”

In *DPP v Ralph* [2007] VSCA 305 at [56] Coldrey AJA (with whom Maxwell P & Cavanough AJA agreed) said in sentencing the applicant for intentionally causing serious injury:

“The use of sentencing statistics of this nature provides a crude tool by which to measure the appropriateness of any individual sentence. It is trite to observe that such statistics provide no indication of the facts and circumstances relating to a specific offence and specific offender. In this regard, such material is of even more limited assistance than that sought to be derived by a comparison of individual cases. However, what those statistics make clear is that the sentencing range for this offence during the period cited varied from immediate custodial sentences to suspended sentences, intensive correction orders and community based orders. See *DPP v Fevaleaki* (2006) 165 A Crim R 524; [2006] VSCA 212 at [19]-[20].”

In *R v Bangard* (2005) 13 VR 146; [2005] VSCA 313 Buchanan & Nettle JJA also referred to the limited value of sentencing statistics but were a little more positive. At [39]-[40] Nettle JA said:

“Apart from the inherent limitations of sentencing statistics [*R v Simon Milne Snowden* Unreported, Appeal Division, 22/3/94, at 6; *R v Papazisis and Bird* (1991) 51 A Crim R. 242 at 245; Fox & Freiberg, *Sentencing, State and Federal Law in Victoria*, 2nd ed. at [12.214]], those which are put forward imply that a number of judges in recent years have given insufficient weight to the increase in the maximum sentence for manslaughter, from 15 years to 20 years, which was implemented with effect from September 1997…So to say is not to ignore the importance of consistency in sentencing. If a sentence is higher than any other in statistics furnished to a court of criminal appeal, it goes without saying that it is a matter which calls for scrutiny [*The Queen v Bugmy* (1990) 169 CLR 525 at 538.] That is why trial judges should and do take sentencing statistics into account. But if upon analysis a sentence accommodates all of the criteria to which a sentencing judge must have regard, including the maximum sentence set by Parliament, the fact that the sentence may range above the current practice is not a basis to disturb it. [cf. *R v Josefski* [2005] VSCA 265 at [83], per Chernov JA].

At [11] Buchanan JA said:

“Sentencing statistics may be of limited value, for each sentence involves a unique synthesis of diverse factors stemming from the circumstances of the crime and the character and antecedents of the offender. Nevertheless, statistics may provide guidance by showing general trends in sentencing. In *R. v. Giordano* [1998] 1 VR 544 at 549 Winneke, P. said:

‘However, a general overview of the sentences imposed by courts over a substantial period for offences of a similar character must inevitably play its part in provoking the instinctive reaction of any court which is asked to consider whether a particular sentence is manifestly excessive or manifestly inadequate.’

His Honour was speaking of appellate courts, but in my view sentencing statistics may equally benefit judges imposing sentences at first instance.”

However, at [27]-[29] Eames JA spoke positively of the statistical analysis of 93 sentences for manslaughter which had been produced by counsel on the appeal: “I found the material very helpful, albeit in a ‘broad-brush’ way.” And at [31]-[32] & [34] His Honour gave unqualified approval to a trial judge’s use of statistics:

[31] “Computer data bases such as those of the Victorian Sentencing Manual (available to the public on the website of the Judicial College of Victoria) and of the Sentencing Advisory Council are very valuable research tools. The website of the Sentencing Advisory Council is also linked to a number of additional sites, both in Victoria and nationally, which also provide statistical information concerning sentencing.

[32] It is to be borne in mind that upon reserving to consider a sentencing decision a judge can conduct his or her own research on sentencing practices whether by consulting sentencing text books, decided cases or by searching relevant data bases…

[34] In my opinion the Courts should not discourage counsel from providing such practical assistance as [counsel] has demonstrated could have been provided to the judge in this case. The judge made it clear that he was inviting assistance in the exercise of his task; he was not inviting counsel to usurp his role.”

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In *Hasan v The Queen* (2010) 31 VR 28; [2010] VSCA 352 at [46] Maxwell P, Redlich & Harper JJA conceded that sentencing statistics and sentencing snapshots have “a part to play; but they must be used with their limitations in mind.” At [45]-[47] their Honours explained why and also explained how such statistics and snapshots are to be used and how they dovetail with the “instinctive synthesis”:

[45] “Tables or graphs showing average or mean sentences across the full spectrum from the statutory maximum to nothing, while important, will also be of limited use because they cannot of themselves identify the appropriate range for an offence of the particular gravity of that for which the particular offender is to be punished. Indeed, their limitations are conveyed by the description given to them by the Sentencing Advisory Council of Victoria as ‘snapshots’.

[46] The tables, therefore, have a part to play; but they must be used with their limitations in mind. As to the limitations in using comparable cases, this Court said in *Hudson v The Queen* [2010] VSCA 332 at [32]:

‘To undertake and utilise a comparative analysis, whether at first instance or on appeal, in an attempt to identify a sentence in a “like” case that is a fair comparison, is calculated to introduce a level of mathematical precision inimical to the instinctive synthesis. Where the parity principle is not enlivened, recourse to other cases is not undertaken to strike some equality with another particular sentence. Consistency is to be achieved by the application of the appropriate range and not from the application of single instances of “like” cases. The adoption of a sentence selected by an earlier court, even if the case is very similar, would be to sacrifice the proper exercise of judicial discretion in pursuit of consistency of sentencing.’

[47] Following an appropriate study of comparable cases, together with the application of the relevant sentencing principles, the judge will be in a position to identify the boundaries marking the range within which the particular sentence must fall. Up to this point, the exercise will have been a largely objective one, but with an element of the subjective introduced by the process of instinctive synthesis without which the case for which, and the offender upon whom, the sentence is to be imposed cannot be assessed. Beyond the point at which the boundaries are identified, however, the judge must exercise his or her discretion in deciding where within the range the particular sentence should fall.”

In *R v McNeill & Brown/Piggott* [2008] VSCA 190 at [130] Buchanan JA reiterated his qualified approval of the use of sentencing statistics and explained how they could most appropriately be used:

“In my opinion, counsel can best assist a sentencing judge, not by advancing what they consider to be sentences at the lower or upper limits of a sound sentencing discretion, but by making submissions as to the existence and nature of aggravating and mitigating circumstances and providing some guide to the manner in which other judges have approached like cases by supplying sentencing statistics and citing passages from decided cases which bear upon aspects of the instant case. The synthesis of the raw material is the task of the sentencing judge, not counsel.”

In their joint judgment in *R v AB (No 2)* [2008] VSCA 39 at [42] Warren CJ, Maxwell P & Redlich JA were generally supportive of the use of sentencing statistics as an aid to the “instinctive synthesis”:

“Though sentencing statistics have ‘inherent limitations’ {R v Bangard (2005) 13 VR 146. 153 [39] (Nettle JA)} and are of limited assistance {*R v Musson* [1997] 1 VR 656, 660; *DPP v Josefski* (2005) 13 VR 85, 105-6 [83] (Chernov JA)}, it is generally accepted now that they provide useful guidance as to general trends in sentencing. Such information must ‘inevitably play its part in provoking the instinctive reaction of any court’ {*R v Giordano* [1998] 1 VR 544, 549 (Winneke P)}, whether in imposing, or reviewing, a sentence {*R v Bangard* (2005) 13 VR 146, [11] (Buchanan JA), [23] (Eames JA)}. Such information provides an extremely useful aid in achieving uniformity of sentence for a particular category of crime {*R* *v Zakaria* (1984) 12 A Crim R 386, 388 (Crockett J)}.”

However, in *R v Rowlands* [2007] VSCA 14 at [13] Eames JA outlined some of the limitations of statistics relating to sentencing trends for armed robbery published by the Sentencing Advisory Council and which showed the average head sentence to be 3y 9m and the average non-parole period to be 2y 2m:

“Useful as such statistics are, whether they relate to median or average sentences imposed on offenders, there are limitations to them. They cannot tell us, for example, what would be the sentencing range for persons such as this offender, who could not claim youth in his favour for sentencing and who had multiple very serious prior convictions for violence and dishonesty, which offences in some cases resulted in sentences of imprisonment.”

And in *R v Vandenberg* [2009] VSCA 9 at [27] Nettle JA was quite scathing about the utility of sentencing statistics:

“Statistical reference to the most common length of actual sentence imposed is seldom much of assistance, and in this case I think largely irrelevant. To state the obvious, each case depends upon its own facts and circumstances and, critically in a case of this kind, upon the effects on the victim of the offence.”

In *DPP v Rickerby (No 2)* [2024] VSC 334 the offender had belatedly pleaded guilty to manslaughter of his domestic partner by unlawful and dangerous act. Citing dicta of Dodds-Streeton JA, with whom Weinberg JA and Williams AJA agreed, Elliott J noted at footnote 32 that “Generally speaking, the utility of sentencing statistics in respect to manslaughter is limited because the range of culpability is so wide: see *R v Jagroop* (2009) 2 VR 80, 85-86 [35]-[37].”

See also *R v Joan Mary Walsh* [2006] VSCA 87 at [28]-[32] per Neave JA; *R v Winter* [2006] VSCA 144 at [57] per Maxwell P; *R v Detenamo* [2007] VSCA 160 at [13]; *R v Casey* [2008] VSCA 53 at [56]-[60]; *R v Parker* [2009] VSCA 19 at [44]; *Alavy v The Queen* [2014] VSCA 25 at [24]; *Hili v The Queen* (2010) 242 CLR 520; *Barbaro v The Queen* [2014] HCA 2.

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### **11.3.3 The Sex Offenders Registration Act 2004 and its relevance to sentencing**

The *Sex Offenders Registration Act 2004* came into operation on 01/10/2004. Section 1(1) states that the purpose of the Act is:

(a) to require certain offenders who commit sexual offences to keep police informed of their whereabouts and other personal details for a period of time-

(i) to reduce the likelihood that they will re-offend; and

(ii) to facilitate the investigation and prosecution of any future offences that they may commit;

(b) to prevent registered sex offenders working in child-related employment.

By providing for the establishment of a Register of Sex Offenders, the Act requires certain offenders who are, or have been, sentenced for registrable offences, to report specified personal details to police for inclusion in the Register. Such offenders must then report annually to police, unless there is a change in their personal details beforehand, in which case such change must also be reported. Under s.46, failure to comply with any reporting obligations without a reasonable excuse is an offence for which the maximum penalty is level 6 imprisonment (5 years maximum).

The Act has application to both adult and juvenile offenders, albeit to a much more restricted class of juvenile offenders. Save for the uncommon cases referred to in s.6(2) of a corresponding registrable offender or a New South Wales registrable offender, it appears from ss.6-11 that the Act does not apply to a person sentenced under the CYFA, the CYPA or the *Sentencing Act 1991* for an offence committed as a child unless-

* the person has been sentenced for a Class 1 or Class 2 offence (listed in Schedules 1 & 2 respectively); and
* the Court has imposed a fine, probation, YSO, YAO or detention under the CYFA or CYPA or a sentencing order under the *Sentencing Act 1991*; and
* the Court is satisfied beyond reasonable doubt that the child poses a risk to the sexual safety of one or more persons or of the community; for this purpose it is not necessary that the court be able to identify a risk to particular people, or to a particular class of people.

It appears from ss.11(2) & 11(3) that a court sentencing a person for a Class 1 or Class 2 offence committed as a child has a discretion whether or not to make a sex offender registration order but may make such an order only if it is satisfied beyond reasonable doubt that the child poses a risk to the sexual safety of one or more persons or of the community. An instructive case is *Victoria Police v MA* [2011] VChC7. The 17 year old offender – who had no prior criminal history – pleaded guilty to assault with intent to rape, stalking and rape, the three offences being committed over a 27 day period. On the charge of rape a magistrate had sentenced him to YJC 9m. In the course of deciding whether MA should be subject to the reporting requirements of the Act, her Honour referred to the decision of the Court of Appeal in *RJE v The Secretary to the Department of Justice, Attorney-General for the State of Victoria and Victorian Human Rights Commission* [2008] VSCA 265 where Maxwell P & Weinberg JA stated at [16]:

“Predicting whether a particular person will commit a criminal offence in the future is notoriously difficult…the making of such a prediction in a particular case requires expertise in observation and assessment of those who commit offences of a particular type, and a detailed knowledge of the types of factors, both personal and environmental, which increase or reduce the risk of further offending.”

Her Honour also noted that in *RJE* at [24] Maxwell P & Weinberg JA had cited with approval dicta of Denning LJ in *Miller v Minister of Pensions* [1974] 2 All ER 372 at 373-374 in relation to the criminal standard of proof beyond reasonable doubt:

“It need not reach certainty, but it must carry a high degree of probability. Proof beyond reasonable doubt must not mean proof beyond a shadow of doubt. The law would fail to protect the community if it admitted fanciful possibilities to deflect the course of justice. If the evidence is so strong against a man as to leave only a remote possibility in his favour which can be dismissed with the sentence ‘of course it is possible, but not in the least probable’, the case is proved beyond reasonable doubt but nothing short of that will suffice.”

Her Honour held that the word “risk” in s.11(3) means “a real or appreciable risk” for the following reasons:

“(1) It is not mandatory for young offenders to be registered. Accordingly, in order to give effect to and not undermine the exercise of a discretion, it must be more than a statistical risk which necessarily arises upon a person having been found guilty of a registrable offence.

(2) Such an interpretation would be consistent with the acknowledgement by Parliament of the rehabilitative prospects of young offenders.”

Applying this test to the evidence – including the evidence of a forensic and clinical psychologist LB – her Honour was “satisfied beyond reasonable doubt that the respondent poses a risk, a real risk, to the sexual safety of the community”. Accordingly she ordered that MA be subject to the reporting requirements of the Act for a period of 7½ years. See also *Bowden v The Queen* [2013] VSCA 382 at [30]-[54]; *Singh v The Queen* [2013] VSCA 300 at [44]-[54]; *Sayer v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 177 at [84]-[114].

Section 34 of the Act sets the length of reporting period for an adult registrable offender as follows:

(a) 8 years if he or she has only ever been found guilty of a single Class 2 offence; or

(b) 15 years if he or she has only ever been found guilty of a single Class 1 offence or of two Class 2 offences; or

(c) life if he or she has been found guilty of-

* 2 or more Class 1 offences; or
* a single offence referred to in item 2 of Schedule 1; or
* a Class 1 offence and one or more Class 2 offences; or
* 3 or more Class 2 offences.

Section 35 provides that the reporting period for a juvenile registrable offender is half that for an adult (or 7½ years in a case where an adult would be required to report for life).

In *DPP v Ellis* [2005] VSCA 105 Callaway JA, with whom Batt & Buchanan JJA agreed, said:

[16] “As a general rule…an offender’s reporting obligations under the *Sex Offenders Registration Act* are irrelevant. Parliament has decided that that persons sentenced for particular offences constitute a class in relation to whom such obligations are appropriate. They are an incident of the sentence. It would unduly burden the sentencing process if judges were required to take them into account, any more than if they were required to take into account other ordinary incidents of the criminal justice system. An exception should be recognized only where the reporting obligations operate with unusual severity on a particular offender. In other words, they are relevant to sentencing only in exceptional circumstances. Like Brooking JA in *R v Stevens* [1999] VSCA 173 at [10], a case concerned with s.31(5A) of the *Sentencing Act*, I would be reluctant to see ‘a jurisprudence of exceptional circumstances’ develop for this purpose.

[17] The prohibition on taking part in child-related employment will usually be irrelevant too, but there will be occasions where it should be taken into account. The present case is an example: compare *Ryan v R* (2001) 206 CLR 267 at 285 [54] per McHugh J. The respondent was a qualified school teacher with some 12 years’ experience who had been actively involved in voluntary activities. The loss of her career and her exclusion from those activities should be taken into account.”

See also *R v Fidler* [2006] VSCA 17 at [14]-[17] per Charles JA; *WBM v Chief Commissioner of Police* [2012] VSCA 159*.*

In *Chan v The Queen* [2006] VSCA 125 at [17] Nettle JA noted that the regard which a sentencing judge might have to the effects of a sex offenders registration order in determining the requirements of general deterrence and community protection was now foreclosed by s.5(2BC) of the *Sentencing Act 1991*, enacted after the decision in *DPP v Elllis* and providing: “In sentencing an offender a court must not have regard to any consequences that may arise under the *Sex Offenders Registration Act 2004* from the imposition of the sentence." However, as the *Sentencing Act 1991* does not directly apply to juveniles sentenced under the CYFA, it may be that the principles in *DPP v Ellis* are still applicable in the Children’s Court.

For a discussion of whether an informant can make a second application for an order under the *Sex Offenders Registration Act 2004* see *Kostiuk v KH (a pseudonym)* [2024] VSC 586 at [78]-[87].

In *Re GH* [2024] VSC 216 the applicant GH, then aged 20 had been presented in the County Court on three counts of sexual penetration of KL, a (female) child under 16. The offences were committed in the course of a consensual sexual relationship between the two when KL was aged 15 and GH was aged between 19 and 20. KL did not want GH charged, and she declined to make a statement to police. But GH largely made the case against himself by his admissions to police, and he pleaded guilty. The judge released GH, without conviction, on an adjourned undertaking to be of good behaviour for 12 months. As a result of those findings of guilt, by operation of the *Sex Offenders Registration Act 2004* (Vic), GH became a “registrable offender” subject to reporting obligations for the rest of his life. Over 15 years later GH – by then aged 36 – filed an application pursuant to s.39(2) of the Act, for an order suspending his reporting obligations permanently. This was the first application of its kind in Victoria. The applicant had no prior or subsequent convictions, other than a minor breach of reporting obligations. He was now married with children, stable employment and a supportive wife and employers. Croucher J was satisfied, in accordance with s.40(2) of the Act, that the applicant “poses no risk or a low risk to the sexual safety of any member of the community” and that “it is in the public interest to suspend [the applicant’s] reporting obligations” for the remainder of the applicant’s life.

See also *Re AJ (a pseudonym)* [2024] VSC 769; *WJH v Chief Commissioner of Police* [2024] VSC 818; *GT v Chief Commissioner of Police* [2024] VSC 824; *RBC v Chief Commissioner of Police* [2025] VSC 10; *Walton v Chief Commissioner of Police* [2025] VSC 231; *DH (a pseudonym) v Chief Commissioner of Police* [2025] VSC 380.

### **11.3.4 Power to direct that time held in detention before trial be reckoned as already served**

In ss.18 & 35 of the *Sentencing Act 1991* a court sentencing a person to imprisonment or YJC pursuant to that Act is given express power to reckon as already served a period during which the person was held in custody before trial in relation to proceedings for any offences for which sentence was passed or proceedings arising from those proceedings.

Sections 411(5) & 413(1) of the CYFA import into the CYFA the powers which a sentencing court has under s.35 of the *Sentencing Act 1991* when imposing imprisonment or adult YJC. Thus if a court sentences a young person to YRC or YJC under the CYFA, that court has statutory power to reckon as already served a period during which the person was held in custody before trial in relation to proceedings for any offences for which sentence was passed or proceedings arising from those proceedings.

In addition, a court sentencing a young person to YRC or YJC under the CYFA has power, as part of the exercise of a sentencing discretion quite distinct from the s.35 power, to take account, in the defendant’s favour, a period during which he or she was held in custody before trial unless it is wholly unrelated to proceedings for the offences for which sentence is passed.

In *R v Arts and Briggs* [1998] 2 VR 261 at 264 the Court of Appeal referred with approval to dicta of Lord Bingham of Cornhill CJ in *R v Governor of Brockhill Prison; Ex parte Evans* [1997] QB 443 at 462 [emphasis added]:

“It has in our experience been the practice to assume that all periods of custody before sentence, other than custody *wholly unrelated* to the offences for which sentence is passed, will count against the period of the sentence to be served.”

Applying this dictum and dicta from *R v Heaney* [Court of Appeal, unreported, 27/03/1996] and *R v Renzella* [1997] 2 VR 88, the Court of Appeal deducted from the head sentence a period that took account of the period of time the appellants’ detention was “doubly warranted”. The outcome was similar in *R v Giakoumogianakis* [2005] VSCA 156. The appellant had been kept in custody for “other offences” in respect of which he was ultimately acquitted. He had been on bail for the offences in respect of which he was sentenced and no application had been made to revoke that bail when he was taken into custody on the “other offences”. Hence that “period wasted” was not capable of being declared under s.18 of the *Sentencing Act*. The Crown conceded it was appropriate that “some adjustment to the sentence be made for the unwarranted time spent in custody”. Winneke ACJ, with whom Ormiston JA agreed, approved at [6] dicta of Callaway JA in *R v Kotzmann* [1999] 2 VR 123 at 137:

“There can be no question of a person on remand who is subsequently acquitted acquiring a kind of bank balance on which to draw in relation to subsequent offences unconnected with the reason for custody: see *R v Arts and Briggs* [1998] 2 VR 261 at 264; but sentencing involves a very wide discretion and the matters [relating to unconnected time in custody] are important parts of the applicant’s background. We are entitled to take them into account and to temper the sense of injustice that he entertains.”

At [7], while cautioning against regarding the outcome as a precedent, the majority in *Giakoumogianakis’ Case* considered it “appropriate to make some adjustment to take account of the time spent in prison which…was unwarranted for reasons not the fault of the applicant”.

The rationale for the deduction of ‘dead time’ – namely time spent in custody in respect of unrelated matters of which the prisoner was later acquitted or in relation to which his or her sentence was reduced – was neatly spelt out by the Court of Appeal in *Thurlow v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 71. The sentencing judge had declined to take the ‘dead time’ spent by the appellant into account because she considered – for reasons which the Court of Appeal found ‘difficult to discern’ – that the appellant had made a ‘conscious tactical choice’ not to apply to have his bail revoked when he was remanded in respect of other charges. Priest & Kaye JJA said that “the failure of the judge to do so not only was an error of law, but resulted in an unfair and unjust sentence being imposed on the appellant”. At [41]‑[42] their Honours said [emphasis added]:

“In *Renzella* [1997] 2 VR 88, 96-97 (Winneke P, Charles & Callaway JJA), the Court recognised that when an offender, who is to be sentenced, has been in custody for a period which does not qualify as pre-sentence detention under s.18(4) of the *Sentencing Act*, the sentencing court is **‘not only empowered but obliged as a matter of justice’ to take that period into account** as a mitigating circumstance. See also *R v Stares* (2002) 4 VR 314, 323 [27]; [2002] VSCA 70 (Charles JA).

The authorities make it clear that the manner in which the ‘dead time’ is to be taken into account is not a mathematical exercise. {See e.g. *Karpinski v The Queen* (2011) 32 VR 85; [2011] VSCA 94 per Tate JA at [60]}. In other words, that factor does not entitle an offender, in each case, to a reduction in sentence that is identical to the ‘dead time’ already spent by the offender in custody. However, it is important to bear in mind that the principle reflects a recognition, in an appropriate case, that, in addition to the sentence which is to be imposed, the offender has already spent a period in custody which could not otherwise be treated as part of a sentence served by that offender for a different offence for which the offender has been convicted. In that way, **the principle is based on fundamental considerations of fairness, as well as on the principle of totality**.”

In *Tufue v The King* [2024] VSCA 22 the Court of Appeal (Beach & Macaulay JJA) discussed the *Renzella* principles at [39] & [43] as follows:

[39] “Pursuant to principles recognised in *R v Renzella* (1997) 2 VR 88, time spent in custody which cannot be declared as pre-sentence detention within the meaning of s 18 of the *Sentencing Act* — sometimes referred to as ‘dead time’ or ‘*Renzella* time’ — may be treated as time served, in a general sense, while awaiting trial on the charge for which the offender is about to be sentenced. *Renzella* time may be taken into account ‘in a broad way’ in the exercise of the sentencing discretion: *Renzella* at 96; see also *R v Berry* (2007) 17 VR 153, 187; [2007] VSCA 202 at [115]-[116]. In sentencing the applicant, the judge indicated that he would take the 450 days into account, ‘totally’, when fixing an appropriate sentence.”

[43] …the judge plainly took into account the dead time the applicant spent in custody pursuant to *Renzella* principles. Such time is to be taken into account in a broad way and not as some sort of ‘mathematical exercise’: *R v Berry* (2007) 17 VR 153; [2007] VSCA 202 at [115]…”

At [31] their Honours stated that “the calculation of pre-sentence detention has no bearing on the determination of the appropriate sentence. As this Court explained in *DPP v TY (No 2)* (2009) 24 VR 705; [2009] VSCA 226 at [53]:

*‘*The appropriate sentence is arrived at by the application of conventional sentencing principles to the circumstances of the case. It is only after the sentence has been determined — and pronounced — that the question of PSD arises.’

See also *WCB v The Queen* [2010] VSCA 230 at [58]-[59].”

For further judicial discussion of the concept of deduction of ‘dead time’ see *Warwick v The Queen* [2010] VSCA 166; *R v Wade* [2005] VSCA 276 at [11]-[12]; *R v Chimirri* [2003] VSCA 45 at [4]; *R v Orphanides* (2002) 130 A Crim R 403; *R v Greenslade* [2004] VSCA 213 at [31]; *R v Sheen* [2005] VSCA 296 at [7]; *R v Smith* [2006] VSCA 23 at [8]; *R v Watts & Black* [2007] VSCA 81; *R v Black* [2007] VSCA 82; *R v Harvey* [2007] VSCA 127; *R v Strezovski* [2007] VSCA 260; *R v Barrett* [2010] VSCA 133 at [39]-[53]; *R v Broad* [1999] 3 VR 31; *R v Ciantar and Rose* [2010] VSCA 313; *R v Wheldon* [2011] VSCA 83 at [18]-[26]; *R v Cook* [2011] VSCA 187 at [12]; *R v Gavanas* [2013] VSCA 178 at [102]-[105]; *Akoka v The Queen* [2017] VSCA 214 at [109]-[112]; *Pang v R* [2019] VSCA 56; *DPP v Roberts (Sentence)* [2022] VSC 532 at [63]‑[64]; *Tambakakis v The King* [2023] VSCA 36; *Sengul v The King* [2023] VSCA 63 at [36]-[42]; *Seiler v The King* [2023] VSCA 207; *Sozmen v The King* [2023] VSCA 215 at [25]-[40].

In *Underwood (a Pseudonym) v R (No 2)* [2018] VSCA 87 at [37] the Court of Appeal concluded that a person should have his or her time spent in immigration detention taken into account in a “broad and practical way” in the assessment of the sentence. Without further elucidating the phrase, the Court affirmed the general principle that “delay intervening between the offending and final resolution of criminal proceedings can, in recognised circumstances, be a significant factor going in mitigation of sentence”. See also *Babar v the Queen* [2022] VSCA 122 at [25]-[29]; *Buddle v The Queen* [2014] VSCA 232 at [42]; *Kenyeres v The King* [2023] VSCA 25 at [57]-[69].

In *R v Sahhitanandan* [2018] VSC 550 the accused had pleaded guilty to a charge of dangerous driving causing serious injury. The victim had sustained significant and enduring injuries. Champion J had categorised the offence as “mid to upper level of seriousness”. The accused had spent 104 days on remand before being bailed. Then he was immediately taken into immigration detention where he remained for 527 days before being remanded back into prison custody for a period of 62 days. In imposing a sentence of IMP 2y3m/1y6m, his Honour said:

* at [49]: “[T]he period of immigration detention is not calculable as pre-sentence detention for the purposes of s 18(1) of the *Sentencing Act 1991*.”
* at [50]: “[E]ach day of that period of immigration detention should not result in a numerically equivalent reduction in the sentence…The period of immigration detention is nevertheless relevant to the assessment of sentence.”
* at [54]-[55]: “[I]t is appropriate to consider immigration detention in the overall intuitive synthesis of the sentencing process, rather than declaring a pre-sentence detention period to be deducted after the sentence is imposed…[T]he period spent in immigration detention should be regarded as a significant factor in mitigation of the head sentence and non-parole periods to be imposed.”

In [2019] VSCA 115 the Court of Appeal allowed an appeal by the accused on a narrow ground, stating at [37] that Champion J was in error in holding that the accused was in immigration detention for a reason not related to the proceeding. The appellant was resentenced to IMP 1y10m/1y3m. At [31]-[36] Priest, McLeish & Weinberg JJA stated-

[31] “Although there is a connection in the present case between the custody in immigration detention and the offence, the connection with the proceedings for the offence is too tenuous or remote to satisfy the statutory test. Custody in immigration detention is not brought about as part of the proceedings for the offence and does not have the conduct of those proceedings as its objective. Immigration detention exists in the context of executive powers to receive, investigate and determine applications for visas and to admit or deport applicants once the application is determined, and as such is lawful for that purpose alone and not for any punitive purpose: see, eg, *Chu Kheng Lim v Minister for Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs* (1992) 176 CLR 1 at 10, 32, 50 & 71 (McHugh J); *AlKateb v Goodwin* (2004) 219 CLR 562 at 571–3, 582, 584, 604-5, 636 & 638; *Falzon v Minister for Immigration and Border Protection* (2018) 262 CLR 333 at 341, 343, 346, 355–6 & 359.

[32] The question is then, what account is to be taken of a period spent in immigration detention? As already noted, it was held in *Underwood* that the fact of such detention must be recognised in a ‘broad and practical way’ in the sentence imposed, reflecting the fact that the offender has been deprived of his or her liberty during the relevant period: *Underwood* [2018] VSCA 87 [37] (Priest and McLeish JJA). That formulation drew upon the judgment of Brooking JA (with whom Winneke P and Hampel AJA agreed) in *R v Heaney* (Victorian Court of Appeal, 27 March 1996 at 6) where a period in remand which was outside the terms of an earlier version of s.18(1) was taken into account ‘in a broad way’: [2018] VSCA 87 [34]–[35]. See also *R v Renzella* [1997] 2 VR 88, 96, 98 (Winneke P, Charles and Callaway JJA) (‘*Renzella*’).

[33] The Court in *Underwood* referred also to *Akoka v The Queen* [2017] VSCA 214 (Warren CJ, Kyrou and Redlich JJA) where this Court gave credit for time spent in a residential rehabilitation facility. In the course of doing so, the Court explained how the question should be approached at [109]-[112] as follows:

‘Self-evidently, it is in the community’s interest that offenders — particularly young offenders with substance abuse problems — seek assistance from residential rehabilitation facilities and complete the rigorous treatment programs that they offer. Offenders will be encouraged to seek residential treatment if it is understood that sentencing judges will acknowledge, and give credit for, the punitive nature of residency in such a facility. The extent of that credit will depend on the circumstances of each case, including the nature and severity of the restrictions to which an offender has been subject and the duration of the offender’s residency. Clearly, the period of residency must post-date the commission of the offences for which the offender is being sentenced. Further, a period of residency cannot be doubly credited. Thus, where the offender is sentenced on different occasions for separate offences following a period of residency, credit for that period can be given on only one of those occasions.

The credit referred to … will, as with all other sentencing discounts, form part of the application of the instinctive synthesis without being numerically identified. However, as with other significant sentencing considerations, a sentencing judge should ordinarily explain how the punitive nature of residency at a rehabilitation facility has informed — in terms of the weight assigned to it — the instinctive synthesis.

Although residency at a rehabilitation facility has punitive elements, credit for it cannot be given in the same way as pre-sentence detention. Presentence detention involves time spent in custody and, in accordance with s 18(1) of the *Sentencing Act 1991*, it must be deducted from a custodial sentence in a precise mathematical manner for the entire period the offender has spent in detention. On the other hand, residence at a rehabilitation facility, no matter how restrictive and punitive, is not equivalent to time spent in custody. It will not ordinarily result in a deduction of the entire period of residency from a custodial sentence.

For these reasons, residency at a rehabilitation facility is also different in nature to *Renzella* time. Although *Renzella* time is actual time spent in custody, it falls outside s 18 of the *Sentencing Act 1991*. As *Renzella* time is real incarceration it will usually be given greater weight than time spent in a residential rehabilitation facility.’

[34] Several aspects of this reasoning are applicable to the case of immigration detention. First, the extent of the credit will depend on the circumstances of each case, including the nature and severity of the restrictions to which an offender has been subject and the duration of the detention. Secondly, the period of detention must post-date the commission of the offence for which the offender is being sentenced. Thirdly, the credit will form part of the application of the instinctive synthesis without being numerically identified. Fourthly, however, the sentencing judge should clearly explain what weight has been given to a period of immigration detention. It is important that this be done in order to explain what might otherwise appear to be an unduly low sentence…

[36] Unlike time spent in a residential facility, immigration detention is time spent in custody. On the other hand, unlike residency at a rehabilitation facility, no part of the purpose of immigration detention is punitive. This may mean that in practice the burden of immigration detention is less onerous than the burden of incarceration in a prison. However, again, each case will depend upon its circumstances.”

In *Lefoe v The King* [2024] VSCA 131 the 27 year old applicant had been sentenced to a TES IMP 8y/5y6m on 4 charges of sexual penetration of a distantly related 12 year old child in which the offending had occurred in quick succession on a single occasion. He had served approximately 2y8m of immigration detention before conviction. The Court of Appeal, following *Underwood v The Queen [No 2]* [2018] VSCA 87 and *Sahhitanandan v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 115, held that the sentence did not adequately reflect the loss of liberty already suffered through immigration detention and allowed the appeal, imposing a TES IMP 6y6m/4y. At [47] & [51] McLeish & Niall JJA noted that:

* if it were not for the immigration detention of the appellant, no complaint could be made about the sentences imposed in this case; and
* while the exercise is not a mathematical one, when substantial account is taken of the time spent in immigration detention the TES imposed was manifestly excessive.

See also *Nuramin & Anor v The King* [2024] VSCA 117 at [32]-[40].

In *Brendan Lowell (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 134 the Court of Appeal (Priest & T Forrest JJA) said at [29]-[33]:

[29] “It is common ground that pre-sentence detention was miscalculated, as alleged in ground 4. Rather than the 512 days’ imprisonment declared, 543 days should have been declared. This does not amount to a sentencing error such as to reopen the sentencing discretion. This Court has held that this type of error ‘is not a sentencing error’: *Nov v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 11, [1]. It does not affect the validity of the sentencing discretion itself as a declaration of pre-sentence detention is not part of the sentence imposed but rather an official statement of time served under the sentence: *DPP v TY [No 2]* (2009) 24 VR 705; [2009] VSCA 226. We shall order that an adjustment be made to this declaration to reflect the true position.

[30] Insofar as the unrelated sentence is concerned (ground 1) the applicant contended that, despite the fact that the 220 days of the period on remand were for an unrelated sentence (affray), the judge was obliged to take into account this period of imprisonment in the applicant’s favour on sentence. The applicant complains that this 220-day period was ‘doubly warranted’ and was not taken into account by the judge.

[31] In *Wheldon v The Queen* (2011) 31 VR 297; [2011] VSCA 83, the prisoner whilst on remand for recklessly causing serious injury was required to serve a short sentence for an unrelated sentence. The court said at 300:

‘The sole ground of appeal in this Court in relation to which leave was granted raises the question of the discretion recognised in *R v Renzella* [1997] 2 VR 88. In *Renzella*, Winneke P, Charles and Callaway JJA, in a joint judgment, followed the approach of Brooking JA in *Heaney’s case* (Unreported, Supreme Court of Victoria, 27 March 1996) in recognising that at common law there was a discretion, when sentencing an offender, to take into account the offender’s detention in custody in circumstances where the detention was ‘warranted twice over’,31 by the offence in relation to which the instant sentence was imposed, and by unrelated offending.

The discretion permitted the sentencing judge to take that detention into account ‘in a broad way’ by reducing the head sentence and non-parole period. This was so despite the fact that this could not be taken into account under what was then s 18(1) of the *Sentencing Act 1991* …’

[32] In *El-Waly v The Queen* (2012) 46 VR 656; [2012] VSCA 184, the Court took a slightly different approach. Whilst accepting that time spent in custody for an unrelated sentence, whilst on remand for a particular offence, should be taken into account when sentencing for the particular offence it was preferable to take it into account under the umbrella of totality, rather than under the *Renzella* discretion. The Court said at [111]:

‘We would have thought that this case, where the appellant was on remand for the current offences, while at the same time serving a term of imprisonment for another offence which cannot be claimed as presentence detention under s 18, raises an issue of totality, rather than calling for the application of *Renzella:* Cf *Karpinski* [2011] VSCA 94, [70]–[75]. We note however, that in *Wheldon v The Queen* the Crown conceded that such a period should be treated as *Renzella* time. In *Wheldon*, the Court accepted that concession.’

See also *R v Boyd* [2002] VSCA 102, [21]–[25]; *McElroy v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 126, [191] (‘McElroy’).

[33] In our view it was incumbent upon the trial judge to take account of this 220-day period in the applicant’s favour on sentence, regardless of whether it is considered under the principle of totality, or as some variant of ‘*Renzella* time’. For our part we consider it to be more appropriate to consider it under the umbrella of totality and to be evaluated in the broad way applied in *Boyd*, *El-Waly* and *McElroy*.”

### **11.3.5 Exercise of mercy**

In *R v Leach* [2003] VSCA 96 at [48]-[49]; (2003) 139 A Crim R 64 at 74 Eames JA – with whom Vincent JA agreed - said of the Court of Appeal:

[48] “It is particularly important that this court should not devalue or deny the right of a sentencing judge to act mercifully in a case where it seems to the judge to be an instance where an opportunity for reformation of an offender ought be grasped. That, after all, may be a decision which redounds very much to the benefit of the community.

[49] Thus, I acknowledge the very important right of a sentencing judge to extend leniency in a case which seems to him or her to be appropriate, and to do so even if it is difficult to identify precisely what it is about the offender which leads to that conclusion.”

In *R v Markovic & Pantelic* (2010) 30 VR 589; [2010] VSCA 105 Maxwell P, Nettle, Neave, Redlich & Weinberg JJA said at [1]:

[1] “There must always be a place in sentencing for the exercise of mercy ‘where a judge’s sympathies are reasonably excited by the circumstances of the case’: *R v Osenkowski* (1982) 30 SASR 212, 212–3 (King CJ). This is a proposition of long standing and high authority, repeatedly affirmed in this Court: *Cobiac v Liddy* (1969) 119 CLR 257, 269; *R v Kane* [1974] VR 759, 766; *R v Clarke* [1996] 2 VR 520, 523 (Charles JA, with whom Winneke P and Hayne JA agreed); *Director of Public Prosecutions (Cth)* *v Carter* [1998] 1 VR 601, 607 (Winneke P); *R v Miceli* [1998] 4 VR 588, 592 (Tadgell JA), 594 (Charles JA). For a recent example, see *DPP v Najjar* [2009] VSCA 246, [11].”

In *R v Osenkowski* (1982) 30 SASR 212 King CJ remarked that there always remains a place for leniency and mercy “when the judge forms the view, almost intuitively in the case of experienced judges, that leniency at that particular stage of the offender’s life might lead to reform”.

In *R v Hanh Lam; R v Thanh Thuan Tran* [2007] VSCA 246 Curtain AJA (with whom Buchanan & Chernov JJA agreed) exercised mercy in allowing the appeal of the first appellant and setting a non-parole period which ensured her immediate release from custody, saying at [8]:

“Accepting as I do that the appellant's incarceration in circumstances where she was the principal carer of her young family, and in particular her autistic child, and that that effects an undue hardship in particular to that child, I am satisfied that the exercise of mercy dictates that the appellant serve a non-parole period of nine months.”

In *DPP v King* [2008] VSCA 151 at [35] Redlich JA (with whom Warren CJ & Forrest AJA agreed) said of an “extremely lenient” 3y8m/1y9m sentence (described by Warren CJ at [6] as “merciful”) imposed on a respondent for culpable driving:

“Justice tempered by compassion required that the severe and permanent injuries sustained by the respondent in this act of criminality should ‘be regarded as some punishment for that criminality: *R v Barci and Asling* (1994) 76 A Crim R 103, 104 (Southwell, Hampel and Hansen JJ).”

See also *DPP v Michaela Snow (a pseudonym)* [2020] VSCA 67 at [80]-[89], esp. at [86] where Maxwell P, Beach JA & Crocuher AJA said:

“The existence of this discretion has been criticised, on the ground that its exercise is idiosyncratic and unpredictable. In our view, this criticism is unjustified. What is of vital importance about the discretion of mercy, in our view, is that its exercise is an expression or embodiment of the essential humanity of the sentencing process: *O’Neill* (2015) 47 VR 395, 410 [59]. It is a reminder that, in passing sentence on an offender, the judge is making a moral judgment on behalf of the community, within the framework of legal principle, as to the appropriate sentence for the individual offender, based on the judge’s assessment of the particular circumstances of the offending and of the offender’s own particular circumstances. Viewed in this way, the exercise of mercy is not qualitatively different from the other elements of the sentencing process, in which the judge has to evaluate and weigh up a whole range of considerations and where, as sentencing law accepts, reasonable minds can differ on the ultimate conclusion.”

In *DPP v Payne* [2023] VSC 286 – in imposing a sentence of IMP16y/10y after a jury verdict of guilty of murder of her husband in the circumstances detailed in **subsection 11.2.22.4** – Incerti J quoted the above dicta from *DPP v Snow* and said at [92]-[97] on the issue of mercy and parsimony-

[92] “I regard this as an unusual case and the sentence I will impose needs to reflect the circumstances. This is a case that calls out loudly for the exercise of the discretion of mercy, to reflect the underlying sense of humanity which guides proper sentencing. I think that an element of mercy is due to you because of the circumstances in which you offended.

[93] I consider the discretion of mercy an important factor in your case. The Court of Appeal has recently emphasised the importance of the role played by mercy in *DPP v Snow*…

[94] You were subjected to repeated acts of abuse, violence and humiliation at the hands of your husband. The fact that you murdered Mr Payne rather than flee can only be understood through the lens of the sustained family violence you had experienced. This was not an ordinary example of murder. This was not a dispassionate execution by a practised killer.

[95] Having weighed all the circumstances of this case, I consider that you are entitled to be afforded a very significant level of mercy consistent with the gravity and severity of your offending.

[96] I think your prospects of rehabilitation are excellent and that you are genuinely remorseful. Your claim for mercy is compelling. In the exceptional circumstances of your case, I propose to fix a lower head sentence. I have given full weight to the serious damage suffered by Mr Payne’s family, as exemplified in the family victim impact statements.

[97] Sentencing you is a difficult task. Notwithstanding the strong mitigating factors, it remains the fact that your actions resulted in the death of a person.”

See also *Payne v The King* [2024] VSCA 272 at [132]-[137].

In *DPP v Richardson* [2023] VSCA 241 the Court of Appeal dismissed a Crown appeal against a sentence of IMP4y/3y (cumulative on a sentence currently being served) on a charge of attempting to traffick in a large commercial quantity of a drug of dependence (1,4-BD) imposed on an offender who had suffered a stroke and had an acquired brain injury. In holding that the sentencing judge had not erred in application of the principle of mercy, Emerton P, Priest & Taylor JJA said at [92]:

“[W]e consider that it was open for the judge to exercise mercy on the facts before him. There are no metes or bounds on the exercise of mercy. This Court has observed that the exercise of mercy towards an offender forms an integral part of the sentencing discretion: *Leach* (2003) 139 A Crim R 64, 74 [49]. In *R v Clarke* [2003] VSCA 96; [1996] 2 VR 520, 523, Charles JA (with whom Winneke P and Hayne JA agreed) referred with approval to the observations of King CJ in *R v Osenkowski* (1982) 30 SASR 212, 212‑13 to the effect that the boundaries of a case in which the principle of mercy may apply are not fixed. This Court has also observed that sentencing judges have the ‘very important right’ to extend leniency to an offender in a case, ‘even if it is difficult to identify precisely what it is about the offender which leads to that conclusion’: *Leach* at [49].”

See also *DPP v Ramos, Delos Santos & Herasan* [2003] VSCA 215 at [38]; *DPP v Rzek* [2003] VSCA 97 at [33] per Eames JA and the dissenting judgment of Maxwell P in *R v Josefski* [2005] VSCA 265 at [33]-[34]; *DPP v Coley* [2007] VSCA 91 at [43]-[44] per Neave JA; *R v NAD* [2008] VSCA 192 at [3], [11]-[15] & [54]: *dpp v najjar* [2009] VSCA 246; *DPP (Cth) v Parfrey* [2010] VSCA 212 at [33]; *Ramezanian v The Queen* [2013] VSCA 71 at [23]-[32]; *DPP v Milson* [2019] VSCA 55 at [50]-[57]; *DPP v Huby* [2019] VSCA 106 at [68]; *Sara Borg v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 191 at [47]-[49]; *Akon Guode v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 257 at [45]-[46]; *Lam v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 241 at [25]-[39]; *DPP v Stratton* [2021] VSC 810 at [38]; *Jan v DPP (Cth)* [2025] VSCA 43 at [69]; *Di Gregorio v The King* [2025] VSCA 103 at [62]-[78]; *Rivero v The King* [2025] VSCA 144 at [44].

### **11.3.6 Conviction or non-conviction**

In *R v P & Ors* [2007] VChC 3 the President of the Children’s Court, Judge Grant, imposed youth supervision orders or probation on eight young co-offenders. Each had pleaded guilty to:

* representative counts of procuring by intimidation a young woman FS described as “mildly delayed in her intellectual development” to take part in an act of sexual penetration with two of them;
* assault of FS; and
* making child pornography, namely a film depicting FS engaging in sexual activity.

A major issue was whether or not each offender should be convicted. At [30]-[32] Judge Grant said:

[30] “Probation orders and youth supervision orders can be made with or without conviction. Fox and Freiberg in their book on Sentencing describe the consequences of conviction as follows-

‘The recording of a criminal conviction is a significant act of legal and social censure. It is a judicial act by which a person’s legal status is officially and, under present Victorian law, irretrievably altered. The alteration effected by a conviction is a diminution of the offender’s legal rights and capacities, These follow automatically from the fact of conviction and are not necessarily tied to the particular sanction that follows.’

[31] The fact that the general consequences of conviction are in the nature of a penalty is a relevant matter for a court to take into account. It is also relevant in those cases where the are particular, identifiable consequences arising from conviction in the individual circumstances of an offender.

[32] The CYFA is silent on the type of matters the Court should take into account in exercising its discretion to record a conviction or otherwise. I have been referred by a number of counsel to section 8(1) of the *Sentencing Act 1991* which provides–

‘In exercising its discretion whether or not to record a conviction, a court must have regard to all the circumstances of the case including–

(a) the nature of the offence; and

(b) the character and past history of the offender; and

(c) the impact of the recording of a conviction on the offender’s economic or social wellbeing or on his or her employment prospects.’

I accept these factors must apply when considering the exercise of discretion in the Children’s Court with an appropriate acknowledgement of the matters referred to in section 362 of the CYFA.”

Applying this test, Judge Grant imposed a conviction on 7 of the 8 co-offenders, explaining that he did so because of the seriousness of their offending, their active role in the criminal activity and the need for them to be accountable for their criminality: see e.g. [37]-[39] & [41].

### **11.3.7 Effect of an injury sustained by offender while committing a crime**

In *Khoja v The Queen* [2014] VSCA 9 the appellant had pleaded guilty to one charge of culpable driving causing death and 4 charges of negligently causing serious injury and been sentenced to aggregate IMP 8y6m/5y6m. Following the accident the appellant developed a stress disorder and associated depression as a direct result of the accident, reflecting his guilt and shame and his feelings of responsibility for the grevious consequences of his own driving. In the course of dismissing the appeal against sentence, Maxwell P, Nettle & Priest JJA said at [32]-[34]:

[32] “It is well established that an injury sustained by an offender during the course of committing a crime is a relevant consideration on sentence. Depending on the circumstances, the injury may be viewed as constituting part punishment in itself: *RLP* (2009) 213 A Crim R 461, 471 [21]. The Court in *RLP* accepted — as would we — that there is no basis in principle to distinguish between physical injury and mental illness for this purpose.

[33] As counsel for Mr Khoja properly acknowledged, however, the Court in *RLP* was not persuaded that the offender’s supervening mental condition was to be treated ‘as a form of punishment that entitles him to some reduction in the sentence he would otherwise receive’: at [23]. Counsel sought to distinguish *RLP* on the same basis as before. That is, Mr Khoja’s mental infirmity was to be seen as having resulted, at least in part, from the commission of the offence itself.

[34] We are not persuaded by that submission. **Reactive mental illness of the kind in issue here is hardly ever likely to qualify as an injury of the relevant kind**. There is no real difference between this case and *RLP*. The trigger for Mr Khoja’s illness — as it was for the offender in *RLP* — was his own reaction to the enormity of his crime, namely, a combination of shame, guilt, embarrassment and remorse.”

### **11.3.8 Effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on sentencing**

In Victoria a State of Emergency was declared on 16/03/2020 as a consequence of the health risks associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. Pursuant to this declaration, the Chief Health Officer imposed various requirements – including what has been called “social distancing” – and various restrictions – including significant limitations on leaving one’s residence. Some of the effects of this pandemic on various aspects of sentencing are discussed in the following cases:

1. **Sentencing generally**

* *Brown (aka Davis) v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 60 (Priest & Weinberg JJA) – 23/03/2020

The applicant submitted that the COVID-19 pandemic impacted upon sentencing in that personal visits for prisoners were no longer permitted. Accordingly the Court should infer that prisoners and families would suffer a high level of anxiety – akin to a Markovic-type burder [hardship to the third parties: *R v Markovic & Pantelic* (2010) 30 VR 589; [2010] VSCA 105] that should give rise to a ‘palpable and discernable discount’. The Court of Appeal held that the extent to which additional stress for prisoners and their families caused by the pandemic was to be taken into account was a matter to be resolved on the particular facts of any individual case. At [48] the Court said:

“With regard to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the submission put forward [by] the applicant, we readily acknowledge that this is a matter that is certain to come before this Court again in the immediate future. In the absence of any adequate material concerning the impact of the virus upon the Corrections system, … and given that the situation is one that is rapidly evolving, we are hesitant to express a general statement of principle regarding how this Court (and others) should deal with this crisis as regards its effect upon relevant sentencing principles. We do accept, however, that the situation is causing additional stress and concern for prisoners and their families, as it is for every member of the community. The extent to which that may be taken into account, if at all, will be a matter to be resolved on the particular facts of any individual case."

* *Brown (aka Davis) v The Queen was followed in Sazimanoska v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 66 (26/03/2020) [leave to appeal refused]; *Nguyen v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 76 (01/04/2020) [leave to appeal refused - no occasion to consider 'fresh evidence' regarding COVID-19 pandemic].
* *Alejandro Mendieta-Blanco v The Queen*; *Chey Tenenboim v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 265 at [37]-[38] – 12/10/2020

“COVID-19 and its effects took their place in the sentencing calculus along with all other relevant considerations. We reject the submission that it acquires some special place in the mix, only to be considered after a synthesis is reached on all other factors. Nor do we accept the proposition, advanced in written submissions by AMB, that, where a person is ‘on the cusp’ of a sentence of imprisonment, the COVID-19 pandemic is a ‘powerful reason’ not to impose such a sentence.”

1. **Age**

* *R v Madex* [2020] VSC 145 at [51], [61]

69 year old offencer – impact of age and higher risk category – custody more onerous.

1. **Ill-health**

* *DPP (Cth) v Politpoulos* [2020] VCC 338 at [76], [83]

Defendant feeling more concern due to health and susceptibility to COVID-19.

1. **Impact on custodial arrangements**

* *DPP v Morey (a pseudonym)* [2020] VCC 320 at [85]-[86]

Limited prospect of visits by family living interstate.

* *DPP v Tennison* [2020] VCC 343 at [36]-[39]

Suspension of personal family visits. Prisoner work limited to essential tasks only, leading to reduced work opportunity and meaningful occupation in prison. Stress from fear of catching virus in a confined environment and fears for family and their exposure to the virus.

* *DPP v Hersi* [2020] VCC 347 at [26]

Pandemic may add to hardship in custody, especially as it was offender’s first time in custody.

1. **Guilty plea**

* *DPP v Bourke* [2020] VSC 130 at [32] (Jane Dixon J) – 16/03/2020

Her Honour accepted a substantial utilitarian value of the accused’s guilty plea in the light of public health concerns regarding COVID-19 which may have impacted on the practical management of a jury and given that new jury trials have been suspended.

* *Worboyes v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 169, *Schaeffer v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 171 & *Chenhall v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 175 (Priest, Kaye & T Forrest JJA)

Their Honours accepted that a plea of guilty during the COVID-19 pandemic augmented the utilitarian value of the plea. For further details see **subsection 11.2.8.2** above. In *Biba v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 168 at [26] the Court of Appeal held that for the sake of consistency *Worboyes*’ discounts (even if modest) must continue to be given in all courts for as long as any of them are experiencing pandemic-related delays: see *DPP v Seymour* [2023] VSC 324 at [60].

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## **11.4 Material admissible in sentencing hearings under the CYFA**

Section 358 of the CYFA provides that if the Court finds a child guilty of an offence, it may, in considering sentence, take into account only the following categories of matters.

### **11.4.1 Pre-sentence & group conference reports**

Section 358(a) permits the Court to take into account a pre-sentence report prepared by the Secretary DJCS [via Youth Justice or via the Children's Court Clinic] and the evidence, if any, of its author. These are the only two bodies which are authorised to prepare pre-sentence reports: see s.572 of the CYFA. The contents of pre-sentence reports are regulated by s.573 and their distribution is governed by ss.574-575.

Section 571 of the CYFA provides:

If the Criminal Division finds a child guilty of an offence it **may**, before passing sentence, order a pre-sentence report in respect of the child and adjourn the proceeding to enable the report to be prepared.

The Criminal Division **must** order a pre-sentence report if it is considering making a youth residential centre order [s.410(1)(e)] or a youth justice centre order [s.412(1)(e)].

If it appears to the Court that a child found guilty of an offence is intellectually disabled, the Court **must**, before passing sentence, order a pre-sentence report in respect of the child and adjourn the proceeding to enable the report to be prepared.

If the Secretary has issued a statement in respect of the child that the child has an intellectual disability within the meaning of the **Disability Act 2006**, a pre-sentence report prepared in accordance with an order under subsection (3) **must**-

1. include a copy of the statement; and
2. specify disability services which are-
3. available under that Act and appropriate for the child; and
4. designed to reduce the likelihood of the child committing further offences.

Section 358(b) permits the Court to take into account a group conference report prepared by a group conference convenor [s.577] and the evidence, if any, of its author. The contents of group conference reports are regulated by s.578 and their distribution is governed by ss.579-580.

In *Le v Collins & Anor* [2004] VSC 524 Williams J held that a failure to provide a pre-sentence report to a 20 year old offender before sentence constituted a denial of procedural fairness, vitiating the sentence.

In *R v Bennett* [2006] VSCA 274 the sentencing judge had adjourned a plea in order to obtain a psychiatric report. The appellant had subsequently been sentenced without a further plea hearing and the sentencing judge had disregarded or discounted the recommendations contained in the psychiatric report. The Court of Appeal held that the failure to allow the parties to make submissions regarding the contents of the report was a denial of natural justice and constituted sentencing error.

In *R v O’Blein* [2009] VSCA 159 at [34] Coghlan AJA (with whom Vincent & Neave JJA agreed) held that the failure by the sentencing judge to have greater regard to a pre-sentence report amounted to sentencing error because his Honour did not have sufficient regard to the alternative to adult imprisonment, namely detention in a Youth Justice Centre, particularly having regard to the principles enunciated in *R v Mills* [1998] 4 VR 235, 241.

### **11.4.2 Report, submission & evidence on behalf of child**

Section 358(c) permits the Court to take into account any report, submission or evidence given, made or tendered by or on behalf of the child who is to be sentenced.

### **11.4.3 Prior findings of guilt**

Section 358(d) permits the Court to take into account any offences of which the child has been convicted or found guilty before the commission of the offence under consideration.

It follows from this that evidence that a child has been the recipient of a formal police caution in relation to a previous offence is not admissible: see *O v McDonald* [2000] TASSC 13. See also the judgment of McDonald J in *Y v F* [2002] VSC 166 at [33].

### **11.4.4A Submissions & duty of prosecutor**

Section 358(e) permits the Court to take into account any submission on sentencing made by the informant or prosecutor or any person appearing on behalf of the Crown.

In *R v Rumpf* [1988] VR 466 at 471 the Full Court of the Supreme Court of Victoria cited with approval dicta from the judgment of Brennan, Deane & Gallop JJ in *R v Tait and Bartley* (1979) 24 ALR 473 at 477:

"The Crown has a duty to the Court to assist it in the task of passing sentence by an adequate presentation of the facts, by an appropriate reference to any special principle of sentencing which might reasonably be thought to be relevant to the case in hand, and by a fair testing of the defendant's case so far as it appears to require it."

In *DPP v Avci* [2008] VSCA 256 at [16] Maxwell P (with whom Buchanan & Redlich JJA agreed) said:

“In *R v MacNeil-Brown* [2008] VSCA 190 this Court recently reaffirmed the principle, first enunciated by the Full Court in the 1980s, that the Crown has an obligation to assist a sentencing judge who seeks guidance on the sentencing range appropriate to the particular case. In *MacNeil-Brown* itself, the prosecutor had exhibited a similar reluctance to respond to a request from the sentencing judge for assistance on sentencing range: see *R v McNeill & Brown/Piggott* [2008] VSCA 190 at [77]-[80].”

At [29] Maxwell P said:

“By reason of his statutory functions, the Director [of Public Prosecutions] is, with this Court, the custodian of sentencing standards in this State. Prosecutors must therefore be appropriately instructed so that they can assist sentencing judges to avoid sentencing error. If current sentencing practices need to be changed, that is the place to start.”

In *R v Mansour* [2008] VSC 226 at [72]-[74] King J was very critical of the prosecutor for suggesting a specific term of imprisonment:

“The Director may, if he thinks it appropriate, suggest a range of sentence or sentences that he believes would ensure the court did not, in his view, fall into an appealable error. For the Director to state actual specific sentences in my view usurps the role of the sentencing judge, and if that is the sentence that the judge ultimately concludes is the appropriate sentence, it may appear to the members of the community that the sentencing judge is obeying the orders or directions of the Director of Public Prosecutions.

The sentencing judge, like the Director of Public Prosecutions, is an independent legal officer of the courts, and must consider many matters that do not necessarily fall within the matters that the Director has to consider when making his decision in respect of prosecutions. Accordingly, in my view it is not appropriate for the Director to make submissions to the court as to what actual sentence should be imposed rather than a range of sentence.”

In *R v AMP* [2010] VSCA 48 at [62] Redlich & Neave JJA approved and adopted the following dicta from *R v MacNeil-Brown* (2008) 20 VR 677; [2008] VSCA 190 at [45]:

“No judge is bound to accept counsel’s submission on any point, and a sentencing judge is entirely free to come to a different conclusion. Indeed, the judge is bound to do so if, in his/her judgment, a sentence outside the nominated range is called for and can lawfully be imposed. The weight to be given to a submission is to be judged according to the merits of the argument(s) which it advances. It would be wrong for a judge to accord weight to a Crown submission on sentence merely because it came from the Crown.”

In *Director of Public Prosecutions (Cth) v Barbaro & Zirilli* [2012] VSCA 288 King J had refused to hear what the Crown had proposed to submit was the applicable sentencing range. The Court of Appeal held at [15]:

“In our view, her Honour committed no error of law. Put simply, the function of a Crown submission on range is to assist the sentencing judge. Nothing said by the majority in *MacNeil-Brown* suggested that a judge who declined such assistance should nevertheless be compelled to receive it, still less that the decision whether or not to entertain such a submission rested on considerations of procedural fairness.”

However, on appeal the High Court of Australia went further, overruling *R v MacNeil-Brown* insofar as it stood as authority supporting the practice of counsel for the prosecution providing a submission about the bounds of the available range of sentences. *In Barbaro v The Queen; Zirilli v The Queen* (2014) 305 ALR 323; [2014] HCA 2, French CJ, Hayne, Kiefel & Bell JJ held at [21]-[23]:

[21] “In *MacNeil‑Brown*, a majority of the Court of Appeal (Maxwell P, Vincent and Redlich JJA, Buchanan and Kellam JJA dissenting on this point) held (2008) 20 VR 677 at 678 that "the making of submissions on sentencing range is an aspect of the duty of the prosecutor to assist the court". Accordingly, a sentencing judge could reasonably expect (2008) 20 VR 677 at 678 the prosecutor to make a submission on sentencing range if either "the court requests such assistance" or, "even though no such request has been made, the prosecutor perceives a significant risk that the court will fall into error regarding the applicable range unless such a submission is made". The majority in *MacNeil‑Brown* (2008) 20 VR 677 at 701 held in respect of the first appellant in that case that the sentencing judge had not erred in insisting that counsel for the prosecution state the range within which the sentence to be imposed on the offender should fall. The offender's appeal against sentence was dismissed.

[22] As a result of what was said by the majority in *MacNeil‑Brown*, a practice has developed in Victoria of a sentencing judge asking counsel for the prosecution to make a submission as to the "available range" of sentences. (Remarks made by King J in the course of the sentencing hearing in these matters suggest that the practice may not be followed at first instance in the Supreme Court.)

[23] To the extent to which *MacNeil‑Brown* stands as authority supporting the practice of counsel for the prosecution providing a submission about the bounds of the available range of sentences, the decision should be overruled. The practice to which *MacNeil‑Brown* has given rise should cease. The practice is wrong in principle.”

The majority in the High Court gave the following reasons wby the practice is wrong in principle:

1) “stating the bounds of an ‘available range’ of sentences is apt to mislead:;

2) “The practice…depends upon the prosecution acting not only fairly (as it must) but in the role of ‘a surrogate judge. That is not the role of the prosecution.”

3) “the prosecution may have a view of the available sentencing range which gives undue weight to the assistance which the offender has given or promised [to the prosecution].”

4) “in cases…where pleas of guilty avoid very long and costly trials…the prosecution may have a view of the available sentencing range which gives undue weight to the avoidance of trial.”

5) “The statement by the prosecution of the bounds of an available range of sentences may lead to erroneous views about its importance…with consequential blurring of what should be a sharp distinction between the role of the judge and the role of the prosecution.”

6) “Fixing the bounds of a range within which a sentence should fall … wrongly suggests that sentencing is a mathematical exercise…[in that]…[i]f a judge sentences within the range which has been suggested by the prosecution, the statement of that range may well be seen as suggesting that the sentencing judge has been swayed by the prosecution’s view…[and] if the sentencing judge fixes a sentence outside the suggested range, appeal against sentence seems well-nigh inevitable.”

7) “If a party makes a submission to a sentencing judge about the bounds of an available range of sentences, the conclusions or assumptions which underpin that range can be based only upon predictions about what facts will be found by the sentencing judge.”

8) “It is neither the role nor the duty of the prosecution to proffer some statement of the specific result which counsel then appearing for the prosecution … considers should be reached or a statement of the bounds within which that result should fall.”

9) “Contrary to the view of the majority in *MacNeil-Brown*, the prosecution’s conclusion about the bounds of the available range of sentences is a statement of opinion, not a submission of law.”

In the joint appeals of *Lee James Matthews v The Queen*; *Tuyet Thi Vu v The Queen* & *Sayeed Hashmi* *v The Queen* [2014] VSCA 291 the Court of Appeal held that “a quantified range submission [made before the judgment in *Barbaro’s Case* was handed down] will not vitiate the sentencing discretion unless it can be demonstrated that the sentencing judge was influenced by the submission in arriving at his or her sentence.” See e.g. judgment of Warren CJ, Nettle & Redlich JJA at [7]. At [22] their Honours concluded that the reasoning in Babaro did not preclude defence counsel from making submissions concerning an appropriate sentencing range. Speaking of the duty of the prosecution, their Honours stated at [27]:

“[I]t appears that, apart from proscribing the submission of a quantified sentencing range, *Barbaro* has not changed any of the pre-existing practice. Nothing said in *Barbaro* detracts from the Crown’s obligation to make clear what type of sentencing disposition, whether imprisonment or otherwise, it contends is necessary or appropriate. It remains that the Crown is required to make its submissions as to sentence fairly and in an even-handed manner. It has a duty to assist the sentencing judge to avoid appealable error: *R v Tait* (1979) 24 ALR 473, 477. That includes making an adequate presentation of the facts, identifying any aggravating features and admitting any mitigating features, fair testing of the offender's case, correcting any error of fact which emerges in the course of the plea and drawing attention to the offender’s antecedents including any sentence of imprisonment currently being served: *R v Rumpf* [1988] VR 466, 476. The Crown’s duty also extends to making appropriate submissions on relevant questions of law, including statutorily prescribed maximum penalties [*R v Travers* (1983) 34 SASR 112, 115-6], principles of sentencing reasonably thought to be applicable [*R v Tait* (1979) 24 ALR 473, 477] and comparable and other relevant cases [*Hili v The Queen* (2010) 242 CLR 520, 536-7]. If it is submitted for an offender that he or she should receive a non-custodial disposition or a suspended term of imprisonment, the Crown should make clear whether it contends, and if so why, a disposition of the kind proposed would not be a proper exercise of sentencing discretion: *Malvaso v The Queen* (1989) 168 CLR 227; *Everett v The Queen* (1994) 181 CLR 295.”

See also *R v Bourne* [2011] VSCA 159 at [18]-[23]; *R v Campisi* [2010] VSCA 183 at [20]; *R v Hilder & Sandhu* [2011] VSCA 192 at [24]-[34]; *R v RPJ* [2011] VSC 363 at [18]; *DPP v Eagles* [2012] VSCA 102 at [48]; *R v A Mokbel (sentence)* [2012] VSC 255 at [44]-[48].

### **11.4.4B Submissions of accused**

In *Frank Brooks (a pseudonym) v The King* [2023] VSCA 4 the 75-year old applicant had pleaded guilty to two counts of indecent assault on a female and three counts of carnal knowledge of a girl aged between 10 & 16. Three of the five charges were ‘rolled up’ charges. The offending – described by the Court of Appeal as “predatory, opportunistic and depraved” – had occurred between 1975 & 1978 when the complainant was aged between 12 & 15 and the applicant was aged between 27 & 30. The complainant was the applicant’s niece by marriage. A TES IMP8y/5y9m had been imposed. In refusing leave to appeal, the Court of Appeal (Niall & T Forrest JJA) was critical at [31] of the unrealistically optimistic submisson made by the applicant’s counsel at the plea hearing:

“We would only add that at the plea hearing the applicant’s then counsel argued for a wholly suspended sentence, the offences [having been] committed at a time when this type of disposition was theoretically available. Such a submission was entirely unrealistic. Advocates are entitled to canvass all sentencing options open when pleading on behalf of a criminal offender, but for their submissions to carry any force, unrealistic optimism should be avoided. It can cause unnecessary anxiety and disappointment to an accused and his or her family, and may lead to sentencing error that will require correction by this Court — on occasions to an applicant’s ultimate disadvantage.”

### **11.4.5 Victim impact statements**

Section 358(f) permits the Court to take into account any victim impact statement made, or other evidence given, under s.359. Under s.359(4) a victim impact statement contains particulars of the impact of the offence on the victim and any injury, loss or damage suffered by the victim as a direct result of the offence. In *SD v The Queen* [2013] VSCA 133 at [13]-[23] the Court of Appeal discussed the equivalent provision in the *Sentencing Act* and said at [15] that there was no “warrant for a sentencing court taking into account injury, loss or damage (including pain and suffering) which is not a *direct result* of the offending”. See also *DPP v QPX* [2014] VSC 133 per Bongiorno JA.

In s.3 of the CYFA “victim” means a person who or a body that has suffered injury, loss or damage as a direct result of an offence, whether or not that injury, loss or damage was reasonably foreseeable by the offender. In *DPP v Prasoeur* [2006] VSC 41 at [22]-[24] Bell J refused to admit a statement made by a person who had suffered as a consequence of false allegations which the offender made about him during the trial, “long after the event of the crime”. While accepting dicta in *R v Miller* [1995] 2 VR 348 at 354 that the definition of “victim” [in s.3 of the *Sentencing Act 1991* which is in virtually identical terms to that in s.3 of the CYFA] should not be interpreted narrowly, His Honour held that he “must still give effect to the ‘particular language’ in which the definition is expressed” and accordingly that the maker of the statement had not suffered as a direct result of the offence.

In *DPP v Edmunds* [2023] VSC 581 Lasry J refused to admit victim impact statements filed by family members of a coaccused Cassidy who died in the course of committing the murder with which the accused was found to be complicit, holding at [5]: “I am unable to see how those people connected to Cassidy who have filed statements could be regarded as victims.”

In *R v Leatham* [2006] VSC 315 at [19]-[21] parts of victim impact statements were used. In *R v Swift* (2007) 15 VR 497; [2007] VSCA 52 at [4]-[41] there is an extensive discussion of the use which may be made by a sentencing judge of victim impact statements under similar provisions in the *Sentencing Act 1991*. The dicta in *R v Swift* was referred to with approval by the Court of Appeal in *R v Vandenberg* [2009] VSCA 9 at [15].

In *R v Katelis* [2008] VSCA 239 at [13] the Court of Appeal referred with approval to views about victim impact statements expressed in *DPP v DJK* [2003] VSCA 109 and noted: “It is also important to bear in mind that, as is often the case, the financial loss incurred by the victim [of a robbery] has been one of its lesser consequences to him.”

Under s.359(12) if a victim who has made, or on behalf of whom another person has made, a victim impact statement so requests, the Court must ensure that any admissible parts of the statement that are appropriate and relevant to sentencing are read aloud by the prosecutor in open court in the course of the sentencing hearing. Under s.359(13) the presiding magistrate may read aloud any admissible part of a victim impact statement at any time in the course of the sentencing hearing.

There have been a number of cases in which the courts have warned that victim impact statements should not be misused so as to produce a sentence which is unfair and have commented that an articulate or emotional victim impact statement could not justify a sentence being imposed which was not just in all of the circumstances: see *R v Skura* [2004] VSCA 53 at [12]-[13] per Eames JA and at [45]-[50] per Smith AJA; *R v Sa* [2004] VSCA 182 at [39]; *R v Dowlan* [1998] 1 VR 123 at 138-140 per Charles JA; *R v Miller* (1995) 81 A Crim R 278; *R v R* (1999) 106 A Crim R 288 at 291-292 per Tadgell JA; *R v CLP* [2008] VSCA 113 at [28]-[36]. Compare *Whitecroft (a pseudonym) v The King* [2025] VSCA 143 at [72]-[78] where the Court of Appeal (Niall CJ & Kidd JA) held that the sentencing judge had not given undue, and disproportionate, weight to the contents of the victim impact statement in imposing a sentence of IMP2y6m/18m on multiple counts of incest committed by the applicant against his younger sister.

In *Kowski v The King* [2024] VSCA 3 the Court of Appeal (Niall & Boyce JJA) said at [53]:

“The absence of a victim impact statement did not mean that the judge was precluded from drawing inferences about the impact of the offence on the two victims. Nor did it compel an inference that there was no impact, or support some *Jones v Dunkel* (1959) 101 CLR 298; [1959] HCA 8 type inference against a finding that the two victims had been in fear. The judge did not make a finding about the long term or ongoing impacts of the offending on the victims. Her findings went no further than that the victims would have been fearful. The bare facts of the offending, and the fact that when faced with an unknown man armed with a knife, using a threatening gesture towards a young girl and demanding keys to the car the victims fled, provide a firm foundation for the findings of fact that the victims would have been in fear. A contrary finding would have been perverse. In argument, counsel for the applicant conceded that the judge’s finding, referred to above, was reasonably open.”

## **11.5 Deferral of sentencing**

Under ss.360(2) & 414(1) of the CYFA the Court may defer sentencing a child if-

(a) it is of opinion that sentencing should, in the interests of the child, be deferred; and

(b) the child agrees to a deferral of sentencing; and

(c) in the case of deferral of sentencing for the purpose of the child’s participation in a group conference [see **Part 11.6**]-

(i) the Court is of the opinion, after consultation with youth justice, that the child is suitable to participate in a group conference; and

(ii) the child agrees to participate in a group conference.

The Court will often defer sentence to give the child a chance to demonstrate that it is appropriate to place him or her on a less intrusive sentencing order.

Under s.414(3)(a) the maximum period of deferral is 4 months. However, if the child is in custody and sentence is deferred for a group conference, the maximum period of deferral is 2 months [s.414(3)(b)].

Except for the purposes of a child’s participation in a group conference under ss.414(1)(c) & 415(1)(d) or 415(1)(e), it appears from ss.414(2)(a) & 414(2)(ab) when read together that the Court cannot otherwise defer sentence for a child who is in custody and ineligible for bail.

Pursuant to s.414(2)(b), it is usual for the Court to order the preparation of a pre-sentence, or a further pre-sentence, report. In general cases, that report is usually prepared by the Youth Justice Division of the Department of Human Services under s.572(a) and an additional report may sometimes be prepared by the Children’s Court Clinic. In cases referred to the Clinic, the pre-sentence report is prepared by the Clinic under s.572(b).

Under ss.414(1) & 415(1) the Court may defer sentence for the purpose of a child’s participation in a group conference if the Court is considering-

(a) placing the child on probation; or

(b) releasing the child on a youth supervision order; or

(c) convicting the child and making a youth attendance order; or

(d) convicting the child and ordering that the child be detained in a youth residential centre [see also s.410(1)(f)]; or

(e) convicting the child and ordering that the child be detained in a youth justice centre [see also s.412(1)(f)]-

and if-

* the Court is of the opinion, after consultation with Youth Justice, that the child is suitable to participate in a group conference; and
* the child agrees to participate in a group conference.

Section 416(1) gives the Court express power, on application by the child, to re-list the adjourned case at short notice if the Court considers it appropriate to do so. Under s.416(2) such notice must be given to the Court, the informant and, if appropriate, the Secretary DJCS. If a child is found guilty of an offence during the deferral period or if a group conference does not proceed, s.416(4) permits the Court to relist the adjourned case at short notice and on the adjourned hearing make any order which the Court could have made if it had not deferred sentence.

On the adjourned hearing date, s.416(3) requires the Court, in determining the appropriate sentence for the child, to have regard to-

(a) the child's behaviour during the period of deferral; and

(b) any pre-sentence report ordered; and

(c) if the child participated in a group conference, the fact of that participation; and

(d) any group conference report ordered; and

(e) any other relevant matter.

## **11.6 Group Conference**

### **11.6.1 Restorative justice**

In a paper entitled "Restorative Justice: Emerging Views" (*The Drawing Board, An Australian Review of Public Affairs*) Chris Cunneen said of restorative justice:

"Prevailing views on law and order emphasize longer and longer prison sentences in the belief that more and 'tougher' punishment will deter crime. Restorative justice begins from a different premise: the need to make an offender accountable for their actions through confronting the harm they have caused the victim, and by providing the offender with an opportunity to offer recompense for that harm…[M]any restorative justice programs actually in operation have been introduced in response to young people's criminal behaviour…In the vast majority of cases, restorative justice is translated into a system of 'conferencing', where the offender and the victim meet before a convenor and with other support persons in attendance. An 'outcome' is reached that is acceptable to the offender and the victim…All states and territories in Australia now have some type of conferencing in place for juveniles".

### **11.6.2 The Victorian Group Conference program**

The Victorian Group Conference program is a joint venture involving the Children's Court of Victoria, Victoria Police, Victoria Legal Aid and the Department of Human Services. It consists of a formal meeting of parties affected by the young person's offending. It is based on the concepts of restorative justice and derives from a New Zealand model for the processing of juvenile offenders set out in the *Children, Young Persons and their Families Act 1989* (N.Z.).

Until 2002 it remained a pilot program, contracted to Anglicare Victoria and available to only about 50 young offenders per year, limited to the Melbourne and suburban Children's Courts. In January 2003 funding was confirmed for a full program. The successful contractor to provide conferencing services, Jesuit Social Services, took over from Anglicare in July 2003.

Commencing on 23/04/2007 the Group Conference Program was given legislative standing in ss.362 & 414-416 of the CYFA and now operates state-wide.

Under ss.415(4) & 415(5) of the CYFA the purpose of a group conference is to facilitate a meeting between the child and other persons (including, if they wish to participate, the victim or their representatives and members of the child’s family and other persons of significance to the child) which has the following objectives-

(a) to increase the child’s understanding of the effect of his or her offending on the victim and the community;

(b) to reduce the likelihood of the child re-offending;

(c) to negotiate an outcome plan, agreed to by the child, that is designed to assist the child to take responsibility and make reparation for his or her actions and to reduce the likelihood of the child re-offending.

Some of the following is taken from an information brochure prepared by Anglicare Victoria.

### **11.6.3 Goal**

The primary goal of a Group Conference is to divert young people from further or more serious offending by harnessing the often untapped resources of the young person's immediate and extended family and by involving them and significant others in decision making. The aim is to address the offending behaviour of young people and help them avoid further or more serious offending by:

* strengthening the young person's family and community supports;
* making amends to the victim(s) where appropriate which can be constructive for both victim and offender; and
* holding the young person accountable for the impact of his or her offending.

### **11.6.4 Consultation with Youth Justice**

If the Court was considering imposing a sentence of probation or a higher sentencing order in respect of one or more offences, it may instead consider deferring sentence for the purpose of a child’s participation in a group conference if the child agrees to participate: ss.414(1) & 415(1) of the CYFA. In that event, the Court is required to consult with Youth Justice as to whether the child is suitable to participate in a group conference. There is no formal legislative basis for determining suitability. Some of the current criteria are that the young person-

* must have been found guilty by the Court;
* is before the Court on charges that warrant probation or a youth supervision order or a youth attendance order or detention in a youth residential centre or a youth justice centre;
* would benefit from a greater awareness of the impact of his or her offending on victims and the community;
* must, with his family, be prepared to meet with the convenor prior to the conference, attend the conference and agree to return to the Court following the conference.

There is no bar on young persons who have previously been subject to supervisory orders participating in the group conference program.

Although the Court must consult with Youth Justice, it is not bound by Youth Justice’s opinion as to whether or not the child is suitable. If the Court does order a group conference, the case is generally adjourned for a period of 6-8 weeks to permit the group conference to be prepared and conducted.

### **11.6.5 Mechanics**

Under ss.415(2) & 415(6) of the CYFA, a Group Conference involves a meeting chaired by a convenor appointed by a service approved under s.480 which must be attended by-

* the young offender and his legal practitioner; and
* the police informant or other police officer.

Section 415(7) permits other people to attend-

* members of the child’s family and other persons of significance to the child;
* the victim(s) of the offence or their nominated representative(s) if they wish to attend;
* any other person permitted to attend by the convenor.

Section 415(8) requires the convenor to prepare a group conference report for the Court which must contain the outcome plan, if any, agreed to by the child.

Subject to ss.415(8) & 415(11) and the group conference report provisions of ss.576-580, the proceedings of a group conference are confidential [s.415(9)] and disclosure of any statement made at, or information provided to, the conference without the leave of the Court or the consent of all the parties is subject to a penalty of 10 penalty units [s.415(10)].

The conference itself has 3 stages:

1. **Information sharing**: Information about the offence(s) is provided by the police informant. Participants then provide information about why each offence was committed, and how others have been affected by the offence(s).
2. **Family deliberation**: The young person, together with family members and support persons, are left alone to talk about what can be done to repair the harm caused and discuss plans to help the young person take a more positive direction in his or her life.
3. **Agreement**: An 'Outcome Plan' is then developed and prepared, explaining the agreements that have been made during the conference. Following preparation of the 'Outcome Plan', it is discussed among the group and input from all participants is encouraged.

### **11.6.6 Conference Outcomes**

Outcomes from a Group Conference could include:

1. **Assistance and support for the young person** in such areas as education, employment, skill development, recreation & counselling (drug & alcohol, individual and/or family).
2. **Dealing with the offence:** This could mean that the young person apologizes and/or agrees to pay for all or part of the damage and/or make a donation or be involved in some sort of community service.

After a group conference the case returns to the Court for completion of the sentencing process. Although the Court is not in any way bound by the 'Outcome Plan', it will usually craft a sentence to incorporate the plan and in any event will almost always give weight to the plan. However, if the child has participated in a group conference, the Court is bound by s.362(3) of the CYFA to impose a lesser sentence than it otherwise would have imposed had the child not so participated. Further, if the child has failed to participate in a group conference s.362(4) prohibits the Court from imposing a more severe sentence than it would have imposed had sentencing not been deferred.

## 

In 2019/2020 there were 186 group conferences conducted across Victoria. Of these 49% were ultimately sentenced to a non-supervisory order, 47% to a supervisory order and 4% to YJC detention.

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## **11.7 Criminal Division Statistics**

### **11.7.1 Victorian statistics**

Table **1** sets out the numbers of sentencing orders made by the Criminal Division of the Children’s Court for children who pleaded guilty or were found guilty of one or more criminal offences between 01/07/2005 and 30/06/2024. The number of detention orders is a very small percentage of the total. The table does not include charges which were dealt with by diversion, no plea being entered and no formal finding of guilt being made in such cases. The limitations of these statistics are detailed in **section 7.5.7** of these Research Materials. For instance, the table contains a count of sentencing orders, not of individual charges and includes only the most intensive sentencing order made in a particular case or supercase, not of every sentencing order in the case. So, for example, if in a particular case the child was fined on some charges and placed on a youth supervision order on others, only the youth supervision order – the most intensive of the orders – is counted.

The number of sentencing orders made in 2011/12 is by far the lowest of any of the preceding six years shown in table **1**. There was a further substantial drop in 2012/13 and that trend has continued in every subsequent year. The spikes in 2006/07 & 2007/08 were a consequence of an increased number of sentencing orders (primarily fines) made in respect of transit offences. Since then most children’s transit offences have been processed through the Children and Young Persons Infringement Notice System [CAYPINS], as to which see **Part 7.7**. The CAYPINS outcomes are not included in tables **1** or **2**.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **1 SENTENCES IN FINALIZED VICTORIAN CHILDREN’S COURT CRIMINAL CASES COMMENCING 01/07/2005** | | | | | | | | |
| **ORDER** | **2005/06** | **2006/07** | **2007/08** | **2008/09** | **2009/10** | **2010/11** | **2011/12** | **2012/13** | |
| **Non-accountable undertaking** | 41 | 47 | 60 | 48 | 33 | 39 | 33 | 27 | |
| **Accountable undertaking** | 481 | 514 | 616 | 626 | 640 | 593 | 481 | 430 | |
| **Good behaviour bond** | 1691 | 1778 | 1914 | 1963 | 1947 | 1793 | 1684 | 1524 | |
| **Fine** | 2393 | 7151 | 5030 | 2349 | 1672 | 1236 | 802 | 752 | |
| **Probation** | 717 | 870 | 939 | 984 | 1113 | 1038 | 882 | 829 | |
| **Youth supervision order** | 245 | 288 | 340 | 368 | 407 | 391 | 367 | 368 | |
| **Youth attendance order** | 47 | 47 | 55 | 79 | 101 | 82 | 57 | 49 | |
| **Youth residential centre order** | 14 | 9 | 20 | 7 | 14 | 18 | 7 | 7 | |
| **Youth justice centre order** | 149 | 158 | 179 | 202 | 232 | 229 | 212 | 162 | |
| **TOTAL** | **5778** | **10862** | **9153** | **6626** | **6159** | **5419** | **4525** | **4148** | |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **ORDER** | **2013/14** | **2014/15** | **2015/16** | **2016/17** | **2017/18** | **2018/19** | **2019/20** | **2020/21** |
| **Non-accountable undertaking** | 41 | 33 | 23 | 20 | 16 | 15 | 9 | 12 |
| **Accountable undertaking** | 302 | 305 | 175 | 174 | 128 | 129 | 99 | 63 |
| **Good behaviour bond** | 1364 | 1357 | 1045 | 950 | 836 | 836 | 661 | 446 |
| **Fine** | 790 | 532 | 414 | 549 | 243 | 187 | 115 | 53 |
| **Probation** | 778 | 751 | 642 | 456 | 497 | 406 | 312 | 264 |
| **Youth supervision order** | 293 | 335 | 353 | 366 | 318 | 246 | 238 | 217 |
| **Youth attendance order** | 62 | 47 | 43 | 59 | 43 | 30 | 31 | 34 |
| **Youth control order** | **UNAVAILABLE** | | | | 0 | 18 | 4 | 5 |
| **Youth residential centre order** | 8 | 12 | 11 | 8 | 13 | 12 | 4 | 3 |
| **Youth justice centre order** | 133 | 143 | 208 | 232 | 261 | 198 | 157 | 116 |
| **TOTAL** | **3771** | **3515** | **2914** | **2814** | **2355** | **2077** | **1630** | **1213** |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **ORDER** | **2021/22** | **2022/23** | **2023/24** |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Non-accountable undertaking** | 10 | 12 | 4 |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Accountable undertaking** | 69 | 66 | 65 |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Good behaviour bond** | 547 | 431 | 373 |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Fine** | 32 | 33 | 26 |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Probation** | 201 | 135 | 154 |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Youth supervision order** | 148 | 144 | 108 |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Youth attendance order** | 36 | 15 | 16 |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Youth control order** | 4 | 2 | 0 |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Youth residential centre order** | 2 | 0 | 1 |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Youth justice centre order** | 88 | 48 | 56 |  |  |  |  |  |
| **TOTAL** | **1137** | **886** | **803** |  |  |  |  |  |

Table **2** shows the respective percentages of the three sentencing types imposed in the Criminal Division of the Children’s Court. “Non-supervisory” orders are undertakings, bonds and fines. “Supervisory orders” are probation, youth supervision orders, youth attendance orders and youth control orders. “Detention orders” are youth justice centre orders and youth residential centre orders but do not include remand orders.

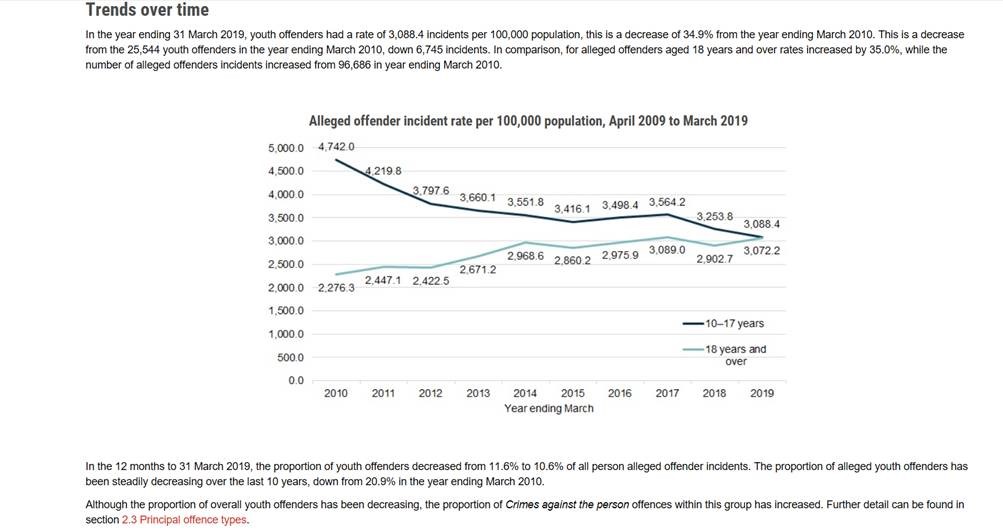
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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **2 PERCENTAGES OF SENTENCING TYPES IN FINALIZED VICTORIAN CHILDREN’S COURT CRIMINAL CASES** | | | | | | | | | | |
| **TYPES** | **2010**  **/11** | **2011**  **/12** | **2012**  **/13** | **2013**  **/14** | **2014**  **/15** | **2015**  **/16** | **2016**  **/17** | **2017**  **/18** | **2018**  **/19** | **2019**  **/20** |
| **Non-supervisory** | 68% | 66% | 66% | 66% | 64% | 57% | 60% | 52% | 56% | 54% |
| **Supervisory orders** | 28% | 29% | 30% | 30% | 32% | 36% | 31% | 36% | 34% | 36% |
| **Detention orders** | 4% | 5% | 4% | 4% | 4% | 7.5% | 8.5% | 12% | 10% | 10% |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **TYPES** | **2020**  **/21** | **2021**  **/22** | **2022**  **/23** | **2023**  **/24** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Non-supervisory** | 47% | 58% | 61% | 58% |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Supervisory orders** | 43% | 34% | 33% | 35% |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Detention orders** | 10% | 8% | 6% | 7% |  |  |  |  |  |  |

However, although the limitations of Tables 1 & 2 and the associated composite statistics in **section 7.5.7** mean that they are not an exact measure of the output of the Criminal Division, the writer believes that they provide an accurate enough measure of the operation of the Division to make them worthwhile including in these Research Materials.

Youth offending rates published by the Australian Bureau of Statistics on 08/02/2018 for the financial year 2016/17 included a finding that there were 8,280 youth offenders in Victoria, a decrease of 5% (446 offenders) from 2015/16. The highest decreases in numbers of youth offenders were for the principal offences of Miscellaneous offences (down 28% or 290 offenders) and Theft (down 7% or 162 offenders).

Figures published by the Crime Statistics Agency show that in the year ending 31/03/2019 youth offenders had a rate of 3,088 incidents per 100,000 population. This is a decrease of 34.9% from the rate of 4,742 incidents per 100,000 population in the year ending March 2010. Further, in the 12 months up to 31/03/2019 the proportion of youth offenders decreased from 11.6% to 10.6% of all person alleged offender incidents, continuing a trend which has seen the proportion of youth offenders steadily decreasing over the last 10 years, down from 20.9% in the year ending March 2010. By contrast, the offender incident rates for alleged offenders aged 18 and over increased by 35.0% from 2,276 to 3,072 incidents per 100,000 population.



### **11.7.2 Australian & world statistics**

The data contained in tables **3** & **4** was collected by the Australian Institute of Criminology and is taken from the Institute’s website [www.aic.gov.au](http://www.aic.gov.au). Both tables provide a snapshot of the comparative rate of detention of persons aged 10-17 in Juvenile Corrective Institutions – both as sentenced detainees and as remandees – in each of the Australian States & Territories in each of the listed years. In table **3** Tasmanian figures are not available from 1997 to 2002. Data formatted as in table **3** is not available after 2008 and has been superseded by table **4**. In table **4** W.A. & N.T. figures are not available for 2009-2010.

Table **3** is a comparative study of the overall rate of detention of young detainees across each of the Australian States and Territories between 1981 & 2008. The rate is measured as the number per 100,000 of the 10-17 population being detained on 30 June in each of the listed years. The study demonstrates that there has been a general decline in the number of persons aged 10-17 in juvenile detention over the period from 30 June 1981 - when 1352 young people [64.94 per 100,000] were detained in juvenile detention facilities throughout Australia – to 30 June 2004 – when 564 juveniles [25.50 per 100,000] were so detained. The trend reversed thereafter with 32.80 per 100,000 juveniles being detained on 30 June 2007 and 37.00 per 100,000 detained on 30 June 2008.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **3 RATE PER 100,000 OF PERSONS AGED 10-17 IN JUVENILE CORRECTIVE INSTITUTIONS** | | | | | | | | | |
| **Year** | **NSW** | **Vic** | **Qld** | **WA** | **SA** | **Tas** | **NT** | **ACT** | **Aust** |
| **1981** | 87.60 | **59.63** | 32.90 | 84.28 | 41.34 | 54.26 | 5.53 | 77.32 | 64.94 |
| **1982** | 91.63 | **53.04** | 30.67 | 78.10 | 38.78 | 36.99 | 55.89 | 48.47 | 62.76 |
| **1983** | 84.57 | **49.83** | 31.91 | 49.03 | 32.89 | 53.21 | 72.11 | 55.41 | 57.30 |
| **1984** | 59.61 | **49.50** | 28.98 | 41.18 | 22.12 | 43.41 | 78.88 | 24.32 | 46.01 |
| **1985** | 38.75 | **47.57** | 34.13 | 55.70 | 23.44 | 27.40 | 103.35 | 34.53 | 40.84 |
| **1986** | 40.42 | **46.41** | 25.79 | 49.30 | 23.80 | 35.69 | 132.22 | 47.08 | 39.88 |
| **1987** | 55.08 | **36.38** | 26.09 | 42.19 | 23.73 | 36.61 | 135.70 | 33.59 | 41.43 |
| **1988** | 38.24 | **36.64** | 26.89 | 40.50 | 26.61 | 35.62 | 177.45 | 35.89 | 36.50 |
| **1989** | 40.01 | **31.68** | 21.98 | 66.65 | 18.20 | 29.43 | 208.56 | 15.51 | 36.57 |
| **1990** | 51.84 | **29.26** | 29.70 | 63.04 | 22.92 | 17.52 | 137.98 | 23.62 | 40.39 |
| **1991** | 48.17 | **13.75** | 20.68 | 58.32 | 28.74 | 29.88 | 166.17 | 18.54 | 34.21 |
| **1992** | 38.88 | **10.34** | 20.06 | 46.49 | 33.25 | 8.79 | 127.06 | 26.80 | 28.55 |
| **1993** | 46.40 | **10.23** | 22.68 | 51.59 | 38.45 | 15.83 | 102.71 | 16.15 | 32.19 |
| **1994** | 54.77 | **12.89** | 24.93 | 64.31 | 36.42 | 17.59 | 57.45 | 24.27 | 36.89 |
| **1995** | 57.83 | **14.87** | 35.06 | 49.33 | 24.44 | 17.51 | 74.78 | 37.77 | 38.33 |
| **1996** | 49.33 | **13.98** | 34.44 | 50.41 | 51.64 | 45.38 | 56.14 | 18.91 | 37.66 |
| **1997** | 51.39 | **14.12** | 25.00 | 51.95 | 47.80 | N/A | 88.34 | 43.53 | 37.12 |
| **1998** | 48.06 | **13.23** | 33.64 | 62.72 | 30.95 | N/A | 103.59 | 30.44 | 37.04 |
| **1999** | 39.47 | **11.79** | 33.57 | 56.99 | 20.99 | N/A | 57.40 | 44.62 | 32.78 |
| **2000** | 38.30 | **10.12** | 25.20 | 51.90 | 36.40 | N/A | 60.70 | 42.24 | 31.46 |
| **2001** | 32.20 | **12.70** | 20.30 | 43.30 | 34.40 | N/A | 24.00 | 68.40 | 27.40 |
| **2002** | 27.90 | **10.80** | 22.70 | 35.00 | 28.90 | N/A | 83.60 | 41.20 | 24.90 |
| **2003** | 30.50 | **14.40** | 23.20 | 46.30 | 43.70 | 34.60 | 92.10 | 64.20 | 29.10 |
| **2004** | 27.20 | **11.70** | 20.60 | 51.90 | 31.50 | 32.70 | 39.80 | 45.10 | 25.50 |
| **2005** | 29.70 | **11.80** | 21.70 | 46.50 | 36.40 | 63.50 | 66.80 | 28.40 | 27.20 |
| **2006** | 35.00 | **7.10** | 29.90 | 46.60 | 25.20 | 54.60 | 97.50 | 48.60 | 29.10 |
| **2007** | **38.00** | **9.00** | **32.30** | **59.40** | **36.50** | **29.10** | **127.90** | **37.00** | **32.80** |
| **2008** | **50.10** | **14.30** | **26.40** | **66.40** | **32.90** | **47.60** | **90.00** | **22.90** | **37.00** |

Table **3** shows some interesting things about incarceration of 10-17 year olds in Victoria-

1. Victoria has by far the smallest rate of juvenile detention of any Australian State or Territory.
2. The rate of detention has decreased by a factor of more than four over 27 years between 1981 & 2008.
3. The greatest annual decrease occurred between 1990 & 1991, a reduction of more than 50% in one year coinciding with the commencement of operation of the CYPA.
4. Since 1991 the rate of detention has nearly always been substantially less than in any other State or Territory. In 2008, the NSW rate was 3½ times higher, the WA rate 5 times higher, and so on.
5. The Victorian rate increased significantly in 2003, as did the Australian average numbers and rates of detainees, but in 2004 the Victorian rate declined again to about the average of the 2001 & 2002 rates. The Victorian rate declined significantly in 2006, increased by a small factor in 2007 but increased significantly in 2008 to just below the 2003 figure.
6. The Victorian rate of detention on 30/06/2008 was just over one-third of the total Australian rate.

As the bar graph below shows, the Australian rate of youth detention in 2008 was vastly greater than the rate in Japan and much greater than the rates in Finland & Sweden. That year the Australian rate – described as 24.9 per 100,000 – was about 3 times greater than the Victorian rate. Both rates – but especially the Victorian rate – compare very favourably with those in the British Isles, New Zealand, the Netherlands & South Africa and extremely favourably with the extra-ordinarily high rate in U.S.A., a rate which is some 40 times greater.

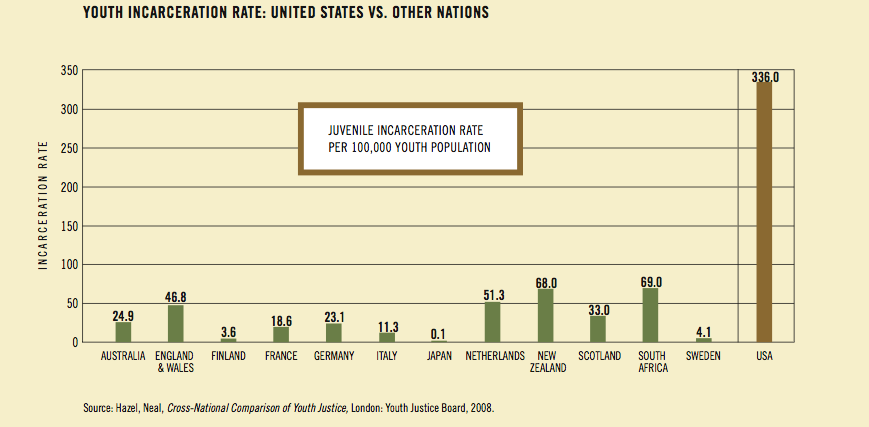


Table **4** is a comparative study of the rate of detention of indigenous and non-indigenous young persons aged 10-17 in each of the Australian States & Territories in each financial year from 2006-07 to 2009-10. The rate is measured as the number per 1,000 of the 10-17 population. The total rate of detention in Victoria in each of the years from 2006-07 to 2009-10 is substantially lower than in any other State or Territory – rarely more than one-half of the second lowest State/Territory. Overall, the rate of indigenous detention in Victoria is lower than in any other State or Territory but the rate of over-representation of indigenous detainees was still grossly disproportionate, varying between 16 and 18 times the rate of non-indigenous detention. By 2020/21 the over-representation had reduced a bit but was still unacceptably high: indigenous young people made up 1.7% of those aged 10-17 in the general population but 10% of those in detention].

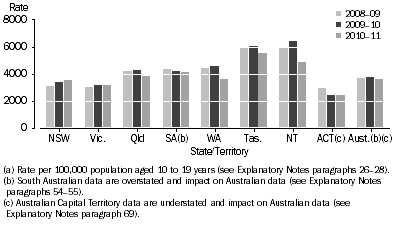
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **4 RATE PER 1,000 OF PERSONS AGED 10-17 IN JUVENILE CORRECTIVE INSTITUTIONS**  **INDIGENOUS [UPPER] – NON-INDIGENOUS [MIDDLE] – TOTAL [LOWER]** | | | | | | | | | |
|  | **NSW** | **Vic** | **Qld** | **WA** | **SA** | **Tas** | **NT** | **ACT** | **Aust** |
| **2006-07** | | | | | | | | | |
| **Indig.** | 25.73 | **7.86** | 13.88 | 42.67 | 27.93 | 10.95 | 11.17 | 42.61 | 21.48 |
| **Non-ind** | 1.74 | **0.46** | 0.66 | 1.43 | 1.84 | 1.33 | 0.72 | 2.78 | 1.18 |
| **Total** | **2.82** | **0.57** | **1.48** | **3.79** | **2.71** | **2.00** | **5.16** | **3.68** | **2.11** |
| **2007-08** | | | | | | | | | |
| **Indig.** | 28.70 | **10.44** | 14.01 | 48.18 | 34.57 | 10.96 | 10.50 | 46.99 | 23.60 |
| **Non-ind** | 1.92 | **0.62** | 0.68 | 1.38 | 1.97 | 1.69 | 0.91 | 2.95 | 1.30 |
| **Total** | **3.13** | **0.74** | **1.52** | **4.06** | **3.06** | **2.34** | **4.99** | **4.06** | **2.33** |
| **2008-09** | | | | | | | | | |
| **Indig.** | 28.72 | **11.22** | 12.04 | N/A | 35.25 | 10.33 | 10.53 | 37.58 | 20.49 |
| **Non-ind** | 1.92 | **0.62** | 0.69 | N/A | 2.02 | 1.91 | 0.99 | 3.73 | 1.31 |
| **Total** | **3.16** | **0.75** | **1.40** | **4.43** | **3.15** | **2.49** | **5.08** | **4.53** | **2.37** |
| **2009-10** | | | | | | | | | |
| **Indig.** | 28.98 | **11.76** | 13.51 | N/A | 32.72 | 10.68 | N/A | 44.11 | 24.10 |
| **Non-ind** | 1.93 | **0.75** | 0.84 | N/A | 1.94 | 1.98 | N/A | 3.78 | 1.44 |
| **Total** | **3.19** | **0.89** | **1.65** | **N/A** | **3.02** | **2.58** | **N/A** | **4.78** | **2.51** |

In a paper entitled “State based comparative assessment of juvenile justice in Australia”, Ms Kasey Tyler (Senior Police Advisor, Children’s Court of Victoria) has analysed Australian-wide data on the numbers and characteristics of youth in Australian Children’s Courts and subject to juvenile justice supervision in Australia. By “juvenile justice supervision”, Ms Tyler is referring to children on bail or on probation, youth supervision orders, youth attendance orders, youth detention orders or their interstate equivalents. In an overview of Children’s Courts in Australia, Ms Tyler noted, *inter alia*:

* In 2010-11, youth aged 10-19 make up 15% of the general Australian population but make up 28% of Australia’s offender population.
* In 2010-11 the lowest number of accused were recorded since collection began in 2006-07. Victoria recorded a drop of 22%. Males accounted for 79% of all accused finalised.
* On an average day in 2010-11, 79% of all accused pleaded or were proved guilty, 4% were acquitted and 17% of all prosecutions were withdrawn, transferred to other courts or closed via non-adjudicated finalisations. Of the 29,961 young persons whose charges were heard in Australia in 2010-11, 95% were found guilty of at least one offence.
* The national average length of sentenced detention for young persons in 2009-10 was 111 days, very slightly greater than the Victorian average of 110 days. The national average length of detention on remand was 36 days, very slightly less than the Victorian average of 38 days.
* On an average day in 2009-10, approximately 0.3% of young persons in Australia were under juvenile justice supervision. Of these 84% were male, up to 37% of whom were indigenous. Of the 16% of females under supervision, 43% were indigenous. Most young persons supervised in 2009-10 had first entered supervision when they were aged 14‑17 years. Victoria’s supervision rate in 2009-10 was 3.69 per 1,000 compared to a national average of 5.11 per 1,000. Victoria had the lowest average number of community-based orders per person (1.8) in 2009-10.
* The average number of days a young person spent under juvenile justice supervision in 2009-10 varied from 218 in Tasmania to 152 in A.C.T. The Victorian average of 179 days was just above the Australian average of 177 days. The more remote a young person’s residence, the more likely he/she is to be subject to supervision. Membership of the lowest socio-economic group increases a young person’s chance of being under supervision by a factor of more than four.
* Overall 10 to 19 year olds made up 28% of all offenders in 2010-11. Offending rates are at their highest (23% of all offenders) for youths aged 15 to 19. The most common offence was theft. For males offending peaked at age 18, for females at age 16.

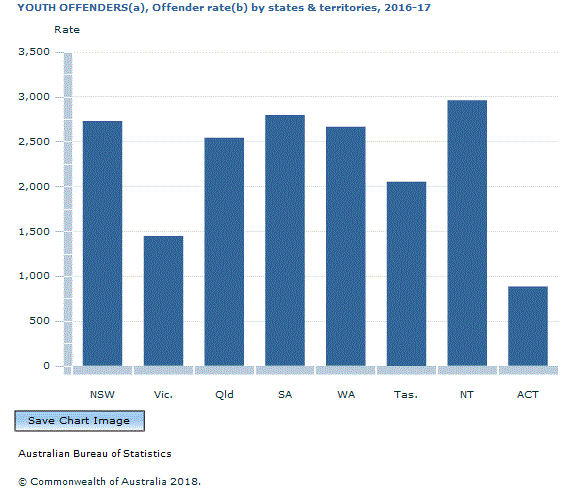
***Australian youth offender rates per 100,000 from 2008-2011***

It is interesting to note that Victoria – which has by far the lowest youth detention rate – also has the lowest rate of youth offending of any Australian State or Territory other than the A.C.T. whose data is described in notes to the chart below as “understated”. So much for the ‘law and order’ philosophy that increasing the detention rate lowers the crime rate. Modern thinking about child brain development referred to in *CNK v The Queen* (2011) 32 VR 641; [2011] VSCA 228 at [77] explains why this old ‘law and order’ philosophy is flawed, at least so far as children are concerned: “The risk that a period of detention will be counter-productive for an offender – and hence for the community – is never higher than in relation to a young offender who has not previously been in custody. Research to which the Chief Scientist of New Zealand has recently drawn attention has highlighted the potential for the immature brain to respond to punitive punishments in such a way as to make recidivism more rather than less likely."



***Australian youth offender rates per 100,000 in 2016/17***

Youth offending rates published by the Australian Bureau of Statistics on 08/02/2018 for the financial year 2016/17 demonstrate a decrease in the Australia-wide youth offender rate for the seventh consecutive year. Between 2009/10 & 2016/17 the rate fell from 3,339 to 2,330 offenders per 100,000 persons aged 10-17. This is a fall of 28% or 20,860 youth offenders over a period in which the total offender population in Australia has increased by 5%. In 2016/17 Victoria has recorded – as it also did from 2008-2011 – the lowest rate of youth offending (1,447 offenders per 100,000 persons) of any Australian State or Territory other than the A.C.T.

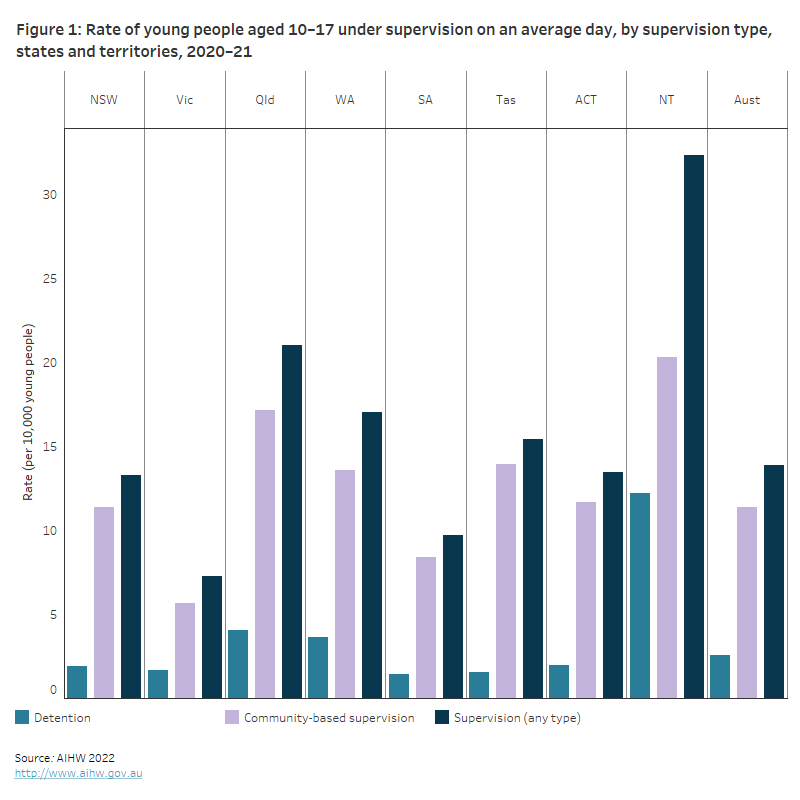


**AUSTRALIAN BUREAU OF STATISTICS**

***Australian youth offender rates in 2020/21 & 2021/22***

Youth offending rates published by the [Australian Bureau of Statistics on 09/02/2023](https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/crime-and-justice/recorded-crime-offenders/latest-release#youth-offenders) show that there were 45,210 offenders aged between 10 and 17 years proceeded against by police in Australia in 2021/22, an increase of 2% from 2020/21. However, after accounting for population change in that time, the youth offender rate decreased slightly from 1,785 offenders in 2020/21 to 1,778 offenders per 100,000 persons aged between 10 and 17 years in 2021/22.

***Rate of 10-17 year olds under supervision 2020/21***



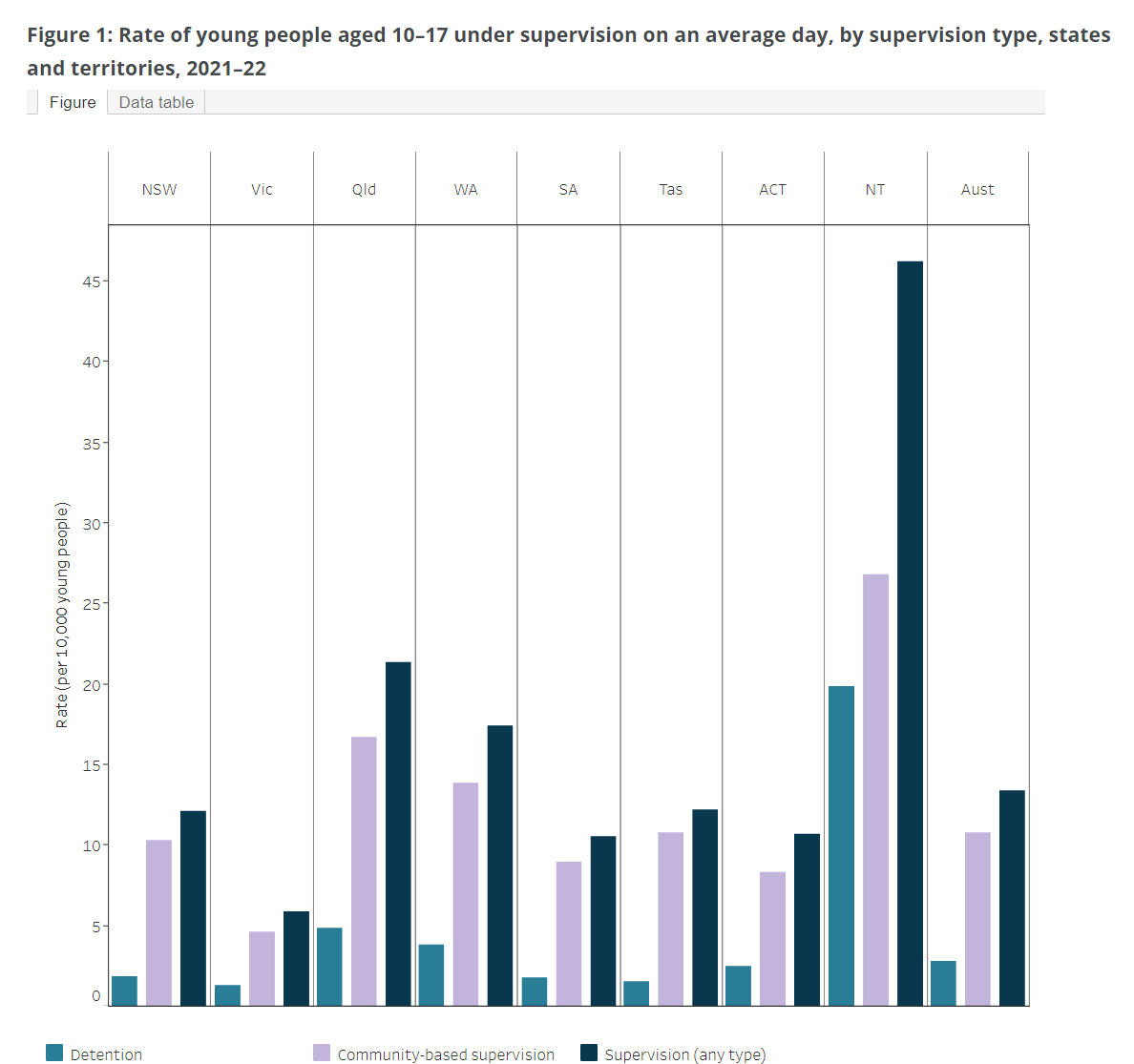
As the above chart partly demonstrates, in 2020/21 Victoria had:

* the lowest rate in Australia of young people under community-based supervision: 5.7 per 10,000 aged 10-17;
* one of the lowest rates of young people in detention: 1.6 per 10,000 aged 10-17;
* the lowest rate in Australia of young people under Youth Justice supervision (community-based and in detention): 7.3 per 10,000 aged 10-17; and
* the lowest return to sentenced supervision rate since 2014/15: 49.6% return following release from custody which is below the national average of 55%.

However, despite these positive results, two sad problems remain a ‘work in progress’:

* Indigenous young people made up 1.7% of those aged 10-17 in the general population but 16% (or 71) of those under supervision [17% (or 61) community-based and 10% (or 10) in detention]. Indigenous young people aged 10-17 were 11 times as likely as non-indigenous young people to be under supervision [68 per 10,000 cf. 7.3 per 10,000]. Indigenous over-representation in community-based supervision was 12 times the non-indigenous rate but was lower in detention (6 times the non-indigenous rate).
* Young people of South Sudanese ancestry were also grossly over-represented in both community-based supervision and in detention.

***Rate of 10-17 year olds under supervision 2021/22***



The above chart – deriving from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Youth Justice report dated 31/03/2023 – demonstrates that Victoria is the Australia state/territory with the lowest average rate of 10-17 year old children in detention, the lowest average rate of children under community-based supervision and the lowest average rate of children under any type of supervision.

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## **11.8 Parole & Remissions**

The purpose of parole is to mitigate the child’s punishment in favour of his or her rehabilitation through conditional freedom and thereby assist his or her reintegration into the community.

### **11.8.1 Parole**

**PAROLE PURSUANT TO A *SENTENCING ACT* IMPRISONMENT ORDER**

A court sentencing an **ADULT** to a term of imprisonment of 12 months or more has power – and in some circumstances an obligation – under s.11 of the *Sentencing Act 1991* to set a non-parole period. This same power – and obligation – applies to a **CHILD** being sentenced to a term of imprisonment of 12 months or more by the County Court or the Supreme Court.

In *R v Josefski* (2005) 13 VR 85; [2005] VSCA 265 at [43] Callaway JA, with whom Chernov JA agreed, reiterated principles applicable to fixing a non-parole period which he and Batt JA had earlier stated in *R v VZ* (1998) 7 VR 693:

“1. When a sentencing judge decides to fix a non-parole period that is unusual, reasons for taking that course should ordinarily be given.

2. A non-parole period may be unusual by comparison with other cases or having regard to the facts of the instant case or the course of the plea. Those examples are not exhaustive.

3. Where a non-parole period is unusual, a failure to give reasons does not inevitably betoken error but it invites appellant scrutiny.

4. The purpose of fixing a non-parole period is to provide for mitigation of punishment in favour of the prisoner’s rehabilitation through conditional freedom.

5. The fixing of a non-parole period requires discrete consideration of the factors bearing upon the question when the prisoner should be eligible for release.

6. The non-parole period is the minimum time that the sentencing judge determines that justice requires the prisoner to serve having regard to all the circumstances of the case.

7. It follows from 5 and 6 that a non-parole period cannot be fixed mechanically by some such method as taking two years, or one-third or one-quarter, off the head sentence.

8. All the relevant factors have to be taken into account. They are many and varied but they include-

(a) that a non-parole period has a penal element;

(b) that, where either general or specific deterrence is important, that objective should not be undermined by an unduly short non-parole period; and

(c) that the prisoner’s prospects of rehabilitation are almost always a significant consideration.”

His Honour also noted that rehabilitation achieved and in prospect is relevant to the head sentence as well as the non-parole period, but it is often given additional weight in fixing the latter. Another factor may be ill health: see *R v VZ* at 698. *R v VZ* has often been applied. See, for example, *R v Pope* (2000) 112 A Crim R 588 at 589; *R v Harkness & Ors* [2001] VSCA 87 at [1], [2] & [22]-[25]; *R v Barnes* [2003] VSCA 156 at [22]-[23], [25] & [31]-[35]; *R v Kotzmann* [1999] 2 VR 123 at 137; *R v Alparslan* [2007] VSCA 3 at [13]-[24]; *R v* *Wooden* [2006] VSCA 97 at [8]-[9]; *R v Detenamo* [2007] VSCA 160; *R v Bertrand* [2008] VSCA 182; *R v Merritt* [2008] VSCA 238 at [16]-[18].

In *Peter Buckley v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 152 the 59 year old applicant truck driver was convicted of one charge of culpable driving and four charges of negligently causing serious injury and was sentenced to TES IMP 11y/9y. The standard sentence for culpable driving is IMP8y. The Court of Appeal held that the head sentence was not manifestly excessive but that the non-parole period was. In re‑sentencing the applicant to TES IMP11y/7y9m Beach & McLeish JJA said at [37]-[38]:

[37] While the non-parole period (like the head sentence) must reflect the objective gravity of the offending, as has been said before, the non-parole period should constitute the minimum period of imprisonment that justice requires be served in any case: *Kumova* (2012) 37 VR 538, 545 [27]. In fixing a non-parole period, punishment is mitigated in favour of rehabilitation. The benefit of the minimum term is for the purpose of the offender’s rehabilitation: *Ibid*.

[38] While in the present case we are of the view that there was nothing manifestly excessive about the head sentence imposed by the judge, we have come to a different conclusion with respect to the non-parole period. In our view, when regard is had to all of the circumstances of the offending and the offender, the non-parole period is wholly outside (above) the permissible range. Not only is the absolute length of the non-parole period too long (manifestly excessive) in all the circumstances, it fails to give effect to the appellant’s prospects of rehabilitation, and thus to appropriately mitigate the appellant’s punishment: see *Kumova* (2012) 37 VR 538 546 [28]. While the judge did not expressly set out any finding as to the appellant’s prospects of rehabilitation, we note that on the plea the applicant submitted that his prospects were ‘promising’, and that the prosecutor told the judge that he had no issue with that description.”

See also *Power v The Queen* (1974) 131 CLR 623 (Barwick CJ, Menzies, Stephen and Mason JJ) at 627; *R v Morgan & Morgan* (1981-3) 7 A Crim R 146 (Kaye & Jenkinson JJ) at 154-155; *Gray v R* [2010] VSCA 312 at [20]-[21]; *Romero v The Queen* [2011] VSCA 45 at [25]-[26]; *R v Milkins* [2011] VSCA 93 at [106]; *R v Davy* [2011] VSCA 98 at [26]-[28]; *R v Green* [2011] VSCA 236 at [11]-[18]; *R v Rintoull* [2011] VSCA 245 at [29]-[33]; *DPP v Underwood* [2011] VSCA 270; *Felicite v The Queen* [2011] VSCA 274 at [37]-[42] & [50]-[51]; *R v Borthwick* [2012] VSCA 180; *R v Yost* [2012] VSCA 181; *DPP v Kumova* [2012] VSCA 212; *R v MA* [2012] VSCA 214; *John Gordon v The Queen* [2013] VSCA 343 at [13]-[20]; *Cummins (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2013] VSCA 352 at [80]; *McLean v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 209; *Staples v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 307 at [80]-[82]; *Bidong v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 33 at [41]-[42]; *Stefani v The Queen* [2023] VSCA 183 at [38]-[41]; [2024] VSCA 29 at [42]-[52]; *Constantinou v The King* [2024] VSCA 79 at [124]-[135]; *The King v Hatahet* [2024] HCA 23 at [19]-[28].

See also *DPP v Huby* [2019] VSCA 106 at [70]-[101] and the numerous cases cited therein.

In *Rahmani v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 51 at [38]-[40] the Court of Appeal (Maxwell P & Niall JA) said:

[38] “This Court has repeatedly been called upon to consider grounds contending that the non-parole period fixed by the sentencing judge failed to effectuate a statement of intention by the judge to impose a ‘shorter than usual non-parole period’. In 2012, in *Wallace v The Queen* (2012) 35 VR 520; [2012] VSCA 114 at [2], the Court (Maxwell ACJ & Buchanan JA) summarised the principles which would apply in the consideration of such ground:

* 1. The non-parole period is the minimum term which justice requires be served.
  2. There is no ‘usual’ non-parole period.
  3. The question to be determined is whether, in all of the circumstances of the case and of the offender, it was reasonably open to the sentencing judge to fix the non-parole period which the judge fixed.
  4. Exceptionally, the Court may be persuaded that the non-parole period manifestly failed to give effect to the sentencing judge’s stated intention, in which case error is established and the sentencing discretion re-opened.

[39] In *Dosen v The Queen* [2012] VSCA 307 at [8] the Court (Maxwell P & Redlich JA) said:

The difficulties created by the notion of a ‘shorter than usual’ non-parole period have been explored in a series of recent decisions in this Court. It has consistently been held that, subject to one exception, the question for consideration when a ground of this kind is raised is whether it was reasonably open to the sentencing judge, in the circumstances of the case, to fix the non-parole period that he did. The exception is where the Court is persuaded that the non-parole period manifestly failed to give effect to the judge’s stated intention, in which case sentencing error is established.

[40] More recently, in *Tutchell v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 269, McLeish and Niall JJA cited the above passages from *Wallace* and *Dosen* and said at [45] & [47]-[48] (citations omitted):

It is plain from *Wallace* that the test to be applied in addressing the applicant’s contentions is whether the non-parole period manifestly failed to give effect to the sentencing judge’s stated intention. While the Court described the circumstances in which that test will be satisfied as ‘exceptional’, it did not posit a test of exceptional circumstances. The use of the word ‘exceptional’ showed only that the Court did not expect the test often to be satisfied.

…

The Court in *Dosen* held that it was reasonably open for the sentencing judge to fix a non-parole period which represented 67 per cent of the head sentence, in circumstances where it was assumed that the judge “intended to provide for a longer period on parole than he might otherwise have done”.

The cases make it plain that, in the application of the above test, each case depends upon its particular facts and no general rule can be articulated by which ‘usual’ or ‘normal’ ratios between non-parole periods and head sentences may be determinative. At the same time, such a ratio may help to inform an answer to the question whether the period fixed has manifestly failed to give effect to the judge’s stated intention.”

In relation to the relevance to a non-parole period of the likelihood of the applicant’s deportation after serving his sentence, see *R v Mann* [2011] VSCA 189 at [36]-[43] and the cases cited therein – *Guden v The Queen* (2010) 28 VR 228, [2010] VSCA 196, [15] & *R v Strestha* (1991) 173 CLR 48, 57 (Brennan & McHugh JJ). See also *R v Hutton* [2011] VSC 484 at [41]-[42].

In *DPP v Yeomans* [2011] VSCA 277 the unsuccessful appellant was aged 18 at the time of the offending and 19 on the date of sentence and had 120 previous convictions from eight court appearances between 2001 and 2009. He was sentenced to IMP 6y7m/4y in relation to 19 separate incidents of burglary (including 2 aggravated burglaries), robbery (including 2 armed robberies) and theft. At [3] Ashley JA approved the lengthy parole period:

“The sentencing judge allowed for a substantial potential period of parole. I think that it will be of critical importance, if the appellant is to have any chance of escaping from a pattern of repeat offending and gaol, that he have substantial assistance from the parole service in whatever period of parole is granted to him. Such assistance may provide the only antidote to the potentially corroding influence of years spent by a young man in an adult prison.”

In his judgment in *R v Monardo* [2005] VSCA 115 Callaway JA observed at [4] that:

“It is well established that a head sentence must be assessed on the basis that the prisoner may have to serve every day of it. A head sentence that is too severe cannot be saved by a moderate, or even merciful, non-parole period.”

In *R v Boland* [2007] VSCA 242 at [13]-[14] Nettle JA, with whom Ashley & Dodds-Streeton JJA agreed, said:

“While it is true that one must approach the task of sentencing on the basis that the prisoner may be required to serve every day of the head sentence, the process of setting a non-parole period is in some respects not dissimilar to concluding that some part of a sentence should be suspended. As was said by the High Court in *Power v The Queen* (1974) 131 CLR 623, 628:

‘[C]onfinement in a prison serves the same purposes, whether before or after the expiration of a non-parole period, and throughout it is punishment, but punishment directed towards reformation. The only difference between the two periods is that during the former the prisoner cannot be released on the ground that the punishment has served its purpose sufficiently to warrant release from confinement, whereas in the latter he can. In a true sense, the non-parole period is the minimum period of imprisonment to be served because the sentencing judge considers that the crime committed calls for such detention.’

“There is, of course, the difference between a partially suspended sentence and a non-parole period that, with the former, the prisoner may be certain that he will not be required to serve an immediate term any longer than is set. There may also be practical differences associated with the need to report and supervision.”

In *R v Wunan Yu* [2005] VSCA 18 Winneke P (with whom Charles & Buchanan JJA agreed), referring to the judgment of Marks J in *R v Binder and Langer* [1990] VR 563 at 569-570, to *Shrestha v The Queen* (1991) 173 CLR 48 and to s.5(2AA)(a) of the *Sentencing Act 1991*, held at [11] that the sentencing judge was wrong to take into account the possible effects of executive action or policy (namely the prospect of the appellant being deported to China) in determining not to set a non-parole period. Further, his Honour said, the circumstances of the case, including the youth and personal characteristics of the appellant, his “otherwise good character” and his rehabilitation made it highly desirable to fix a minimum term following which he would become eligible for parole. See also *R v Arnold* [1998] VSCA 34; *R v Heazlewood* [1998] VSCA 33; *R v Glennon (No.3)* [2005] VSCA 262 at [40]; *Nguyen v The Queen* [2010] VSCA 244; *R v Adenopo* [2011] VSCA 269.

In *Kowski v The King* [2024] VSCA 3 the Court of Appeal rejected the applicant’s submission that the sentencing judge erred in fixing a non-parole period rather than imposing a combined sentence of imprisonment and a CCO. In so submitting the applicant had asserted {see [66]} that “he had offended in the past and that periods of parole had not prevented further offending, the judge should have proceeded on the basis that he would not get parole and that a CCO with conditions was the only way the court could ensure supervision once the applicant was released from prison.” In response Niall & Boyce JJA said at [70]-[71]:

“The judge was plainly of the view that the offending was too serious for a combination sentence. That conclusion was well open. The judge was required to fix a non-parole period. That did not mean that the judge ignored rehabilitation. The judge was plainly alive to the need for rehabilitative support to be provided to the applicant outside prison.

Contrary to the applicant’s submission, the judge was not permitted to take into account whether or not he would get parole. Rather, the judge determined to allow a relatively lengthy period for parole. Whether he gets parole is a matter for the executive and irrelevant to the sentencing exercise: *Sentencing Act 1991*, s 5(2AA)(a).”

The Court of Appeal has made it clear in *R v Tin Yu Ng* and *R v Yik Lun Siu* [2009] VSCA 218 at [28] that-

“[T]here is no usual or standard non-parole period: *R v Tran* [2006] VSCA 222, [27]-[28]. Looking at the typical non-parole period imposed, Callaway JA in *R v Bolton & Barker* [1998] 1 VR 692 observed at 699:

‘As with the discount appropriate to a plea of guilty, there is no fixed ratio between a head sentence and a non-parole period. In the majority of cases the proportion is between two-thirds and three-quarters, but both shorter and longer periods are found.’”

Both *R v Bolton* and *R v Tran* were referred to with approval by the Court of Appeal in *R v Marino* [2011] VSCA 133 at [45]-[47].

In *Carter v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 13 the Court of Appeal refused to fix a non-parole period in a case where the applicant had already served almost the entirety of the 3y total effective sentence. In *R v Chee* [2021] VSC 355 at [36]-[37] Lasry J did not set a non-parole period in a case where the accused had already served 867d and would almost certainly be deported at the end of the IMP3y sentence.

In *Russo v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 244 the 30 year old appellant had pleaded guilty to charges of carjacking, conduct endangering life and failing to stop vehicle and had been sentenced to IMP4y/3y. In allowing the appeal and reducing the non-parole period to 2y6m, Emerton JA (with whom Priest JA agreed) said at [64] & [66]-[68]:

[64] “In *Grantley (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 112 the Court of Appeal had confirmed that there is no ‘usual’ non-parole period. Although non-parole periods are generally in the range of 60 to 75 per cent of the head sentence, the fact that the non-parole period fixed in a particular case falls outside that range is not indicative of error. Moreover, although in circumstances where a sentencing judge has fixed a very long non-parole period, an appeal court will be assisted by reasons given by the sentencing judge for fixing the period in question, failure to give such reasons does not bespeak error. The question to be determined is whether in all of the circumstances it was reasonably open to the sentencing judge to fix such a non-parole period.

[66] According to the High Court of Australia, the purpose of fixing a non-parole period is ‘to provide for mitigation of the punishment of the prisoner in favour of his rehabilitation through conditional freedom, when appropriate, once the prisoner has served the minimum time that a judge determines justice requires that he must serve having regard to all the circumstances of his offence’: *Power v The Queen* (1974) 131 CLR 623, 629; [1974] HCA 26 (Barwick CJ, Menzies, Stephen and Mason JJ). In fixing the non-parole period, the sentencing judge is required to consider the factors put before the Court that are relevant in determining the question of when the prisoner should be eligible to be released and rehabilitated through conditional supervision. Any steps already taken towards rehabilitation are a relevant consideration: *R v VZ* (1998) 7 VR 693, 698–9 [18]; [1998] VSCA 32 (Callaway JA).

[67] In this case, there was no reason to impose what is unquestionably a long non-parole period. To the contrary, there was good reason to give the appellant the opportunity of a significant period for rehabilitation under strict supervision in the community. While the appellant is not a young offender and has a relevant criminal record, this is the first time he has been incarcerated. He has available to him guaranteed work, which he has proven himself to be well capable of performing, and strong family support, and he has evinced a strong desire to remain drug free in the future.

[68] In my view, the non-parole period imposed in these circumstances was outside the range and a shorter non-parole period should have been imposed in the interest of the appellant’s rehabilitation and in order to facilitate his reintegration into the community following his time in prison.”

In *Wilson v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 2 the Court of Appeal rejected a submission that the sentencing judge had erred by fixing a manifestly excessive non-parole period. At [35]-[37] Priest & Niall JJA said:

[35] “The term of a sentence ‘is the period which justice according to law prescribes, in the estimation of the sentencing judge, for the particular offence committed by the particular offender’, and the minimum term or non-parole period ‘is the period before the expiration of which release of that offender would, in the estimation of the sentencing judge, be in violation of justice according to law, notwithstanding the mitigation of punishment which mercy to the offender and benefit to the public may justify’ {*R v Morgan* (1980) 7 A Crim R 146, 154 (Jenkinson J, Young CJ and Kaye J agreeing). See also *Power v The Queen* (1974) 131 CLR 623, 628–9 (Barwick CJ, Menzies, Stephen and Mason JJ); *Deakin v The Queen* (1984) 54 ALR 765; *Bugmy v The Queen* (1990) 169 CLR 525, 536 (Dawson, Toohey and Gaudron JJ)}. The fixing of a minimum term ‘is no sinecure but requires discrete consideration of those factors which exist in the material before the court which bear upon the question of when the prisoner should be eligible for mitigation of confinement and, in turn, rehabilitated under conditional supervision’ {*R v Mulvale* (Unreported, Court of Appeal, Winneke P, 20 February 1996), citing *R v Currey* [1975] VR 647. See also *R v VZ* (1998) 7 VR 693, [15]–[16] (Callaway JA)}.

[36] We consider that the non-parole period fixed by Judge Hogan fell well within the bounds of sound discretionary judgment, and did not infringe the principle of totality….

[37] There is no ‘usual’ non-parole period {see *Kumova v The Queen* (2012) 37 VR 538, 541–3 [10]–[15] (Nettle JA)}. In the circumstances of this case, a notional non-parole period equating to a shade over 80 per cent of the length of the notional total effective sentence was open.”

In *Dieni v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 16 the 74 year old appellant had pleaded guilty to attempting to pervert the course of justice (6 charges), trafficking in drug of dependence (2 charges), false accounting, possessing firearms (2 charges) and had been sentenced to IMP14y/9y. The Crown conceded that the TES and NPP were each manifestly excessive. In re-sentencing the appellant to IMP9y/5y the Court of Appeal (Beach, Kaye & T Forrest JJA) noted at [147] that “because of the applicant’s age and health problems, we have fixed a relatively short non-parole period”.

In *O’Brien v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 11 the appellant had pleaded guilty to one charge of sexual assault, one charge of sexual penetration of a child, 7 charges of failing to comply with reporting obligations under the SORA and 2 charges of possessing a drug of dependence. A TES of IMP5y3m/3y11m was imposed. In refusing leave to appeal McLeish JA did not accept the appellant’s submission that the non-parole period was manifestly excessive. At [35] his Honour said:

“This Court has repeatedly stated there is no ‘usual’ non-parole period: see, eg, *Grantley v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 112 [37] (Maxwell P and Kyrou JA). The non-parole period must be responsive to the particular, and sometimes unusual, circumstances of the case, and the offender. The fact that the non-parole period will often fall between 60 and 75 per cent of the head sentence does not mean that a sentence at the upper or lower end of that range, or outside it, is in error: see *R v Merritt* (2008) 191 A Crim R 272, 277–8 [24] (Vincent, Nettle and Kellam JJA); [2008] VSCA 238. Instead, the question to be determined is whether it was reasonably open to the sentencing judge to fix the non-parole period in question: *Grantley* [2018] VSCA 112 [37]–[38] (Maxwell P and Kyrou JA).”

In *DPP v Pan* [2022] VSCA 98 the Court of Appeal dismissed a DPP appeal against a sentence of IMP24y/16y imposed on a 22 year old man who at the age of 19 had fatally shot a childhood friend at close range with a shotgun. At [53]-[56] Priest, Niall & Emerton JJA said:

[53] “At the time the murder was committed, the offence was a standard offence, with a standard sentence of 25 years’ imprisonment. Section 11A(4) of the *Sentencing Act* required the judge to fix a non-parole period of 70 per cent of the head sentence, unless the court considered that it was in the interests of justice not to do so. The judge imposed a non-parole period of 16 years, which is 66.67 per cent of the head sentence. In her reasons, the judge said that the circumstances of the case, particularly the respondent’s youth, his plea of guilty and the length of the head sentence, led her to conclude that it was in the interests of justice to fix a lower non-parole period.

[54] In assessing whether the non-parole period is manifestly inadequate, it is important to recall the purpose of parole as explained by the High Court in *Power v The Queen* [1974] HCA 26; (1974) 131 CLR 623 at 629, namely ‘to provide for mitigation of the punishment of the prisoner in favour of his rehabilitation through conditional freedom, when appropriate, once the prisoner has served the minimum time that a judge determines justice requires that he must serve having regard to all the circumstances of his offence.’

[55] As Winneke P explained in *R v Mulvale* [unreported, 20 February 1996]:

‘The fixing of a minimum period is no sinecure but requires discrete consideration of those factors which exist in the material before the court which bear upon the question of when the prisoner should be eligible for mitigation of confinement and, in turn, rehabilitated under conditional supervision.’

It was plainly open to the judge to take into account the respondent’s youth and plea of guilty in assessing what was the minimum time that justice required the respondent serve in prison. The Director’s submission that the length of the head sentence was irrelevant to the fixing of a non-parole period, which was not advanced as a specific error but as a factor pointing to how the outcome might have gone awry, cannot be accepted. As s 11A makes clear, the *Sentencing Act* requires, at least as a starting point, that the non-parole period be fixed by reference to a proportion of the head sentence. Further, the length of the head sentence will be the other determinant of how long the person must be under supervision.”

See also *DPP v Brown* [2023] VSC 311 at [135]-[139].

**NO POWER TO ORDER A NON-PAROLE PERIOD FOR A CHILD SENTENCED TO DETENTION UNDER THE CYFA**

When sentencing a **CHILD** to a period of detention in a YRC or YJC, neither the Supreme Court, the County Court nor the Children’s Court has power to set a non-parole period, whatever the period of detention imposed. This is so whether the child is sentenced under ss.32-34 of the *Sentencing Act* or s.410 or s.412 of the CYFA. A decision to release a child on parole is an administrative decision taken pursuant to s.458(1) by the Youth Parole Board [see ss.442-452 & 462-463 of the CYFA] after a review of the case made by the Board. This structure was criticised by the Court of Appeal in *R v Hill* [1996] 2 VR 496 at 504-5 but it remains the law:

"[T]he…fact that the Youth Parole Board (which, unlike a court, is not obliged to make public its decisions) and not any court, decides when a young offender will be released, appears to provide but little support for the ideal of truth in sentencing."

Though every case depends on its individual circumstances, the Youth Parole Board often considers eligibility for parole of young persons who have been sentenced to YJC/YRC detention of 6 months or more. However, this is not a universal rule.

Section 458(4) provides that subject to any determination of the Youth Parole Board, a parole order is subject to-

1. the terms and conditions prescribed in reg.30 of the Children, Youth and Families Regulations 2017 [S.R.No.19/2017]; and
2. any conditions imposed under s.458A, the conditions referred to in s.458A(3) being mandatory on a parole order for a person detained in respect of category A or category B offences committed in certain circumstances unless the Board considers that the person has demonstrated a history of good behaviour and positive engagement with rehabilitation programs throughout the detention period for the offence in question.

Under s.459(2) of the CYFA, a person released on parole is regarded as still being under sentence and as not having served his or her period of detention.

Section 460(1) of the CYFA empowers the Board to cancel parole at any time before the end of the parole period. Section 460(4) empowers the Board to cancel a person's parole, whether or not the parole period may already have ended, if the person is sentenced to a term of imprisonment or period of detention of more than 3 months in respect of an offence committed during the parole period. Section 461 empowers the Board to release a detainee on parole more than once.

**A STATE MAY VALIDLY CHANGE THE CONDITIONS FOR A GRANT OF PAROLE WITHOUT THIS BEING AN IMPERMISSIBLE INTERFERENCE WITH JUDICIAL POWER**

In *Cherry v Queensland* [2025] HCA 14 the plaintiff had been convicted in 2002, following trial by jury in the Supreme Court of Queensland, of two counts of murder. He was sentenced to life imprisonment for each count. The sentencing judge ordered that the plaintiff not be released from imprisonment until he had served a minimum of 20 years in gaol (unless released sooner under exceptional circumstances parole). An appeal against conviction was unsuccessful. The body of one of the murder victims has never been found. Subsequently in 2006 the Queensland parliament passed the *Corrective Services Act 2006* (Qld). Under s.175L of the CSAQ the Queensland parole board may make a “no‑cooperation declaration” about a “no-body-no parole” prisoner where the remains of the victim have not been found and where the parole board is not satisfied that the prisoner has given “satisfactory cooperation”. The effect of such declaration is that the prisoner may not apply for parole notwithstanding the expiration of the non-parole period.

The plaintiff commenced a proceeding in the original jurisdiction of the High Court challenging the constitutional validity of ss.175L & 175E of the CSAQ and submitting that ss.175L & 175E permit the executive branch of the State government to interfere with the exercise of judicial power by the Supreme Court of Queensland contrary to the “separation of powers” principle established by the High Court in *Kable v Director of Public Prosecutions (NSW)* (1996) 189 CLR 51. In holding that s.175L was not invalid – and consequently finding that no answer was required in relation to s.175E – Gageler CJ, Gordon, Edelman, Steward, Gleeson, Jagot and Beech-Jones JJ said at [2]:

“The plaintiff's challenge to the validity of ss 175L and 175E faces the difficult task of distinguishing the principles established by the decisions of this Court in *Crump v New South Wales* (2012) 247 CLR 1, *Knight v Victoria* (2017) 261 CLR 306 and *Minogue v Victoria* (2019) 268 CLR 1. In essence, those cases establish that a State may validly change the conditions for a grant of parole from time to time and that this does not constitute an impermissible interference with judicial power.”

### **11.8.2 Remissions**

Though, again, every case depends on its individual circumstances, a child who is serving a sentence of YJC or YRC detention of less than 6 months is sometimes given a remission for satisfactory behaviour. Remission for satisfactory behaviour in custody is regulated by reg.37 of Children, Youth and Families Regulations 2017 [S.R.No.19/2017].

## **11.9 Temporary leave from detention**

In relation to a person detained in a remand centre, YRC or YJC, s.485(1) of the CYFA empowers the Secretary DJCS or the officer in charge to permit a detainee to take temporary leave of absence, with or without escort or supervision, for any purpose stated in the permit. Such purpose is not limited to but may include any of the following:

(a) to engage in employment, whether with or without remuneration;

(b) to attend an educational or training institution;

(c) to visit his or her family, relatives or friends;

(d) to participate in sport, recreation or entertainment in the community;

(e) to attend a hospital or a medical, dental or psychiatric clinic or like place for receiving treatment or for examination;

(f) to attend a funeral;

(g) to accompany members of the police force for a specified purpose or for assisting in the administration of justice;

(h) to seek employment;

(i) to live in any other accommodation specified in the permit for any purpose specified in the permit.

Such permit may be subject to any conditions, limitations or restrictions that the Secretary thinks fit to impose: s.485(2). A detainee permitted temporary leave is deemed to continue to be in legal custody: s.485(3).

A permit under s.485(1) may be granted at any time, whether or not the non-parole or non-remission part of his or her sentence has been completed. This is because the underlying philosophy of both YRC and YJC detention is rehabilitation. The aim is to work intensively with each detainee and to provide him or her with supervision, support, education, training and rehabilitation programs to maximise any possibility of rehabilitation ["New Directions for Juvenile Justice: Melbourne Juvenile Justice Centre", Juvenile Justice Branch, Dept of Human Services, June 1995, Publication No.92/0121].

## **11.10 Transfers between custodial institutions**

Administrative transfers between custodial institutions are authorized and regulated by s.484 and by the following provisions of the CYFA:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **FROM YRC** | | **FROM YJC** | | **FROM PRISON** | |
| TO YJC | ss.464-466 | TO PRISON | ss.467-469  s.473  [transfer back] | TO YRC | s.472 |
| TO PRISON | s.467-469  s.473  [transfer back] | TO YRC | s.470 | TO YJC | s.471 |

Cases in which the Supreme Court or Court of Appeal has recommended to the Adult Parole Board that it consider transferring a young person from prison to a YJC pursuant to s.244 of the CYPA [now s.471 of the CYFA] include *DPP v Karipis* [2005] VSCA 119 at [18] & [23]; *DPP v Reynolds & Ors* [2004] VSC 533 at [34]; *R v PP* [2002] VSC 533 at [38]-[39] and on appeal [2003] VSCA 100 at [11]; *R v LMA* [2005] VSC 152 at [10]-[11]; *R v Ty* [2005] VSC 109 at [10]; *R v Speedie* [2005] VSC 194 at [38].

## **11.11 Further custodial sentence imposed on detainee**

The following sections of the CYFA regulate the service of a subsequent custodial sentence imposed on a person who is already serving a custodial sentence.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **CYFA** | **SUBJECT MATTER** |
| 474 | Person in YRC sentenced to detention in YJC or to imprisonment |
| 475 | Person in YJC sentenced to imprisonment |
| 476 | Person in YJC sentenced to detention in YRC |
| 477 | Person in prison sentenced to detention in YJC |

By and large these provisions confer powers on the Youth Parole Board and the Adult Parole Board. The only power conferred on the Court, albeit indirectly, is a power to direct that certain sentences be served cumulatively or part-concurrently. Provisions relevant to the Court are as follows:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **CYFA** | **SUBJECT MATTER** |
| 475(2) | If a person has been sentenced to YJC and before the end of the sentence is sentenced to a cumulative term of imprisonment, service of the YJC detention is suspended until the person has served the sentence of imprisonment. |
| 475(3) | Every sentence of imprisonment must, unless otherwise directed by the Court at the time, be served concurrently with any uncompleted sentence of YJC detention imposed either before or at the time the sentence of imprisonment was imposed. |
| 477(1) | If a person has been sentenced to imprisonment and before the end of the sentence is sentenced to a cumulative term of YJC detention, service of the YJC detention is suspended until the person has served the sentence of imprisonment. |
| 477(2) | Every sentence of YJC detention must, unless otherwise directed by the Court at the time, be served concurrently with any uncompleted sentence of imprisonment imposed either before or at the time the sentence of YJC detention was imposed. |

For a brief judicial comment on ss.475(2) & 475(3) of the CYFA [formerly ss.246(2) & 246(3) of the CYPA] see the judgment of O'Bryan AJA - with which Vincent JA & Smith AJA agreed - in *R v Caleb James O'Connor* [2004] VSCA 8.

## **11.12 Breach of sentencing orders made under the CYFA**

### **11.12.1 “Generic” provisions governing commencement, hearing and transfer of breach proceedings**

For a proceeding commenced on or after 01/07/2005 for breach of a sentencing order made under the CYPA or the CYFA (regardless of which court made the sentencing order, when the offence to which the proceeding relates was committed, when the sentencing order was made or what was the defendant’s age at the time of the breach), s.423 of the CYFA [previously s.196A of the CYPA] provides a nearly “generic” procedure for the commencement, hearing and transfer of such proceeding. Breach of a CYFA sentencing order for this section includes default in the payment of a fine or of any instalment under an instalment order.

**ALL CYFA BREACH PROCEEDINGS ARE COMMENCED IN THE CHILDREN’S COURT**

Section 423(2) provides that a proceeding for breach of a CYFA sentencing order must be commenced in the Children’s Court-

1. whether the sentencing order was made by the Children’s Court or by the Supreme Court or County Court, whether on appeal or otherwise; and
2. whether the person against whom the proceeding is commenced is aged 19 or more.

The method of and time for commencement of a proceeding against a person for breach of a CYFA sentencing order / revocation of a YCO is as follows-

**ACCOUNTABLE UNDERTAKING**: Commenced by notice served by the Court on the person and if the person is under 15 years of age his or her parent [s.366(1)]. If the person fails to appear in response to served notice, the Court may issue a warrant to arrest [s.366(2)]. No time limits specified.

**GOOD BEHAVIOUR BOND**: Commenced by notice served by the Court on the person and if the person is under 15 years of age his or her parent [s.371(1)]. If the person fails to appear in response to served notice and the Court is satisfied the notice has come to the attention of the person, the Court may issue a warrant to arrest [s.371(2)(a)] or proceed in the person’s absence [s.371(2)(b)]. Proceeding must be commenced-

* not later than 3 months after a finding of guilt in respect of a breaching charge [s.372(a)]; or
* not later than 3 months after any other alleged breach and before the expiry of the bond [s.372(b)].

**PROBATION**: Commenced by notice served by the Secretary to the Department of Justice and Community Safety [‘Secretary DJCS’] or by the Court [s.384(1)] or by warrant to arrest if service of a notice cannot be effected [s.384(2)(b)]. If the person fails to appear in response to served notice and the Court is satisfied the notice has come to the attention of the person, the Court may issue a warrant to arrest [s.384(2)(a)] Proceeding must be commenced-

* not later than 3 months after a finding of guilt in respect of a breaching charge [s.386(a)]; or
* not later than 14 working days after any other alleged breach [s.386(b)].

**YOUTH SUPERVISION ORDER**: Commenced by notice served by the Secretary DJCS or by the Court [s.392(1)] or by warrant to arrest if service of a notice cannot be effected [s.392(2)(b)]. If the person fails to appear in response to served notice and the Court is satisfied the notice has come to the attention of the person, the Court may issue a warrant to arrest [s.392(2)(a)]. Proceeding must be commenced-

* not later than 3 months after a finding of guilt in respect of a breaching charge [s.395(a)]; or
* not later than 14 working days after any other alleged breach [s.395(b)].

**YOUTH ATTENDANCE ORDER**: Commenced by notice served by the Secretary DJCS [s.408(4)] or warrant to arrest if service of a notice cannot be effected [s.408(6)(b)]. If person fails to appear in response to served notice and the Court is satisfied the notice has come to the attention of the person, the Court may issue a warrant to arrest [s.406(6)(a)]. Proceeding must be commenced-

* not later than 3 months after a finding of guilt in respect of a breaching charge [s.408(3)(a)]; or
* not later than 14 working days after any other alleged breach [s.408(3)(b)].

**YOUTH CONTROL ORDER**: Unlike the other sentencing orders, the provisions relating to breach of a YCO are contained in sections referring to “revocation” of a YCO [ss.409Q & 409R]. There are no stand-alone breach proceedings. Proceedings for revocation are commenced by application filed by-

1. the child or, if the child is under 15 years of age, his or her parent [s.409Q(2)(a)];
2. the Secretary DJCS if it appears to the Secretary that the child has breached the YCO for any reason [s.409Q(2)(b)]; or
3. a police officer if the child has been convicted of an offence punishable on first conviction with imprisonment for life or for a term of 5 years ir more during the period that the YCO is in force [s.409Q(2)(c)].

Notice of the hearing of the application must be served by the Court on the child and, if the child is aged under 15 years, his or her parent and on the applicant. The Court may order that a warrant to arrest be issued against the child if he or she does not attend for the hearing [s.409Q(6)]. Proceeding must be commenced-

* not later than 3 months after a finding of guilt in respect of a breaching charge [s.409Q(3)(a)]; or
* not later than 14 working days after any other alleged breach [s.409Q(3)(b)].

It is not clear from the brief reference to s.423 in s.409K(c) whether it is the intention of Parliament that proceedings for revocation of a YCO made by a higher Court must also be commenced in the Children’s Court if the proceedings do not actually originate from a “breach” of the YCO (for example if the application was filed by the child under s.409Q(2)(a) or by a police officer under s.409Q(2)(c) in relation to a conviction for an offence which pre-dated the making of the YCO).

**HEARING OF A CYFA BREACH PROCEEDING WHERE CHILD IS UNDER AGE 19**

Section 423(3) provides that if the proceeding for breach of a CYFA sentencing order is against a child who is under the age of 19 years when the breach proceeding is commenced, the Children’s Court must hear and determine the proceeding unless-

1. the sentencing order was made by the Supreme Court or the County Court and the child does not consent to the Children’s Court hearing the breach proceeding; or
2. the Children’s Court considers that in all the circumstances of the case it is appropriate to transfer the proceeding to the court that made the sentencing order.

**HEARING OF A CYFA BREACH PROCEEDING WHERE CHILD IS AGED 19 OR MORE**

Sections 423(4) & 423(5) provide that if the proceeding for breach of a CYFA sentencing order is against a person who is aged 19 years or more when the breach proceeding is commenced, the Children’s Court must transfer the proceeding (other than a proceeding for breach of an accountable undertaking) to the Magistrates’ Court or to the court that made the sentencing order unless the Children’s Court considers that in all the circumstances of the case it is appropriate for the Children’s Court to hear and determine the proceeding, having regard to the following matters-

1. the age of the person;
2. the nature and circumstances of the alleged breach;
3. the stage of the breach proceeding;
4. whether the person is the subject of another proceeding in any other court;
5. the availability of appropriate sentencing orders in the other court if the breach were proved;
6. whether the person prefers to be dealt with in the Children’s Court or any other court;
7. any other matter that the Court considers relevant.

An exception has been made in s.423(4) for proceedings for breach of an accountable undertaking. These may not be transferred to a higher court in any circumstances. Presumably the reason for this exception is that s.366(5) provides that if the court revokes the order dismissing the charge the maximum penalty it may impose is a fine of no more than 1 penalty unit.

Section 423(6) provides that a CYFA breach proceeding must not be transferred on the sole ground that the sentencing order was made by another court.

**POWER TO DISCONTINUE CYFA BREACH PROCEEDING & TRANSFER TO ANOTHER COURT**

Section 423(7) provides that-

* if the person does not consent to the Children’s Court hearing the proceeding for breach of a CYFA sentencing order made by the Supreme Court or County Court; or
* if the Children’s Court considers that the breach proceeding should be transferred-

it must discontinue the proceeding and order that it be transferred to the relevant other court and in the meantime may-

1. permit the person to go at large; or
2. grant the person bail; or
3. remand the person in custody or in accordance with s.49 *Magistrates’ Court Act*.

Section 423(8) gives the Magistrates’ Court power to re-sentence the person as if it had just been satisfied of the person’s guilt, whether or not the Magistrates’ Court would otherwise have had jurisdiction to deal with the offence.

**CONSTITUTION OF CHILDREN’S COURT HEARING A CYFA BREACH PROCEEDING**

Proceedings for breach of the following sentencing orders must be heard by the judicial officer who made the original sentencing order if he or she still holds office unless the child consents to another judicial officer hearing the breach-

* accountable undertaking [ss.366(3) & 366(4)];
* good behaviour bond [ss.371(3) & 371(4)].

Proceedings for breach of the following sentencing orders must be heard by the judicial officer who sentenced the person if he or she still holds office unless the child consents to another judicial officer hearing the breach or it is otherwise impracticable for the original judicial officer to hear the breach-

* probation [s.384(3)];
* youth supervision order [s.392(3)]; and
* youth attendance order [s.408(7)].

These provisions refer only to “magistrate” and not to “judge or magistrate”. Section 508(8) of the CYFA is relied on to extend these breach provisions to the President of the Children’s Court.

### **11.12.2 Powers upon proof of breach of CYFA sentencing order (other than YCO & fine default)**

|  |
| --- |
| **(1) [AUT] ACCOUNTABLE UNDERTAKING**  Under s.366(5), the Court may-  (a) cancel the undertaking; or  (b) continue or vary the undertaking but must not extend the period; or  (c) revoke the order dismissing the charge and impose a fine not exceeding 1 penalty unit. |
| **(2) [GBB] GOOD BEHAVIOUR BOND**  Under s.371(5), the Court may-  (c) declare the bond to be forfeited and impose no penalty; or  (d) proceed with the further hearing and determination of the case and deal with the child in any way in which the child could have been dealt with before the adjournment was granted. |
| **(3) [PRO] PROBATION**  Under s.384(5) the Court may-  (d) confirm the probation order; or  (e) vary, add or substitute any special condition but must not extend the period of the order; or  (f) revoke the probation order and impose any other sentencing order the Court thinks just; or  (g) if the probation order has expired, impose any sentencing order the Court thinks just. |
| **(4) [YSO] YOUTH SUPERVISION ORDER**  Under s.393 the Court may-  (d) vary the YSO but not extend its term; or  (e) confirm the YSO and direct the person to comply with it; or  (f) revoke the YSO and impose any sentencing order the Court thinks just; or  (g) if the YSO has expired, impose any sentencing order the Court thinks just. |
| **(5) [YAO] YOUTH ATTENDANCE ORDER**  Under s.408(2) the Court may-  (a) vary the YAO but not extend its term; or  (b) confirm the YAO and direct the person to comply with it; or  (c) revoke the YAO and impose any sentencing order than the Court thinks just but not make an order for the person to be kept in custody for a period longer than that of the breached YAO; or  (d) if the YAO has expired, impose any sentencing order that the Court thinks just but not make an order for the person to be kept in custody for a period longer than that of the breached YAO. |

It is clear that it is the intention of s.423 that there be no age restriction on the jurisdiction of the Children’s Court to deal with breaches of any sentencing order made under the CYFA, irrespective of how old the person was at the time the alleged breach was committed or the breach proceeding was commenced.

### **11.12.3 Revocation of YCO and consequences thereof**

Under s.409Q(1) of the CYFA the Court must revoke a YCO in respect of a child if an application for revocation has been made and-

1. the Court is satisfied that the child has breached the order, by failing to comply with the order to such an extent that he or she is no longer suitable for the order; or
2. the child commits an offence punishable on first conviction with imprisonment for life or for a term of 5 years or more during the period that the YCO is in force.

Under s.409R of the CYFA if the Court revokes a YCO in respect of a child, the Court must impose a sentence of detention on the child unless the Court considers that detention is not appropriate because exceptional circumstances exist. The sentence of detention must not be for a period longer than the remaining period of the YCO. In sentencing the child, the Court must have regard to the period for which the YCO has been in force and the extent of the child’s compliance with the order.

### **11.12.4 Fine defaults**

In earlier years a significant proportion of sentencing orders were fines: 42% in 2003/04. That reflected the very high proportion of *ex parte* hearings in relation to offences like travelling on public transport without a valid ticket or riding a bicycle without wearing a properly fitted helmet. In more recent times the proportion of fines has continued to decline and reached a low of 14% in 2015/16. It increased slightly to 19.5% in 2016/17. The reason for the decline is that the majority of the offences for which fines were imposed in the past are now processed through the Children and Young Persons Infringement Notice System [CAYPINS], as to which see **Part 7.7**.

Because children and young people frequently have no source of income other than their parents, a very significant proportion of fines are not paid. There is no power to enforce the payment of unpaid fines against a parent. Nor, unlike the situation with an adult, is there any power to order a child to perform unpaid community service in default of payment of a fine (cf. s.62(10)(a) of the *Sentencing Act 1991* [as amended]). By amending Act No.69/1992, s.155(1)(d) – the option for a YSO or YAO – was to be replaced with a 'community service order' made pursuant to a new s.155B of the CYPA. However, those provisions never came into operation. Section 378(1)(f) of the CYFA now makes probation or YSO for a period not exceeding 3 months an option in fine default proceedings.

If for a period of more than one month a person defaults in payment of a fine or any instalment under an instalment order, the person may be served, by post or otherwise, with a notice to appear before the Court in respect of the default: s.378(2) of the CYFA. If the person fails to appear or service of the notice cannot be effected, the Court may order that a warrant to arrest the person be issued.

Section 378(1) of the CYFA gives the Court power in relation to a “person” who has been served with a notice under s.378(2) or has been arrested on a warrant issued under s.378(3). This is a recent amendment. The fine default provisions previously referred to a “child” defaulting in the payment of a fine. The amendment is clearly intended to enable persons who were fined as children and who have not paid the fine to be subject to the fine default provisions whether or not they are no longer children.

A court’s powers under s.378(1) of the CYFA are-

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **(a)** | **WAIVE PAYMENT** | to determine that payment of the amount of the fine that remains unpaid not be enforced; |
| **(b)** | **ADJOURN** | to adjourn the hearing or further hearing of the matter for up to 6 months on any terms the Court thinks fit; |
| **(c)** | **VARY** | to order that the fine be varied in a specified way; |
| **(d)** | **VARY INSTALMENT ORDER** | if the default is in payment under an instalment order [s.375], to order that the instalment order be varied; |
| **(e)** | **WARRANT TO SEIZE PROPERTY** | to order that the fine then unpaid be levied by a warrant to seize property; |
| **(f)** | **PROBATION or YSO** | to release the child on probation or YSO for a period not exceeding 3 months and not extending beyond the child’s 21st birthday. |

Since 01/07/2005 all previous powers to order that a child in default of payment of fine be detained in YRC or YJC on weekend detention have been repealed.

It has been uncommon at most courts for a child to be placed on a YSO or YAO in default of payment of a fine. At Melbourne Children's Court, most orders made in default of payment of a fine were warrants to seize property under s.378(1)(e) of the CYFA [previously s.155(1)(c) of the CYPA]. Most warrants so issued are returned to Court marked *'nulla bona*' (no goods to seize). This process falls well short of the sentencing ideal, set out in s.362(1)(f) of the CYFA, of requiring a child to be accountable for his or her offending behaviour.

## **11.13 Sunset provision for Children's Court priors – Spent convictions**

### **11.13.1 Section 584 CYFA**

Children's Court prior criminal orders effectively expire after 10 years. So far as it is relevant to criminal charges and orders, s.584 of the CYFA provides:

1. If a person has appeared before the Court charged with an offence, the fact of the charge or of any order made in respect of the charge must not be given in evidence against the person in any legal proceeding within the meaning of s.3 of the *Evidence Act 1958* (other than a proceeding in the Children’s Court) after the end of 3 years from the date of the charge.
2. Subsection (1) does not apply if that fact is relevant to the facts in issue in the proceeding or to matters necessary to be known in order to determine whether or not those facts existed.
3. Despite subsection (1), if a person is found guilty by a court of an offence, evidence may be given to the court of an order of the Criminal Division in relation to an offence committed by the person, if the order was made not more than 10 years before the hearing at which it is sought to be proved.

### **11.13.2 Spent Convictions Act 2021**

Two of the purposes of the *Spent Convictions Act 2021* [SCA] detailed in s.1 are-

* to establish a scheme for ‘convictions’ to become spent automatically or on application; and
* to amend the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* to make a spent conviction an attribute on the basis of which discrimination is prohibited under that Act.

Under ss.3 & 5 SCA ‘**conviction**’ means-

1. a finding of guilt by a court for an offence (including a qualified finding of guilt under the *Crimes (Mental Impairment and Unfitness to be Tried) Act 1997*)-

(i) whether or not a conviction is recorded by the court; and

(ii) whether the offence is an indictable offence or a summary offence; or

1. an ‘**infringement conviction**’ (an infringement notice that has taken effect as a conviction of the offence specified in the notice).

This definition also applies to an offence against an interstate or foreign law that would have constituted an offence against a Victorian law if it had been committed in Victoria. Under s.6 the SCA applies to a conviction imposed before, on or after the day on which the SCA comes into operation.

Under s.3 SCA a ‘**serious conviction**’ means a conviction of a person-

* for which the sentence imposed includes a custodial term – as defined in s.5A – of more than 30 months as calculated under s.5B; or
* for a sexual offence as defined in s.4 of the *Criminal Procedure Act 2009*; or
* for a serious violence offence as defined in the *Serious Offenders Act 2018*.

Under s.3 SCA-

* ‘**child**’ means a person who was under the age of 18 years at the time of the commission of the offence to which the conviction relates;
* ‘**young offender**’ means a person who is under the age of 21 years at the time of sentencing for the offence to which the conviction relates.

**CONVICTIONS SPENT AUTOMATICALLY BY OPERATION OF THE SCA**

Under s.7 SCA a conviction is spent with immediate effect if-

1. it is not recorded by a court; or
2. it is a qualified finding of guilt under the *Crimes (Mental Impairment and Unfitness to be Tried) Act 1997* or a corresponding foreign law; or
3. it is a conviction (including a serious conviction) for an offence committed when the person was under the age of 15 years; or
4. the only penalty imposed on conviction is a fine imposed by the Children’s Court or a corresponding court of a country other than Australia; or
5. it is an infringement conviction.

However, if a court imposes a penalty with a condition attached, the person’s conviction does not become spent until the person completes all conditions attached to the penalty.

Under ss.8 & 9 SCA a conviction for an offence against a law of Victoria or a foreign law becomes spent on the day on which the ‘**conviction period**’ for the conviction expires unless-

1. the conviction is a serious conviction; or
2. section 7 SCA applies.

A ‘**conviction period**’ is a period of-

* 5 years for a conviction of a child or young offender; or
* 10 years for a conviction of any other person.

See also s.10 for recommencement of conviction periods for subsequent convictions.

**CONVICTIONS SPENT ON MAKING OF A ‘SPENT CONVICTION ORDER’**

Under s.11(1) SCA a person may apply to the Magistrates’ Court for a **spent conviction order** in relation to a serious conviction for an offence against a law of Victoria if-

1. the person was a child or a young offender; or
2. the serious conviction was for a serious violence offence or a sexual offence and the sentence imposed for the offence did not include a custodial term; or
3. the serious conviction was for any other offence for which the sentence imposed included a custodial term of not more than 5 years.

The Magistrates’ Court may determine an application under s.11 without holding a hearing [s.15] or after holding a hearing [s.16].

Under s.19(1) SCA the Magistrates’ Court may make a spent conviction order after considering the matters set out in s.19(2).

**EFFECT OF CONVICTION BECOMING SPENT**

Section 20(1) SCA provides that subject to ss.21 & 22-

1. a spent conviction does not form part of a person’s criminal record; and
2. a person is not required to disclose to another person the existence of a spent conviction or information in relation to a spent conviction; and
3. a person must not request that another person disclose the existence of a spent conviction or information in relation to a spent conviction.

A spent conviction is not revived by any subsequent conviction of the person [s.20(2)].

Sections 21 & 22 SCA detail limited circumstances in which spent convictions are disclosable:

* by law enforcement agencies, courts and tribunals [s.21];
* by specified persons and bodies [s.22].

In particular s.21(3) provides that a court or tribunal may collect or use (or disclose to any person as part of the disclosure of the criminal record of a person or information contained in the criminal record of a person) a spent conviction or information relating to a spent conviction-

1. in the course of a legal proceeding before a court or tribunal; or
2. in the course of publication or dissemination of decisions of the court or tribunal.

**OFFENCES**

Section 23 SCA makes the unlawful disclosure of spent conviction information an offence punishable by a penalty of 40 penalty units. Section 24 makes it an offence punishable by a penalty of 20 penalty units for a person to obtain information relating to a spent conviction by fraud or dishonesty.

**CASE LAW**

For a detailed discussion of the operation of the SCA – in particular ss.3, 7, 8, 9, 11 & 20 – in relation to an adult offender, see the judgment of Taylor JA in *Tabban v The King* [2024] VSCA 216 at [61]-[65] & [69]-[84]. The applicant – who was 33-34 years old at the time of offending and 38 years old at the time of sentence – had pleaded guilty to charges of sexual assault against two separate young complainants seeking employment by him about 12 months apart and had been sentenced to an 18 month adjourned undertaking with conviction. His licence as a real estate agent was cancelled as a result of the offending by operation of s.22 *Estate Agents Act 1980* [EAA]. In refusing leave to appeal, Taylor JA held that the sentencing judge had not failed to take into account a material consideration, namely the prospect of the applicant being relicensed if given a non-conviction disposition. At [79] her Honour said:

“Turning then to the first particular of the proposed ground of appeal before the Court, the ‘material consideration’ which it is alleged the judge had failed to have regard to misstates the true position of the applicant vis-à-vis his and his company’s prospects of re-licensing as at the time of sentencing. The applicant had argued for an adjourned undertaking as an appropriate disposition. The judge accepted that argument. The judge rejected the argument that the adjourned undertaking should be imposed without a recorded conviction. Even if the judge had not recorded a conviction, the finding of guilt would not have become spent under the SCA until the completion of all its conditions and the expiry of its term 18 months later. In short, the automatic licence cancellation provisions of the EAA would have operated with respect to the applicant irrespective of the recording of a conviction. In either case, he could avail himself of the s 31C EAA mechanism. And, in either case, if the Business Licensing Authority sought his criminal record in determining that application, the finding of guilt was disclosable.”

## **11.14 The MAPPS Program**

In *R v P & Ors* [2007] VChC 3 the President of the Children’s Court, Judge Grant, imposed youth supervision orders or probation on eight young co-offenders. Each had pleaded guilty to:

* representative counts of procuring by intimidation a young woman FS described as “mildly delayed in her intellectual development” to take part in an act of sexual penetration with two of them;
* assault of FS; and
* making child pornography, namely a film depicting FS engaging in sexual activity.

Each of the co-offenders having been assessed as suitable to participate in the MAPPS program, his Honour placed a special condition on each of the orders that the offender participate in the MAPPS program as directed by Youth Justice in consultation with MAPPS. At [24]-[25] Judge Grant said to the offenders:

“MAPPS is the Male Adolescent Program for Positive Sexuality. It is based within the Adolescent Forensic Health Service of the Royal Children’s Hospital. It is a program that is run for young males aged 10-21 who have been found guilty of a sexual offence. The program ‘places emphasis on the young person accepting responsibility for his offending behaviour and for making the necessary changes so that he can lead a life that doesn’t include offending.’ The program is held in high regard. Independent evaluation has shown it to be very successful in protecting the community by ensuring young men cease offending and change their attitudes and behaviours. It is no an easy option. You and your family will be engaged in various aspects of treatment. The treatment will be tailored to your individual needs as assessed by MAPPS. The average period of treatment is nine months.

In a general letter to the Court (accompanying the individual assessment reports) Ms L, a clinical consultant at MAPPS stated, ‘The offences, involving the sexual and physical assault, exploitation and degradation of a vulnerable female, committed by these young men are viewed as very serious. All of the young men require rehabilitative interventions to address their offending and reduce the risk of further anti-social behaviour.’ I agree with those comments.”

See also *R v M & Ors* [2008] VChC 4 at [24]-[27].

## **11.15 Sentencing of adults for child abuse**

### **11.15.1 Sexual abuse**

In *R v PFG* [2006] VSCA 130 at [61] the Court of Appeal said:

“Children must be protected from sexual abuse by adults who are entrusted with their care. Incest often permanently scars its victims emotionally and psychologically. The offence also corrodes human relations. It is an attack upon the family and thus upon a singularly important social institution.”

In *DPP v HRA* [2012] VSCA 88 at [23] Maxwell P said:

“Questions of general deterrence and denunciation are overwhelmingly important, as this Court has so often said, where child sex offending is concerned. Such is the continuing frequency of serious child sex offending by persons, like this applicant, who hold positions of trust that there is a continuing need for stern sentences.”

However in *R v RGG* [2008] VSCA 94 at [3] Ashley JA sounded a note of caution in sentencing for child sexual offences:

“There is an ever-present danger, I think, when a person is to be sentenced for child sexual offences, that lip service and nothing more will be paid to matters going in mitigation. In this case, there were substantial mitigatory circumstances.

And in *R v CLP* [2008] VSCA 113 at [24] Neave JA noted:

“Weight should also be given to an admission of sexual offences because it may help the victims to recover from the harm caused to them, particularly where, as in this case, the abuse occurred within a family and was kept secret by each of the daughters for many years.”

In *Adkins v The King* [2023] VSCA the Court of Appeal allowed an appeal against a TES IMP 2y9m/15m imposed on a 21 year old who had pleaded guilty to 6 charges of sexual penetration of a 15 year old girl who was the younger sister of an old school friend of the applicant and a member of the same Cadet unit as the applicant. In imposing a TES IMP 2y2m/12m, Beach & Macaulay JJA said at [61]:

“While general deterrence is an important consideration when sentencing offenders for committing sexual offences against children, its significance is reduced to a degree in this case because of the applicant’s particular immaturity. His recidivism risk profile was assessed as low to moderate and his continued participation in the SOTP was regarded as very important. Thus, his progress toward rehabilitation by participation in that program is to be encouraged so far as possible to serve the ends of both rehabilitation and community protection.”

In *R v Dibbs* [2012] VSCA 224 at [2] Harper JA said:

“The fair, even-handed and compassionate administration of criminal justice according to law is as difficult as any aspect of civilised governance. And, of all the myriad forms of wrongdoing of which humankind is capable, sexual misconduct presents difficulties in its detection, punishment and restorative aspects which are as problematic as any that confront the criminal courts. This case, although by no means as complicated as some, illustrates the point.”

In his joint judgment with Beach AJA in *PG v The Queen* [2013] VSCA 9 at [3]-[5]& [8]-[9], Harper JA expanded on this theme:

[3] “Allegations of sexual misconduct, especially if the accused is a close family member, are…in a class of their own. They not only often contain at least the seeds of tragedy, but also commonly pose problems of almost impossible difficulty. Frequent among these are multiple allegations of serious offending over many years – offending which is often said to have occurred not only long ago, but also when the victim was too young or too traumatised to remember specifics such as dates and places. Even where neither youth, nor a mind affected by trauma, nor any like factor, adversely affects the memory, details may be hard to recall. The more frequently offending occurred, the more will one episode tend in the mind of the victim to blur into another; but this circumstance could also be exploited by the unscrupulously mendacious complainant to serve as a smokescreen for an inability to provide detail which, because (on this hypothesis) the allegations are false, does not exist. And not only do delays in disclosure cause problems in themselves for both prosecution and defence (and therefore also for the courts), but the victims not unusually have difficulty in explaining not so much the initial failure to report offending shortly after it is alleged to have occurred, but why allegations are made when they are made.

[4] It is facile and quite wrong, but all too easy, to approach these allegations with preconceptions, such as (for example) that embodied in the nostrum that accusations of sexual misconduct are easy to make but difficult to defend. On the contrary, their making must frequently involve an extraordinary resolve born of considerable courage, or desperation, or both. Sometimes, on the other hand, false allegations spring from malicious dishonesty.

[5] When the allegations are true, the sexual assaults which gave rise to them will be likely to have caused severe, perhaps irreparable, damage to the life of the victim. Where they are untrue, an innocent accused may suffer the unimaginable distress of being convicted of a crime or crimes the mere thought of which the particular accused may find abhorrent. And there is often no easy means for the impartial fact-finder to distinguish between the two possibilities, even though (or sometimes because) guilt must be proved beyond reasonable doubt…

[8] Regardless of the result of the legal process, the allegations once made have necessarily had a profound effect on all involved. When sentencing the appellant following his conviction, the trial judge described, with undoubted accuracy, the effect on the appellant’s family (of which, of course, the appellant himself was once an integral part). It was, as her Honour said, ‘devastating’. For the appellant, this manifested itself in the severance of former family bonds and the prospect of many years in prison. For his daughters and wife, if their victim impact statements be accepted, the consequence has been and will doubtless continue to be years if not a lifetime of anguish. Some of the damage is irreparable, no matter what the ultimate result of the proceedings in court.

[9] The fundamental importance of the courts doing everything possible to reach the correct result nevertheless remains. When the positions taken by the protagonists are diametrically opposed, however, the certain identification of the truth is sometimes unattainable. In the circumstances presented by cases of this kind, it is beyond the capacity of any human institution to get it right every time.

### **11.15.1.1 Sexual abuse in a family setting**

In *R v MKG* [2006] VSCA 131 Chernov JA said at [10]:

“The crime of incest is abhorred by the community. As Batt JA said in *R v VZ* [1998] 7 VR 693 at 699, it is a repugnant offence that strikes at the core of the family relationship and involves the breach of trust and the dereliction of protective duties. Furthermore, in this case, the young complainant had to endure the appellant's unnatural conduct towards her for almost 15 months. And the fact that the three counts were representative counts constitutes an aggravating factor, as was recognised in *R. v. SBL* [1999] 1 VR 706. That the appellant abused his parental position of moral superiority and trust in relation to the complainant cannot be sufficiently emphasised. Instead of protecting his young daughter, he did her serious harm. Moreover, the sentencing principles of general deterrence, denunciation and just punishment assumed considerable importance in this case.”

In *R v GMT* [2006] VSCA 13 the offender had maintained a sexual relationship with his daughter which commenced in 1989 when the daughter was 3 years old. In holding that a sentence of 9 years with a non-parole period of 6 years was not manifestly excessive, Charles JA, with whom Vincent JA & Mandie AJA agreed, said at [20]:

“The appellant's offending occurred over a lengthy period, the count alleging almost seven years. It was submitted by Ms Cannon for the Crown, quite rightly, that the appellant's acts were persistent, repulsive and unnatural; that he exploited the victim, who was his natural daughter; that he subordinated her, both physically and psychologically, to his demands and acts; and that she suffered, and continues to suffer, from the consequences of his offending. By his actions the appellant breached the trust placed in him as the father of a young girl, and his offending was very serious and merited condign punishment. In this case, factors of particular importance in sentencing included general deterrence, denunciation, and punishment and retribution. As Hedigan AJA said in *R v Ware* [1997] 1 VR 647 at 653 with the agreement of Winneke P and Hayne JA:

‘The courts have had occasion more often than they would care to remember, particularly in the last decade, to consider matters raised by these cases involving both the interests of young persons and societal interests in protecting them by the detection and punishment of this type of crime, which strikes at the familial roots of civilised society.’ “

In *DPP v EB* [2008] VSCA 127 the victim was the respondent’s natural daughter who was aged between five and seven at the time of the offences. The Court of Appeal replaced a sentence of 9½y on 8 counts of incest with a sentence of 11y but did not alter the non-parole period of 7y. Nettle JA (with whom Buchanan & Redlich JJA agreed) said at [16]:

“The risk of re-offending was, therefore, not insignificant, and, as McHugh J put it in *R v Ryan* (2001) 206 CLR 267, 304 [126]–[128] {*in diss* but not on this point}, the persistently punitive attitude of the community towards sexually deviant crimes mandates that, even if long sentences do not deter paraphilic offenders or others with similar inclinations, they may at least have the effect of putting them in a place where they cannot harm others for the time being.”

In *DPP v CPD* (2009) 22 VR 533; [2009] VSCA 114 the accused had pleaded guilty to two counts of sexual penetration of a 3 year old girl and two counts of sexual penetration of a 1 year old girl. One of each of the counts was a representative count. He also pleaded guilty to a representative count of committing an indecent act with a 6 year old girl (making her touch his penis) and a representative count of committing an indecent act with the 3 year old girl (touching her vagina). He was 38 at the time of the offending, 42 at the time of sentence. He had met the girls’ parents at parenting classes in 1996 and they had become good fiends. On occasions, CPD would baby-sit the children of the family. He had been sentenced to IMP2y6m/15m. On DPP appeal this was held to be manifestly inadequate and he was sentenced to IMP6y/4y. At [18] Maxwell P, Redlich JA & Robson AJA said:

“It is indeed deeply disturbing that children so young should have already had to endure such suffering and should have had their emotional development so seriously compromised. The effect on the victim, particularly in offences of this kind, is recognised as a significant sentencing consideration. In *DPP v DJK* [2003] VSCA 109 [17]–[18], which concerned sexual offences against a child, Vincent JA spoke of the important part played by victim impact statements in achieving

‘what might be termed social and individual rehabilitation … of those persons who have sustained loss and damage by reason of the commission of an offence. …

The imposition of a sentence often constitutes both a practical and ritual completion of a protracted painful period. It signifies the recognition by society of the nature and significance of the wrong that has been done to affected members, the assertion of its values and the public attribution of responsibility for that wrongdoing to the perpetrator. If the balancing of values and considerations represented by the sentence which, of course, must include those factors which militate in favour of mitigation of penalty, is capable of being perceived by a reasonably objective member of the community as just, the process of recovery is more likely to be assisted. If not, there will almost certainly be created a sense of injustice in the community generally that damages the respect in which our criminal justice system is held and which may never be removed. Indeed, from the victim’s perspective, an apparent failure of the system to recognize the real significance of what has occurred in the life of that person as a consequence of the commission of the crime may well aggravate the situation.’

Eames JA agreed at [30] that, in sentencing, the interests of the victims and the consequences to them of the criminal conduct were matters of particular importance.”

Table C to the judgment in *DPP v CPD* summarises 26 appeals against sentence for sexual penetration of a child under 10. The highest sentence for a single count is 8y: *R v SSG* [1998] VSCA 94. Table D summarises 9 appeals against sentence for incest. It was the view of the Court of Appeal that “the offence of incest may be viewed for present purposes as being cognate with the offence of sexual penetration of a child under 16, at least where the offender holds a position of trust and has responsibility for looking after the victim(s).”

In *R v OAA* [2010] VSCA 155 the applicant had pleaded guilty to five counts of incest. He was sentenced to IMP9y6m/7y on the basis that certain counts were representative in nature. The Crown conceded that one of the counts was not truly representative. The applicant was re-sentenced to IMP9y/6y6m. Maxwell P & Weinberg JA said at [37]:

“Insofar as current sentencing practices for offences of this kind are concerned, these are usefully dealt with in Sentencing Snapshot Number 43 [produced by the] Sentencing Advisory Council. The median total effective term of imprisonment for the offence of incest during the period 2002-3 to 2006-7 seems to have been of the order of six years, with a non-parole period of four years. Individual counts of incest have tended to draw sentences of about four years. The single heaviest total effective sentence for incest recorded in this Snapshot was 15 years’ imprisonment, with a non-parole period of 11 years.”

Their Honours said at [42]:

“The principles which govern sentencing for crimes of this nature committed against a child are well established. Such offending is viewed most seriously. The reason for that approach was explained by Hedigan AJA in *R v Ware* [1997] 1 VR 647 at 653, where his Honour said {in a passage cited with approval in *R v Bellerby* [2009] VSCA 59 at [41]}:

‘A society which fails to protect its children from sexual abuse by adults, particularly by those entrusted with their care, is degenerate. The offence of incest is particularly erosive of human relations and casts doubt on the assumption that parents are natural trustees of the welfare of their children. It ought to be unnecessary to recount the morbid features of incest, the most prominent of which include the exploitation by the stronger will of the adult of the weaker will of the child, the physical and psychological subordination of the child to the perverted indulgences of the adult, the gross breach of trust placed in the offender by the victim and the community, and the irreparable damage to the victim.’”

In *R v PDA* [2010] VSCA 94 the Court of Appeal found no error in a sentence of 7y3m with a non-parole period of 3y10m on six ‘rolled-up’ counts of sexual acts against a 15 year old girl which occurred during one or more of seven episodes in the period October 2006 to April 2007. At [19]-[20] Maxwell P (with whom Buchanan JA agreed) said:

“As this Court said in *DPP v DDJ* [2009] VSCA 115, [51], it is a very serious matter when an older man takes advantage, as this appellant did, of a vulnerable younger girl who is crying out for help. It is close to unthinkable, in my view, that a man of 37 with daughters of his own could convince himself that the right way to respond to a plea for help from a girl threatening suicide was to have sex with her. The repetition of sexual abuse only made it worse. This was a man who, by his own admission, knew that what he was doing was wrong. Yet he kept going back for more sexual encounters. When interviewed, he seemed wholly unable to acknowledge that it was his own sexual interest which made him keep returning.”

In *R v FD* [2011] VSCA 8 the appellant had pleaded guilty to eight counts of incest, one count of attempted incest and two counts of false imprisonment involving biological daughters. He was sentenced as a serious sexual offender to IMP16y/13y. The Court of Appeal agreed with the sentencing judge that the abuse was “appalling”. At [5] Redlich & Weinberg JJA continued:

“It was aggravated by the breach of trust involved, the age of the complainants, and the fact that the offending took place in the presence of both of them. The impact upon the victims had been profound, and was potentially immeasurable. The children had each filed victim impact statements accompanied by assessments by specialist sexual assault counsellors. In A’s case, she was demonstrating behavioural problems described as withdrawal, anxiety and sleep disturbance. In B’s case, there were indications of similar unsettled behaviour, including sleep disturbance, fear and aggression.”

However the Court of Appeal held that the individual sentences and the total effective sentence were “significantly out of kilter with current sentencing practice in this State”. Hence the sentence was manifestly excessive. The appeal was allowed and the appellant was re-sentenced to IMP12y/9y.

Annexure B to the judgment in *R v DJ* [2011] VSCA 250 contains a table of 36 cases heard by the Court of Appeal between 1983 & 2011 that involved sentences for incest. Table B includes for each case the individual sentences, the total effective sentence and non-parole period, the age of the offender, the duration of the offending and a summary of mitigating and aggravating factors. Annexure C includes a table of 17 cases heard by the Court of Appeal between 2002 & 2011 that involved sentences for incest where force, violence or threats were involved or where there was pain or lack of consent but no violence. In *R v DJ* at [5]-[6] Maxwell P (with whom Weinberg & Harper JJA agreed) said:

“[T]he judge spoke in the strongest terms about the gravity of this offending… I respectfully agree. This Court has repeatedly emphasised the seriousness of the crime of incest: see *DPP v CPD* (2009) 22 VR 533, 546–7 [54]–[56] and the cases there cited. This case was undoubtedly made the more serious by the respondent’s use of force in the ‘primary incident’ under count 2, and by his having acted ‘in spite’, that is, to punish his daughter for what he judged to be her refusal to participate in family events.”

And at [26] the Court of Appeal concluded:

“Although this appeal by the Director failed, it does provide this Court with the opportunity to restate – emphatically – that in a case of incest (or other sexual offending against a child), the use of threats or coercion or actual force, and any punitive feature of the offender’s motivation, should be regarded as very significantly increasing the offender’s culpability for what is in any case a very serious crime. Such aggravating factors should be clearly reflected in the sentence imposed.”

In *R v PDI* [2011] VSCA 446 at [83]-[84] the Crown conceded that a sentence of IMP 18y6m/15y ordered on a number of counts of incest and other sexual offences committed against the applicant’s eldest daughter from the age of 8 or 9 to 17 was “quite inconsistent with current sentencing practice for multiple offences of incest, even allowing for the fact that the matter was contested and the appalling features of the applicant’s wrongdoing”. The Court of Appeal said: “This case fell within the worst category of offending for the offence of incest.” Nevertheless, having regard to *FD v The Queen* [2011] VSCA 8, [19]–[29], *DPP v HPW* [2011] VSCA 88, *MP v The Queen* [2011] VSCA 78, *DPP v OJA & Ors* (2007) 172 A Crim R 181, 195 [29] (Nettle JA), *DPP v BJD* [2009] VSCA 298, *NJD v DPP* [2010] VSCA 84, *OAA v The Queen* [2010] VSCA 155 & *DPP v CPD* (2009) 22 VR 533, the Court of Appeal reduced the applicant’s sentence to 15y/10y6m.

In *R v ED* [2011] VSCA 397 Robson AJA (with whom Redlich & Harper JJA agreed) said at [86]:

“This Court has consistently held that sexual offending against children is a matter of utmost seriousness: *DPP v DDJ* [2009] VSCA 115, [36] (Maxwell P, Vincent and Neave JJA); *DPP v DJ* [2011] VSCA 250. The maximum penalty of 25 years for the offence of maintaining a sexual relationship with a child under the age of 16 years reflects the gravity with which the community views sexual crimes against children: *R v Macfie* [2000] VSCA 173, [49] (Winneke P and Chernov JA with whom Brooking JA agreed); *DPP v DDJ* [2009] VSCA 115, [36] (Maxwell P, Vincent and Neave JJA).”

After quoting from *DPP v DDJ* at [37]-[38] Robson AJA continued at [88]: “In *DPP v VH* (2004) 10 VR 234, 237–238 {see also *DPP v DAK* [2004] VSCA 175, [33]–[35]} Callaway JA (with whom Buchanan and Eames JJA agreed) said that ‘the sexual abuse of children by persons in a position of trust is intolerable.’” See also *DPP v Stalio* [2012] VSCA 120 where the Court of Appeal upheld a sentence of IMP 5y4m/3y8m in respect of 10 charges of sexual assault involving five girls under the age of 16 between February 1974 and late 1983 by an accused described as “a trusted neighbour and, in some cases, a trusted work colleague of the father of the victim”.

In *R v RSJ* [2012] VSCA 148 the offences of incest were committed over a period of 28 years against the one complainant M who is the appellant’s eldest daughter. The offending commenced in 1977 when M was aged 13 and the appellant was 34 and concluded in 2005 when M was aged 40 and the appellant was 62. The offending was sustained, repeated, accompanied by violence and threats and occurred despite M’s ongoing disclosures and pleas to social workers and others. As a result, M bore four children to the appellant, in 1990, 1998, 2000 and 2001. The youngest child died in infancy. The eldest two children suffer from intellectual disabilities, while the third child receives ongoing speech therapy and has difficulty with social interaction. Although he was aged 69 at the time of sentence, thr trial judge imposed a sentence of IMP 22y5m/18y. Dismissing the appeal, the Court of Appeal said: “The facts and circumstances of the offending are of such a despicable and deplorable nature that the case falls in the worst category of such cases.”

In *PG v The Queen* [2013] VSCA 9 the accused had been found guilty of 9 counts of indecent assault and 4 counts of sexual penetration of a child under 10. The complainants were the two eldest of his 3 daughters who alleged that he had sexually molested them in their early childhood. In upholding a sentence of 8y/6y2m, Harper JA & Beach AJA (with whom Maxwell P agreed) said at [102]-[103]:

“There are many obligations of parenthood. Those persons who have relevant expertise will also have a greater claim than judges to give detailed consideration to these; but about one obligation there can be no doubt. Parents must refrain from the knowing infliction of unnecessary harm upon their children. The appellant was criminally in breach of this fundamental duty. The gravity of his offending is of particular importance in deciding upon the appropriate sentence.

This is not the occasion to attempt to allocate degrees of seriousness to the crimes a parent might commit against his or her child. It is enough to observe that the sexual penetration by the parent of that child is a total repudiation of not only the high obligation of trust which ought necessarily to adhere to the relationship between the two, but also of the respect which every person, but especially a parent, owes to the psychological integrity of everyone else, especially his or her children.”

In *Ling Seng Soo v The Queen* [2014] VSCA 304 the appellant had pleaded guilty to 2 counts of committing an indecent act with a child under 16 and 2 counts of producing child pornography. He was sentenced to IMP5y/3y. The appellant was aged 58 at the time of the offending, and 60 when sentenced. The complainant was a girl aged six when the offences occurred. The appellant and his wife knew the complainant and her parents through a local community group and for a period of about 18 months prior to the offending had looked after the complainant on Sundays while her parents worked. The appeal was dismissed. At [30]-[32] Santamaria JA (with whom Weinberg & Whelan JJA agreed) said:

“In an appendix to these reasons, there is an analysis of the cases which the appellant submitted are ‘comparable’ to the present case.

As will become evident, the fact that each of those cases may have involved an act which was physically similar to the act forming the basis of Charge 3 does not make those cases relevantly ‘comparable’ as explained in *Hudson* (2010) 30 VR 610.

There is a further consideration which must be taken into account. In some cases, a judge may have determined a separate sentence in respect of each count or charge before addressing questions of cumulation and totality: *DPP v Grabovac* [1998] 1 VR 664, 680 (Ormiston JA with whom Winneke P and Hedigan AJA agreed). In other cases, where there has been sentencing for multiple offences, the ‘moderate and cumulate’ approach has been followed: *R v Izzard* (2003) 7 VR 480, 484–6 (Callaway JA with whom Winneke P and Vincent JA agreed). Neither approach is mandated: See the discussion in *DHC v The Queen* [2012] VSCA 52 (Weinberg JA with whom Maxwell P and Buchanan JA agreed). But, the possibility that one approach has been used rather than the other is a further reason for questioning whether two sentences for an indecent act with a child under 16 are truly comparable.”

The cases in the appendix to which Santamaria JA referred are: *R v McDonald* [2004] VSCA 196; *IRJ v The Queen* [2011] VSCA 376; *HRJ v The Queen* [2011] VSCA 217; *Bavage v The Queen* [2012] VSCA 149; *JBM v The Queen* [2013] VSCA 69; *O'Brien (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2014] VSCA 94; *SLJ v The Queen* [2013] VSCA 193; *CMG v The Queen* [2013] VSCA 243; *SD v The Queen* (2013) 229 A Crim R 580.

In *DPP v Charlie Dalgleish (a pseudonym)* [2016] VSCA 148 the accused had pleaded guilty to charges of incest and sexual penetration of the daughters of his de facto partner. One of the daughters aged 13 had fallen pregnant as a result and the pregnancy had subsequently been terminated. The total effective sentence imposed was IMP5y6m/3y6m. Analysing a large number of comparable cases the Court of Appeal (Maxwell ACJ, Redlich & Beach JJA) held-

* that the ensuing pregnancy was a highly aggravating factor; but
* in light of current sentencing practice for comparable offending the sentence, although lenient, was not outside range.

Accordingly the DPP appeal was dismissed. However the Court of Appeal said:

“[43] Society, the legislature and the courts are at one regarding the objective seriousness of sexual offending against children, and of incest in particular. Reflecting community views, courts have condemned in the strongest terms sexual offending against children by those responsible for their welfare. In *Ryan v The Queen* (2001) 206 CLR 267 at 302 Kirby J said:

‘Courts must uphold the law which treats sexual offences against children and young persons as extremely serious crimes, particularly where (as is often the case) such offences involve breaches of trust and responsibility on the part of those who had such young persons in their care.’

[44] On 4 May 2012, the Sentencing Advisory Council published a paper entitled ‘Community Attitudes to Offence Seriousness’. One of the key findings [at p.109] was that sexual offences against young children were viewed by the community as among the ‘most serious’. The report found that the age of the victim, the relationship of trust, the physical aspects of the offending and the broad harm done to child victims of sexual offending were relevant factors which underpinned the seriousness of such offending.

[45] We must at this point address CD’s submission that ‘there was no violence accompanying the offence’ and that this constituted a mitigatory circumstance. Arguments of this kind are often advanced in pleas in mitigation for such offending. They must be emphatically rejected, as must the associated implication that no harm was really done to the victim.

[46] Such arguments rest on a serious misconception about the nature of sexual abuse of a child. The crime of incest involves sexual penetration of a child which is, by its very nature, an act of violence. The Sentencing Advisory Council made this point strongly in its report [dated 10 June 2016] on Sentencing of Offenders for Sexual Penetration with a Child under 12:

‘[I]t is concerning that the courts do not sufficiently recognise, or articulate, the inherent violence involved in the sexual penetration of a young child, regardless of whether such acts are accompanied by additional non-sexual violence.’ [p.63]

...

‘This characterisation of ‘violence’ as encompassing only non-sexual violence has the consequence of diminishing the equally destructive and terrifying violence inherent in sexual offending against children, which more often takes the form of physical or emotional coercion, or the simple act of being overpowered. It can also have the effect of rendering invisible and irrelevant the extreme physical pain inherent in the act of an adult forcibly penetrating the genitals and anus of a child. Many of the sexual penetration cases simply did not mention, in the relevant description of the offending the terror and/or extreme physical pain that objectively would have been caused by the offence. The reason for this is unclear, but it has the effect of diminishing harm.’ [p.23]

[47] Moreover, as this Court explained in *Clarkson v The Queen* (2011) 32 VR 361, 364 the absolute prohibition on sexual activity with a child is ‘founded on a presumption of harm’. The significance of the violence and harm which such conduct entails cannot be overstated.”

In the light of these principles the Court of Appeal held that current sentencing practice for incest involving a dependent child was inadequate. It did not reflect objective gravity and moral culpability. Nor was it consistent with the maximum penalty provided: see *Makarian v The Queen* (2005) 228 CLR 357 at 372-3; *R v AB (No 2)* (2008) 18 VR 391, 405-6; *Hogarth v The Queen* (2012) 37 VR 658; *Ashdown v The Queen* (2011) 37 VR 341, 403. Accordingly there was a need for higher sentences for such offending. Referring to *R H McL v The Queen* (2000) 203 CLR 452 and *Gordon v The Queen* [2013] VSCA 343 the Court of Appeal at [59]-[60] observed that although the scope for applying the totality principle must be more limited when the offender was a ‘serious sexual offender’ the cumulation in this case, while very lenient, did not produce a manifestly inadequate total sentence. In light of the Court of Appeal’s conclusion that current sentencing practice was not proportionate to the objective gravity of the respondent’s offending or his moral culpability, the High Court allowed the DPP appeal and remitted the case to the Court of Appeal for re-sentencing according to law: (2017) 262 CLR 428; [2017] HCA 41.

In *Jesse Deacon (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 257 at [162] Kaye & T Forrest JJA & Taylor AJA spoke sternly in relation to the applicant who had been found guilty after a trial of multiple charges of sexual penetration under 16 and indecent assault committed against his niece who was 5 years old at the time of some of the offending:

“[T]he High Court has reminded us of the profound and destructive consequences to the victims of this type of offending: *DPP v Dalgliesh (a pseudonym)* (2017) 349 ALR 37 [57] (Kiefel CJ, Bell and Keane JJ). The consequences to this particular complainant comfortably meet that characterisation and include suicide attempts, drug and alcohol abuse, homelessness, eating disorders, insomnia and social anxiety. The applicant’s offending is grave and a stern sentence must be imposed.”

The Court made a similar comment in relation to a cooffender: see *Jenni Smith v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 258 at [91] where is said: “Not all of these consequences can be attributed to the applicant but nor can she be totally absolved. Her conduct, like that of her co-offender, was reprehensible. To borrow the sentencing judge’s word, it was ‘despicable’.”

In *Oliver Harlow (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 234 the accused had been convicted after a trial of multiple charges of incest and committing an indecent act with a child under 16. The victims were his step-children. In sentencing him to IMP 21y/15y the trial judge said:

“The offending took place essentially over a decade. I can safely say that in my 30-dd years’ experience as a criminal lawyer I do not believe I have come across such a serious example of this sort of offending.”

In refusing leave to appeal Beach & Weinberg JJA said at [95]-[96]:

“Having reviewed the authorities and sentencing decisions relied upon by the applicant, we are not persuaded that any of the sentences or order for cumulation made in this case were excessive. Indeed, to the contrary, the various sentences and orders for cumulation appear to us to be moderate.

If there is any issue about the applicant’s sentence, it relates to whether the orders for cumulation have resulted in a total effective sentence that infringes totality principles. Given the length of the applicant’s TES, it seems to us that this issue is at least arguable. That said, for the reasons already given, we are not persuaded that the sentence ultimately imposed upon the applicant infringes totality principles…[T]he applicant’s offending constituted very serious examples of very serious offences and was seriously aggravated by the matters to which we have already referred. Moreover, in respect of the bulk of his offending, the applicant pleaded not guilty and thus did not have the benefit of the substantial mitgatory effect that a plea of guilty may have carried. The sentence imposed upon the applicant was very high, but that is merely a reflection of the totality of the criminality involved in his offending in all the circumstances.”

In dissent, Priest JA would have granted leave to appeal against sentence and would have reduced the sentence to IMP 17y/13y. After an extensive discussion of sentences imposed in other cases, his Honour held at [21] & [23] that the TES and the non-parole period were manifestly excessive.

In *DPP v Jason Amaral (a pseudonym)* [2020] VSCA 290 the Court of Appeal allowed a Director’s appeal against a total effective sentence of IMP8y10m/5y8m and substituted a sentence of IMP10y6m/7y6m. The respondent A had pleaded guilty to three charges of sexual penetration of a child under 16. The victim of the offending was his niece T who was aged between 12 and 15 during the period of the offending. At [33]-[34] Maxwell P, T Forrest & Weinberg JJA said:

“As this Court has often said, sexual abuse of children by those in positions of trust or responsibility with respect to them calls for severe punishment. As T’s uncle, A was in breach of the trust reposed in him by T and by her mother (his sister). Given A’s role in caring for T, what the Court has said about sentencing for incest is apt:

‘Incest involving a child is an appalling crime. It involves a breach of trust of the most fundamental kind, and an inexplicable abdication of parental responsibility: see, eg, *R v Ware* [1997] 1 VR 647, 653 (Hedigan AJA) and *DPP v G* [2002] VSCA 6, [9]–[10] (Winneke P). Just as seriously, it involves a cynical exploitation by the parent of the opportunity for sexual contact which being in that position of trust presents: *Sutton (a pseudonym) v The Queen* (2015) 47 VR 496, 505 [28]; [2015] VSCA 251 (Maxwell P and Redlich JA).

Incest involving a child is, moreover, a crime of violence. As the Sentencing Advisory Council has pointed out, sexual penetration of a child is inherently violent, whether or not it is accompanied by additional non-sexual violence: *Dalgliesh [No* *1]* [2016] VSCA 148, [46] (Maxwell ACJ, Redlich & Beach JJA); see also Sentencing Advisory Council, *Sentencing of Offenders: Sexual Penetration with a Child under 12* (10 June 2016) 63. Often, as in the present case, the act of sexual penetration causes the child actual physical pain: *DPP v Walsh* [2018] VSCA 172, [1]–[2] (Maxwell P and McLeish JA).’

In the present case, A exploited for his own sexual gratification the position of trust in which he was placed. These were crimes of violence by their very nature: *Dalgliesh [No* *1]* [2016] VSCA 148. In addition, the first occasion involved the actual infliction of pain. Although A had the opportunity to pause and reflect after that first offence, he persisted. It was truly appalling conduct.

As the Director submitted, the fact that the unprotected sex the subject of charge 2 resulted in T becoming pregnant makes that offence very much more serious. It is difficult to imagine a more profound lifelong impact on the victim of a sexual crime. The sentence imposed needed to reflect those consequences.”

In *Wyatt Tobin (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 180 the 20 year old offender had pleaded guilty to one rolled-up charge of sexual assault of a child under the age of 16 and one charge of sexual penetration of a child under 12. The victim was his step-niece. He had been sentenced to a TES of 9y/5y6m. In dismissing his appeal, the Court of Appeal (Kaye & T Forrest JJA) said at [88]:

“[G]iving full weight to each of those mitigating factors, we do not consider that it could be maintained that the sentences imposed on the applicant for each of the two offences, and the total effective sentence, were manifestly excessive, in view of the grave nature of the offending and the high level of the applicant’s culpability for it. In a case such as this, it was important that the sentences be such as to serve as a general deterrent to other persons who might be minded to commit sexual offences against children. It is important that the courts, in that way, play their part in protecting the vulnerable children in our society. Further, it was of importance that the sentences imposed on the applicant be sufficiently severe to express the revulsion and condemnation by the community, and of the Court, of the abhorrent nature of the offending indulged in by the applicant. Finally, it was necessary that the sentences be sufficiently severe to specifically deter the applicant from any further such reoffending.”

In *Geoffrey Boxer (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 300 Niall & Walker JJA said at [44]:

“As the Courts have recognised, incest committed by a parent on a child is an objectively serious offence that necessarily involves violence: see, eg, *Walsh* [2018] VSCA 172, [1]‑[2]; *Dalgliesh* (2017) 262 CLR 428, 447 [57]; [2017] HCA 41. Its seriousness is reflected in the maximum penalty, namely 25 years’ imprisonment. That is the starting point for considering the appropriate sentence to be imposed for such offending. But it is not, of course, the end point. It is also necessary to consider whether the offending was attended by aggravating features, current sentencing practice, and any mitigating features the offender might call in aid. Further, as the High Court observed in *R v Kilic* (2016) 259 CLR 256, 266 [19]; [2016] HCA 48, quoted with approval in *Dalgliesh* (2017) 262 CLR 428, 443 [45]; [2017] HCA 41:

‘Where, however, an offence, although a grave instance of the offence, is not so grave as to warrant the imposition of the maximum prescribed penalty ... a sentencing judge is bound to consider where the facts of the particular offence and offender lie on the ‘spectrum’ that extends from the least serious instances of the offence to the worst category, properly so called.’”

While acknowledging that the offending was “undoubtedly serious” and that the charges involved two victims and were separated in time and place, the Court of Appeal held that the the individual sentences imposed on the applicant for attempted incest (7y) and incest (10y) were outside the range reasonably available and that the total effective sentence (16y3m/13y) was manifestly excessive. The appeal was allowed and the applicant was resentenced to IMP13y9m/10y.

In *DPP v Howard (a pseudonym)* [2021] VSCA 298 the Court of Appeal allowed a DPP appeal against a TES of IMP9y7m/7y on 3 charges of sexual penetration of his 14 year old daughter and 1 charge of involving his daughter in the production of child abuse material. At [54]-[55] describing the offending as “a continuing, shameless and reprehensible breach of the trust that should exist between every parent and child”, Maxwell P, T Forrest & Walker JJA said:

“Viewed against the objective gravity of the offending, the factors relied upon in mitigation …have a limited capacity to ameliorate the appropriate sentence, and certainly not to such an extent as to bring the sentences imposed, or the total effective sentence, within range.”

The appeal was allowed, the sentence was set aside and a new TES of IMP13y/10y was substituted.

In *Adam Wright (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 137 the Court of Appeal refused leave to the 73 year old applicant to appeal a sentence of IMP8y6m/4y6m imposed after a jury trial on 6 charges of indecent assault and 1 charge of attempted incest. The complainant was the applicant’s daughter. Rejecting the appliant’s submission that insufficient weight had been given to his age, good character, prospects of rehabilitation and delay and to the principle of totality, Emerton JA said that the sentence was “appropriate and well within range” and added that “the applicant’s intermittent sexual abuse of the complainant over many years, beginning when she was quite young,…reflected the applicant’s apparent view that the complainant was a piece of sexual property he could abuse at will. At [50] Emerton JA concluded:

“The applicant’s moral culpability was high. He was not entitled to a discount for a plea of guilty, he exhibited no remorse and he took no responsibility for his actions. Neither the amount of good work he has done in the community nor the good opinion of his friends and colleagues reduces this moral culpability. He offended atrociously against his own daughter over many years and treated her with utmost disrespect. He has caused her significant harm. Moreover, his offending conduct is of a kind requiring strong denunciation and respect of which general deterrence is a very important sentencing consideration.”

In *Frank Brooks (a pseudonym) v The King* [2023] VSCA 4 the 75-year old applicant had pleaded guilty to two counts of indecent assault on a female and three counts of carnal knowledge of a girl aged between 10 & 16. Three of the five charges were ‘rolled up’ charges. The offending had occurred between 1975 & 1978 when the complainant was aged between 12 & 15 and the applicant was aged between 27 & 30. The complainant was the applicant’s niece by marriage. A TES IMP8y/5y9m was imposed. In refusing leave to appeal the Court of Appeal held that the applicant’s age and ill health had not been undervalued by the sentencing judge and no error could be found in the sentences or reasons. At [28] Niall & T Forrest JJA said:

“In this case we agree with the sentencing judge, and essentially for the reasons he elaborated that this was a ‘particularly grave’ sequence of offending... It is sufficient to say that the applicant’s sexual exploitation of a young family member was predatory, opportunistic and depraved. We agree with his Honour that the applicant’s moral culpability is ‘very high’.”

In *Weir (a pseudonym) v The King* [2023] VSCA 113 the 42 year old appellant had pleaded guilty to-

1. a course of conduct change of incest in which during weekly visits the appellant had penetrated his 13 year old daughter’s vagina and anus on a frequent basis which typically involved holding his daughter down; and
2. a charge of sexual assault and (3-6) four charges of sexual penetration of his 11 year old stepdaughter.

A TES IMP17y1m/13y was imposed. In dismissing the appeal the Court of Appeal held that the appellant’s plea of guilty and the onerous nature of custody under COVID-19 conditions had not been undervalued by the sentencing judge. At [22] & [25]-[28] Beach & T Forrest JJA said:

[22] “The appellant’s offending against his daughter and stepdaughter can only be described as appalling. In what were comprehensive and commendably detailed reasons for sentence, the judge rightly described the offending as ‘heinous’; ‘a fundamental abuse of parental authority and as a fundamental betrayal of the whole community’s recognised values of family, of decency and of simple common humanity’; and as having deprived the appellant’s victims (his daughter and his stepdaughter) of their childhoods, their physical integrity, and their right to feel safe at home.”

…

[25] When one looks at the total criminality involved in respect of all charges, it cannot be said that a total effective sentence of 17y1m infringes the principle of totality. Each of charges 1, 3, 4, 5 and 6 were very serious examples of very serious offences. While charge 4, which resulted in the impregnation of the appellant’s 11 year old stepdaughter, received the highest sentence, the protracted and repeated penetrations by the appellant of his 13 year old daughter’s vagina and anus (charge 1) resulted in the appellant receiving a sentence on that charge which could only be described as modest in all the circumstances. Plainly there can have been no undervaluing of the appellant’s plea of guilty on that charge when it came to the imposition of a sentence of a mere 10 years for that offending.

[26] It will be recalled that the standard sentence for charges 3, 4, 5 and 6 is 10 years’ imprisonment. The standard sentence, as correctly characterised by her Honour, is a legislative guidepost akin to the similar guidance provided by the maximum penalty for an offence. The standard sentence takes ‘account only of the objective factors affecting the relative seriousness of that offence’, and not the personal circumstances of the offender. Parliament has determined that the standard sentence is intended to reflect offending in ‘the middle of the range of seriousness’ for the offence being considered. These guideposts are to be considered along with the other factors relevant to the instinctive synthesis.

[27 The offending constituting charge 4 represents an extremely serious example of the offence of sexual penetration of a stepchild, considerably more serious, in our view, than a notional middle of the range example of this offence. Ultimately, the judge imposed a sentence for that offence that was only 44% of the maximum penalty, and slightly higher than the standard sentence. Many more factors, as we have observed, inform the instinctive synthesis, however, the objective gravity of the offending on charge 4, involving the impregnation of this 11 year old child, would have permitted the judge to impose a significantly higher sentence than that which was ultimately imposed for this charge.

[28] Similarly, it is to be remembered that, in addition to charges 3–6 being standard sentence offences, the appellant was sentenced as a serious sexual offender on those charges — giving rise to a presumption of cumulation in respect of the sentences on those charges. In the circumstances, it is difficult to see how there can be any complaint about the orders for cumulation made on charges 3, 5 and 6.”

In *Gibson (a pseudonym) v The King* [2024] VSCA 33 the applicant had pleaded guilty to 5 charges of indecent act with a child under 16 (on the first indictment) and had been found guilty of 1 charge of indecent act with a child under 16, 1 charge of gross indecency with a person under 16, 2 charges of incest and 4 charges of indecent assault (on the second indictment). He was sentenced to TES IMP 14y/10y. In refusing leave to appeal, the Court of Appeal said at [75]-[77]:

[75] “Her Honour concluded by acknowledging the adverse impact of the applicant’s disadvantaged and traumatic childhood, and the ‘tragic irony’ that ‘[he had] now transmitted trauma to multiple others’. Her Honour stated:

‘The length of the offending, and the nature of the offending, particularly in relation to Brenda, makes it very grave. The law recognizes the appalling nature of incest, involving as it does such a fundamental breach of trust, an abdication of parental responsibility and cynical exploitation of the opportunity for sexual contact while in a position of trust. It is also a crime of violence. It strikes at the heart of the family relationship and involves abuse of parental responsibility to protect a child and, instead, does harm.’

We endorse these remarks.

[76] In our view, her Honour was correct to give weight to denunciation, community protection (the applicant last offended in 2019), just punishment and general deterrence. Whilst the judge considered the need for specific deterrence was a ‘less prominent consideration’ as a consequence of the applicant’s age and ‘likely physical and psychological decline’ and the fact he would not be in proximity to children whilst serving a lengthy term of imprisonment, her Honour nevertheless concluded that the applicant’s prospects for rehabilitation were poor. These conclusions were all reflected in the total effective sentence now imposed.

[77] There is no doubt that this is a stern sentence imposed on a man in decline [aged 72], but this is, as the judge described it, ‘abhorrent’ and ‘depraved’ offending, deserving of the community’s utmost condemnation. None of the individual sentences are the subject of this application and they are comfortably within range. We consider the orders for cumulation are within the range of sensible sentencing discretion. The orders for cumulation on the first indictment are relatively modest, totalling 8 months of a two year head sentence. In our view, they are unremarkable and reflect appropriately the separate criminality involved as between the five charges. The orders for cumulation are more substantial in the second indictment, however the offending conduct was considerably more criminally culpable; there were two complainants, and the offending extended over many years. None of the orders for cumulation in all the circumstances strike us as manifestly excessive, nor does the second sentence of 12 years’ imprisonment imposed on the second indictment — this was dreadful offending. Further and for the same reasons, we consider the global total effective sentence of 14 years’ imprisonment with a minimum non-parole period of 10 years to be within the range of sentences open to the judge.”

In *Long (a pseudonym) v The King* [2025] VSCA 15 the 76 year old applicant – who was 74 years old at the time of offending – had pleaded guilty to two charges (one of which was a rolled-up charge) of sexual penetration of his biological granddaughter in the months prior to and following her 19th birthday and was sentenced to TES IMP7y9m/5y7m. The offending had led to a terminated pregnancy which her Honour described at [50] as “an extremely aggravating feature of the offending”. The applicant had previously offended against his granddaughter when she was a child and had received a short term of imprisonment. In refusing leave to appeal Orr JA held that the sentence was neither ‘crushing’ due to the applicant’s age and ill health nor was manifestly excessive but was justified in the circumstances. At [60]-[61] her Honour said:

[60] “Finally, while considerable care must be taken in relying on statistics that do not differentiate between specific features of either offending or offenders (*DPP v Currie* [2021] VSCA 272, [130]), I note that the most recent sentencing snapshot published by the Sentencing Advisory Council indicates that between 2017–18 to 2021–22, the average term of imprisonment imposed for a charge of incest (defined for the purposes of the snapshot as encompassing a number of different offences, including the offence in s 50C(1) of the *Crimes Act 1958*, of which the applicant was convicted) was 6 years and 7 months, the median term of imprisonment was 6 years, and the most common term of imprisonment was between 6 and 7 years. As for total effective sentences, the median term was 9 years, and the most common term was between 9 and 10 years: Sentencing Advisory Council, *Sentencing Trends for Incest in the Higher Courts of Victoria 2017–18 to 2021–22* (Snapshot No 284, September 2023) 3–4.

[61] When regard is had to the particular circumstances of this case, including the matters to which I have referred in [59] above, these statistics tend to confirm that the sentences imposed of 6 years and 6 months’ imprisonment on charge 1, 4 years’ imprisonment on charge 2, and the total effective sentence of 7 years and 9 months’ imprisonment, were within the range of sentences available to the judge.”

Other cases involving child sexual abuse in a family setting include:

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| --- | --- |
| * *R v VN* [2006] VSCA 111 * *R v Lewis* [2006] VSCA 272 * *DPP v DL; DPP v CB* [2006] VSCA 280 * *R v BGJ* [2007] VSCA 64 * *R v DD (No 2)* [2008] VSCA 15 per Neave JA at [14]-[15] & [21]-[24] * *R v DP* [2007] VSCA 219 * *R v Bowen* [2008] VSCA 33 * *R v GLH* [2008] VSCA 88 * *DPP v RAL* [2008] VSCA 140 esp at [25]-[27] * *R v JF* [2008] VSCA 243 * *R v RLP* [2008] VSC 381 at [22]-[26] * *R v NJD* [2010] VSCA 84 * *R v MG* [2010] VSCA 97 at [93] * *R v Barry Hall* [2010] VSCA 349 with reference to *Ibbs v The Queen* (1987) 163 CLR 447 * *R v Davy* [2011] VSCA 98 * *R v TC* [2011] VSCA 190 * *R v RBN* [2011] VSCA 261 * *R v LQ* [2011] VSCA 135 * *PRW v The Queen* [2011] VSCA 381 * *DLJ v The Queen* [2011] VSCA 389 * *DPP v DPC* [2011] VSCA 395 * *R v FC* [2012] VSCA 22 * *R v CGT* [2012] VSCA 23 * *R v AWP* [2012] VSCA 41 * *R v MA* [2012] VSCA 214 * *R v DM* [2012] VSCA 227 * *DPP v SJ* [2012] VSCA 237 * *DPP v DRS* [2012] VSCA 276 * *R v ISJ* [2012] VSCA 321 * *BM v R* [2013] VSCA 3 * *DPP v CJA* [2013] VSCA 18 * *Martin v The Queen* [2013] VSCA 377 * *Wallace Cummins (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2014] VSCA 352 * *McDonald v The Queen* [2014] VSCA 80 at [81]-[83] * *Christopher Avery (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2014] VSCA 86 at [118]-[120] * *Morgan v The Queen* [2014] VSCA 303 * *George Bussell (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2014] VSCA 310 * *DPP v Max Walsh (a pseudonym)* [2018] VSCA 172 * *Alexander Holland (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 241 * *Ryan Shawcross (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 295 * *DPP v Shearer (a pseudonym)* [2019] VSCA 47 * *DPP v Michaela Snow (a pseudonym)* [2020] VSCA 67 * *Lachlan Pitt (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 73 * *Dean Harmer (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 310 * *Victor Williams (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 35 * *Carr (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 130 | * *DPP v Tullipan (a pseudonym)* [2021] VSCA 191 * *Shaun Page (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 364 * *Barnard (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 42 * *Porter (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 177 * *Jay Moore (a pseudonym) v The King* [2022] VSCA 233 * *Toby Murphy (a pseudonym) v The King* [2022] VSCA 259 * *Edgar Case (a pseudonym) v The King* [2023] VSCA 12 * *Newton (a pseudonym) v The King* [2023] VSCA 22 * *Nathan Hester (a pseudonym) v The King* [2023] VSCA 41 * *Caulfield (a pseudonym) v The King* [2023] VSCA 76 * *DPP v Hill (a pseudonym)* [2023] VSCA 56 * *DPP v Henry* [2023] VSCA 100 * *Qadir (a pseudonym) v The King* [2023] VSCA 155 * *DPP v Sutcliffe (a pseudonym)* [2024] VSCA 63 * *Henderson (a pseudonym) v The King* [2024] VSCA 78 * *Gilmore (a pseudonym) v The King* [2024] VSCA 98 * *Benson (a pseudonym) v The King* [2024] VSCA 99 * *Lefoe v The King* [2024] VSCA 131 * *Franklin (a pseudonym) v The King* [2024] VSCA 213 * *Greene (a pseudonym) v The King* [2024] VSCA 226 * *Bernard (a pseudonym) v The King* [2024] VSCA 293 * *Frendo v The King* [2024] VSCA 319 * *DPP v Talbot (a pseudonym)* [2024] VSCA 321 * *Kovachev (a pseudonym) v The King* [2024] VSCA 325 * *Lombard (a pseudonym) v the King* [2025] VSCA 51 * *Whitecroft (a pseudonym) v The King* [2025] VSCA 143 [see summary in **subsection 11.1.2.1**] * *Allen (a pseudonym) v The King* [2025] VSCA 210 |

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### **11.15.1.2 Sexual abuse by a person in authority**

In *DPP v Toomey* [2006] VSCA 90 the Court of Appeal drew no distinction between cases of incest and those involving sexual abuse by persons in authority. In that case the respondent brother aged 56 had pleaded guilty to 10 counts of indecent assault, of which 5 were representative counts, committed 30 years ago against boys under the age of 16 years. The Court of Appeal allowed a Crown appeal against a total effective sentence of 27 months of which 21 months was suspended, increasing it to 4 years and 3 months with a non-parole period of 2 years and 6 months. Buchanan JA said at [10]:

“The offences were serious. They were committed by a person who was trusted to care for children and given authority over them. He betrayed that trust and abused that authority. The respondent exploited his position by using his power of corporal punishment to cow his victims and secure their acquiescence in his actions. There were multiple offences involving repeated acts over a period of two years. They were not isolated incidents which might be said to be out of character. The effect of the offences on the victims was described by the sentencing judge as "devastating". The early years of their secondary education were blighted, and their later lives affected. Most of the victims moved away from the Church and encountered difficulties in forming and maintaining personal relationships. Some have suffered diagnosed psychological problems. The courts have recognised that those who commit crimes against one of the most vulnerable groups in society, which almost invariably have long-term effects on their victims, should be severely punished. See *Ryan v. The Queen*.(2001) 206 CLR 267 at 283 per McHugh J.”

Vincent JA said at [18]-[19]:

“As Heidgan AJA, adopting an earlier statement of Marks J in *R v Sposito* [unreported, Court of Criminal Appeal, 08/06/1993, p.4], put it in *R v MJ* [2000] VSCA 66 at [17]:

‘A society which fails to protect its children from sexual abuse by adults, particularly those entrusted with their care, is degenerate.’

Referring to the circumstances of the matter before him, he continued:

‘The offence of incest is particularly erosive of human relations and casts doubt on the assumption that parents are natural trustees of the welfare of their children. It ought to be unnecessary to recount the morbid features of incest, the most prominent of which include the exploitation by the stronger will of the adult of the weaker will of the child, the physical and psychological subordination of the child to the perverted indulgences of the adult, the gross breach of trust placed in the offender by the victim and the community, and the irreparable fundamental damage to the victim.’

Although his Honour's remarks were made in the context of a case concerning incest, they are clearly applicable to many other situations and relationships and certainly to those presently before the Court.”

Vincent JA continued at [21]-[22]:

“On occasions, when imposing sentence I have made mention of the notion of social rehabilitation. In *DPP v. DJK* [2003] VSCA 109 at [18], for example, I remarked:

‘This notion of social rehabilitation is one that I do not believe has been accorded anything approaching significant recognition as an identifiable underlying concern of the criminal justice system. It seems to me that the process of social and personal recovery which we attempt to achieve in order to ameliorate the consequences of a crime can be impeded or facilitated by the responses of the courts. The imposition of a sentence often constitutes both a practical and ritual completion of a protracted painful period. It signifies the recognition by society of the nature and significance of the wrong that has been done to affected members, the assertion of its values and the public attribution of responsibility for that wrongdoing to the perpetrator. If the balancing of values and considerations represented by the sentence which, of course, must include those factors which militate in favour of mitigation of penalty, is capable of being perceived by a reasonably objective member of the community as just, the process of recovery is more likely to be assisted. If not, there will almost certainly be created a sense of injustice in the community generally that damages the respect in which our criminal justice system is held and which may never be removed. Indeed, from the victim's perspective, an apparent failure of the system to recognise the real significance of what has occurred in the life of that person as a consequence of the commission of the crime may well aggravate the situation.’

It is well to bear in mind that the rehabilitation of the victim of sexual abuse may often be more difficult to achieve than that of the perpetrator. Frequently the damage will be profound and a long time will pass before it can be addressed at all. In the meantime, childhood will be destroyed, self esteem damaged, educational and career opportunities lost and the capacity to form and maintain relationships seriously impaired. The notion to which I have adverted underpins, I believe, such concepts as restorative justice, just punishment, the vindication of rights and the attribution of responsibility based on moral culpability. The vindication of the victim in cases of this kind, in particular, is profoundly important if the criminal justice system is to perform its role properly.”

Nettle JA said at [26]:

“I agree with the learned presiding judge and with Vincent JA that cases such as this case can no longer be regarded as exceptional by reason only that the offending occurred a long time ago and that the offender may since have gone a considerable way towards rehabilitation. Regrettably, such cases occur all too frequently.”

In *R v DCP* [2006] VSCA 2 at [24]-[25] the appellant school teacher had been sentenced to 7 years imprisonment with a non-parole period of 5 years for indecent acts and acts of sexual penetration of a child under 16 and a child aged 16 who were under his care, supervision or authority. In holding that the sentence was not manifestly excessive, Chernov JA, with whom Callaway & Vincent JJA agreed, said at [24]-[25]:

“The offences in this case were of a very serious kind. As Callaway JA has explained in *R v Ellis* (2005) 153 A Crim R 340 at 341, Parliament has made it clear that the essential purpose of the applicable statutory provisions is to protect children and young persons from sexual exploitation, particularly by those who are in positions of care, supervision and authority in relation to them. See also *R. v. Howes* (2000) 2 VR 141 at [4] per Winneke P and at [29] per Brooking JA and *R. v. Coffey* (2003) 6 VR 543 at 547 per CallawayJA.

But not only were the offences here very serious, the appellant's offending conduct was abhorrent. The appellant was not only in a position of trust and moral and intellectual superiority in relation to the two young complainants, but he was charged with the obligation of protecting them or at least furthering their interests. As a much older person and as their teacher, he appreciated, as her Honour said, that he had considerable influence over the impressionable and vulnerable young girls. X, in particular, must have been vulnerable given that, for some months before the offending conduct, he was her counsellor in relation to her behavioural problems. The appellant callously exploited this position over a considerable period for the purposes of satisfying his sexual appetite and in the course of so doing he effectively debauched the two girls…Instead of protecting the complainants' interests as he should have done, he effectively destroyed their sexual integrity. Not surprisingly, the offending had a significantly detrimental effect on them and their families that is likely to continue for some time. As her Honour pointed out, none of the offending conduct was committed on the spur of the moment but involved, over some months, deliberate and premeditated encouragement of the complainants to satisfy his sexual appetite with the knowledge that they would be compliant with his wishes. In the circumstances, the principle of general deterrence and the need for the court to express denunciation of this offending conduct assumed considerable importance in the sentencing disposition. Thus, notwithstanding that below the Crown may have adopted the position that the offences fell in the middle range of offences of this kind, I think that in the circumstances the sentencing judge was entitled to treat the offending conduct as being very serious [see, for example, *R v Bell* [1999] VSCA 223 at [16] per Batt JA] and to regard general deterrence and the need for the court to express its denunciation of the offending conduct as being of considerable importance in the sentencing disposition and thus take the view that the conduct called for condign punishment.”

In *DPP v Klep* [2006] VSCA 98 the respondent priest aged 62 had pleaded guilty to 14 counts of indecent assault against adolescent boys committed 30 years ago when he was in charge of a school infirmary. In allowing a Crown appeal against a sentence of 36 months imprisonment of which 24 months was suspended and increasing it to 5 years 10 months imprisonment with a non-parole period of 3 years and 6 months, Buchanan JA, with whom Vincent & Nettle JJA agreed, said at [13]:

“There can be no doubt as to the gravity of the offences, which were repeated over a period in excess of five years. The respondent exploited his authority and abused the trust placed in him by the community and the families of his victims. Victim impact statements give a glimpse of the long-term emotional trauma caused by the respondent's actions to youths at a most vulnerable period in their lives. It is important that young persons like them should be protected by the law. The objective of general deterrence ought to have been a significant factor in sentencing the respondent. It is also important that the courts clearly denounce crimes such as those committed by the respondent.”

Nettle JA added at [18]:

“[M]uch of the sentencing judge’s analysis appears to me to be informed by the notion that the respondent has already been substantially punished by reason that he has been denied the faculties of a priest and is now likely to be defrocked…No doubt it is a relevant consideration that a prisoner may have suffered loss of office or profession or trade as a result of his or her offending: that is one of the factors to be borne in mind in determining the level of punishment to be imposed. Equally there can be no doubt that such a loss of office cannot be treated as a substitute for the punishment which the law requires”.

In *R v FAJ* [2011] VSCA 137 the respondent store manager, aged 33 at the time of offending nine years before, had pleaded guilty to 9 counts – some of which were representative – of committing an indecent act with a child under 16 and sexual penetration of a child aged between 10 & 16. The victims were students who were casual employees of the store and were aged 15 & 14. In dismissing his appeal against a sentence of IMP 6y6m/3y, the Court of Appeal said at [7]:

“[T]he provision to children of potentially addictive substances in return for sex, with no regard for the adverse consequences, constitutes very serious offending. It can, and often does, result in lifelong damage to those subjected to it. It is selfish and exploitative in the extreme.”

In *Fichtner v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 297 the 70 year old applicant had pleaded guilty to 3 charges of indecent assault, one charge of gross indecency and two representative charges of carnal knowledge committed over a period of 6 years commencing in 1976. In addition he pleaded guilty to a charge of common law assault against his first wife. The 3 child complainants, one of whom had been receiving guitar lessons from the respondent, were aged between 8 and 16. In dismissing the appeal against a sentence of IMP17y4m/13y, the Court of Appeal referred to the applicant’s breaches of trust and very high culpability, noting the the offending had caused severe and permanent harm to the child victims and holding that there was limited mitigation apart from the applicant’s age and there was limited relevance of his prior good character. At [67]-[69] Maxwell P & Kaye JA said:

“The conduct of the applicant was inherently evil and depraved. It violated the most basic norms of civilised behaviour, and struck at the heart of the value which our society places on the lives and wellbeing of each of its young persons. The applicant’s conduct is properly described as disgusting, degraded and perverted. His actions, in using his sense of power over the young victims, and in threatening and using force in relation to them, were as cowardly as they were cruel. The moral culpability of the applicant, in respect of each offence, can properly be described as being of a very high level.

In cases such as this, the law recognises that the sentencing purposes of denunciation and general deterrence must be given prominence. It is important that the sentences imposed on offenders be adequate to express the condemnation of the court, and of society, and to make it plain that conduct of the kind undertaken by the applicant strikes at the fundamental moral values of our decent and civilised society.

Equally, the principle of general deterrence is of particular significance in cases such as this. It is important that the courts, by the sentences imposed in such cases, make it clear to any person who may be minded to engage in such conduct, that that person will, when apprehended, lose his or her right to be at liberty within our community for a long period of time. Only by the imposition of sufficiently stern sentences in cases such as this can the courts, and the justice system, play their part in protecting vulnerable members of the community from such degraded and predatory conduct.”

Other cases involving child sexual abuse by persons in authority include:

* *R v Jobling-Mann* [2000] VSCA 3 [mature female/2 boys aged between 10 & 16];
* *R v Cleary* [2004] VSCA 14 [captain of life-saving club/14 year old female member];
* *DPP v Ellis* (2005) 11 VR 287; {2005] VSCA 105 [female teacher/15 year old male student];
* *R v O’Neill* [2005] VSCA 248 [junior football & basketball coach/team members];
* *R v Parfitt* [2006] VSCA 91 [teaching aide/14 year old female student];
* *R v JMA* [2007] VSCA 105 [friend & carer/4-5 year old female];
* *R v Howell* [2007] VSCA 119 [female teacher/15 year old male student];
* *R v Franklin* [2008] VSCA 249 [scout leader/7 male scouts];
* *R v Ash* [2011] VSCA 112 at [82]-[94];
* *R v Onur Yildirim* [2011] VSCA 219 [security guard/16 year old female shoplifter];
* *R v DHC* [2012] VSCA 52 [teacher giving private music lessons to multiple students];
* *R v Szeto* [2012] VSCA 155 [48 year old part-owner of restaurant/16-17year old employee];
* *Ha v The Queen* [2014] VSCA 335 [50 year old pharmacist found guilty of 8 charges of indecent assault of 14 year old employee-prior offending of similar charaacter-breach of trust-IMP 4y/2y];
* *Gill v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 92;
* *Zampatti v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 285;
* *DPP v Allen* [2020] VSCA 292;
* *DPP v Nwigwe* [2022] VSCA 14 [doctor at local hospital recently arrived in community plea guilty to 3 charges of sexual penetration of a neighbouring family who reposed trust in offender due to his position and his Christian beliefs -IMP6y6m/4y3m not manifestly inadequate].
* *Narang (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 103 [yoga teacher pleaded guilty to two rolled-up charges of sexual assault of his student aged 15 – deliberate deception of complainant and her mother – degrading conduct to vulnerable victim caused serious impact to the victim – importance of denunciation and general deterrence – IMP4y/19m within range];
* *DPP v Ooms* [2023] VSCA 207 [respondent guilty of 4 counts of sexual penetration of child aged 16 or 17 years and under care, supervision or authority – sentenced to 4-year community correction order – trial judge did not misapply s.5AA Sentencing Act 1991 by taking into account offender’s good character in mitigation – minimal submissions made at trial on application of s.5AA – no evidence led at trial whether good character assisted the offending – no error by trial judge – sentence wholly within range open to trial judge – DPP appeal dismissed];
* *Gugliucciello v The King* [2023] VSCA 247.
* *DPP v Dissanayake* [2024] VSCA 320 the 50 year old respondent had pled guilty in the County Court to five charges of sexual penetration of a child under 16 years, two charges of sexual assault of a child under 16 years, one charge of grooming for sexual conduct with a child under the age of 16 years, two charges of intentionally damaging property, and one charge of common law assault and was sentenced to TES IMP8y/5y. The respondent was a medical practitioner and the leader of a religious sect to which complainants’ parents belonged and who was accorded a god-like status by cult members. The respondent used his position and influence to create circumstances for repeated offending over months against two complainants aged 12 years. The offending was objectively serious. The respondent had high moral culpability and limited mitigating factors save for remorse shown on day of sentencing. Holding that the sentence was manifestly inadequate the Court of Appeal allowed the DPP appeal and resentenced the respondent to TES IMP10y10m/8y.
* *DPP v Barton (a pseudonym)* [2025] VSCA 202.

### **11.15.2 Use of the internet to procure sex**

In *DPP(Cth) v Hizhnikov* [2008] VSCA 269 at [23]-[25] & [27] the Court of Appeal (Maxwell P, Nettle & Weinberg JJA) said of the offence of use of the internet to procure sex:

“There is as yet not very much appellate authority regarding sentencing for this Commonwealth offence. There are, however, State analogues. In *R v Burdon; ex parte Attorney-General (Qld)* (2005) 153 A Crim R 104 at 108-109, the Queensland Court of Appeal said of the equivalent Queensland provision:

‘…people who are considering using the internet … to attempt to make contact with young people with a view to corrupting or sexually exploiting them must now be on notice that such behaviour will be likely to result in a salutary penalty generally involving terms of actual imprisonment, even where indecent physical conduct does not and could not eventuate.’

This passage was cited with approval by de Jersey CJ in *R v Hays* (2006) 160 A Crim R 45.

Recently, in *Western Australia v Collier* (2007) 178 A Crim R 310, a Crown appeal against sentence, the Western Australian Court of Appeal had something similar to say regarding the Western Australian equivalent to s 474.26. There Steytler P, who delivered the judgment of the Court, made it clear that offences of this kind were regarded by the legislature as serious. His Honour said that paedophiles were increasingly making use of the internet to access children and groom them for subsequent sexual offending. He regarded an offender’s conduct as being no less morally reprehensible if that person was communicating with someone believed to be a child, although not actually so, than if communicating with a person who was in fact a child. An offence of this kind would ordinarily, though not invariably, result in a term of immediate imprisonment. The fact that an offender was of previous good character did not mean that a term of immediate imprisonment should not be imposed.

Steytler P then summed up reasons why the Crown appeal should be allowed, and the respondent required to serve an actual term of imprisonment. His Honour said at [43]:

‘It seems to me that, even taking into account the matters favourable to the respondent, the sentence imposed was so manifestly inadequate as to demand the intervention of this court, notwithstanding the constraints inherent in a State appeal. This was a very serious example of this kind of offending, for the reasons that I have mentioned. In those circumstances there was, in my respectful opinion, no basis for the imposition of a sentence of suspended imprisonment, whether conditional or otherwise. Anything less than an immediate term of imprisonment does not take sufficient account of the seriousness of the respondent's offending behaviour or of the need to deter him, and others, from committing offences of this kind in the future. It is important to say, as clearly as one can, that adult persons who make use of the internet to locate, and make contact with, children so as to procure them to engage in sexual activity can ordinarily expect to receive a term of immediate imprisonment. As with offences concerning possession of child pornography … there is a paramount public interest in protecting children from sexual abuse.’

…

As we said in *R v* *Gajjar* [2008] VSCA 268, *Collier* states correctly the principles that govern sentencing of offenders for offences of this nature. There is nothing untoward about the notion that a person who uses the internet in an attempt to procure a child to have sexual contact with him will ordinarily expect to receive a term of immediate imprisonment. This is simply a reflection of the seriousness with which the courts must view such conduct. Deterrence, both general and specific, will be the paramount consideration when sentencing an offender for an offence of this type.”

In *Campbell v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 158 the appellant had pleaded guilty to grooming a child under 16 for sexual conduct (3 charges), using carriage service to transmit indecent communication to a person under 16, failing to comply with reporting obligations under the *Sex Offenders Registration Act* (2 charges), possessing child abuse material and committing indictable offence while on bail. He was sentenced to IMP5y9m/4y3m. In refusing his application for leave to appeal, the Court of Appeal (Priest & Beach JJA) said at [52]:

“This Court has said many times that for sexual offending involving children, denunciation, general deterrence and just punishment are primary sentencing considerations. In the present case, having regard to the applicant’s history, protection of the community and specific deterrence were also primary sentencing objectives. The sentences imposed on the applicant in the past have plainly not deterred him. And on the evidence given on the plea, the judge was clearly entitled to conclude that the applicant is a high risk of reoffending against boys under 16.”

In *DPP (Vic) v Conos* [2021] VSCA 367 the Court of Appeal allowed an appeal by State and Commonwealth DPPs against a sentence of IMP6y6m/4y6m imposed on charges of sexual penetration and grooming by carriage service of children under 16 and resentenced the respondent to IMP10y/7y. At [1]-[8] Maxwell P, Kaye & Sifris JJA made it clear that very serious offending of this kind would be met with severe punishment:

[1] “As is now widely recognised, the perceived anonymity of the internet has greatly facilitated the exploitation of children for sexual purposes. In some cases, both the grooming and the sexual activity take place online, the offender deriving sexual satisfaction from observing the victim performing sexual acts to the offender’s instructions. See, eg, *DPP v Meharry* [2017] VSCA 387.

[2] In other cases — of which the present is an example — the online grooming and indecent communication lead to ‘contact offending’, that is, physical sexual abuse of the child by the offender. In this case, the respondent (‘TC’) groomed three 15-year-old girls, through increasingly explicit online communications, and then committed multiple offences of sexual penetration against each of them.2 His fourth ‘victim’ was an undercover operative, the offending in that instance being confined to online grooming and indecent communication.

[3] The offending spanned a period of almost two years, when TC was aged between 25 and 27. In relation to each of the first two victims, he pleaded guilty to sexual penetration of a child under 16. In each case, he offended on two different occasions. In relation to the third victim, TC pleaded guilty to two rolled-up charges of sexual penetration of a child under 16, involving four occasions and five occasions respectively, as well as to charges of grooming, transmitting indecent communications and supplying a drug of dependence. In relation to the undercover operative, he pleaded guilty to the Commonwealth offences of using the internet to groom a person under 16 and to transmit indecent communications.

[4] The total effective sentence imposed for all of this offending was 6 years and 6 months’ imprisonment. The judge fixed a non-parole period of 4 years and 6 months.

[5] Two appeals have been brought. The first appeal is by the Victorian Director of Public Prosecutions, and concerns the sentences imposed for the State offences (including sexual penetration and grooming for sexual conduct). The other by the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions, concerns the sentences imposed for the Commonwealth offences (of transmitting indecent communications and using a carriage service for grooming). In each appeal, it is contended that the relevant individual sentences and orders for cumulation are manifestly inadequate, such that the total effective sentence and non-parole period are also manifestly inadequate.

[6] For reasons which follow, we would uphold both appeals. This was particularly serious offending, involving the knowing exploitation of vulnerable girls, whom TC pressured and manipulated into having sex with him. And he persisted in his relentless pursuit of his own sexual gratification despite being fully aware — as he acknowledged to one of his victims — that what he was doing was both illegal and morally wrong.

[7] It is of the first importance that offending of this kind be met with severe punishment. This is necessary in order to mark the community’s abhorrence of the sexual exploitation of children, to deter those who might be inclined to take advantage of the internet to pursue their own sexual gratification, and to protect children under 16, whom the law deems to be unable to give meaningful consent to sexual activity: *Clarkson v The Queen* (2011) 32 VR 361; [2011] VSCA 157.

[8] We would resentence TC to a total effective sentence of 10 years’ imprisonment and would set a non-parole period of 7 years.”

See also *R v Bryan Cooper* [2012] VSCA 32 per Neave, Mandie & Harper JJA and the cases cited in the Schedule to that judgment; *DPP v Chatterton* [2014] VSCA 1; *Boucher v The* Queen [2022] VSCA 3; *ABC (a pseudonym) v The King* [2023] VSCA 280; *Senarath v The King* [2024] VSCA 306.

### **11.15.3 Possession/production/transmission of child pornography**

In *R v Fulop* [2009] VSCA 296 the Court of Appeal allowed an appeal against a total effective sentence of 4 years imprisonment with a minimum sentence of 3 years on charges of using a carriage service to access child pornography contrary to the *Criminal Code* (Cth) and possession of child pornography contrary to the *Crimes Act 1958* and imposed in lieu a total effective sentence of 3 years with a minimum sentence of 2 years. At [20] Buchanan JA (with whom Nettle JA agreed) said:

“The evil at which the provisions contravened by the appellant is aimed is the production of the images by subjecting children and young persons to degrading exploitation. That exploitation exists to serve the demand created by those who gain access to and collect the images. The legislation aims to deter persons such as the appellant and thereby remove the demand which child pornographers supply. The appellant was to be punished not simply for his predilection to the material but rather for his pursuit of it. In this connection, I regard the length of time and the frequency with which the appellant obtained access to the images and the quantity of images which he collected, sorted and stored as the most significant aspects of his offending.”

In *R v SLJ (No.2)* [2010] VSCA 32 the Court of Appeal fixed a sentence of 10 months imprisonment of which 5 months was suspended for a period of 12 months in relation to an offence of possession of child pornography committed by a 60 year old man with no prior convictions. At [4] the Court of Appeal gratefully adopted the references by the sentencing judge to dicta of–

* the English Court of Appeal in its guideline judgment in *R v Oliver and Ors* [2003] 1 Cr App R 28, [11];
* Malcolm CJ in the Western Australian appeal of *Assheton v R* [2002] WASCA 209 that “The capacity of child pornography to deprave and corrupt individuals is an accepted result of such [possession]”;
* Vincent JA (with whom the other judges of the Court of Appeal agreed) in *R v Curtain* [2001] VSCA 156, [25] that “the offence is designed to address one aspect of the sexual exploitation of children, namely the distribution in the community of descriptions, pictures, or images of violation”; and
* Callaway JA, speaking for the Court of Appeal in *R v Coffey* [2003] VSCA 155, [30] (cited with approval by Batt JA in *R v Jongsma* [2004] VSCA 218, [31]), who emphasised that child pornography involves the corruption and violation of children and creates a market which encourages the further exploitation of children. His Honour added that the maximum penalty for the offence is intended, among other things, “to deter prospective purchasers and collectors of child pornography in the hope that adverse economic consequences will ensue for those who produce it”.

In *R v Rivo* [2012] VSCA 117 the 47 year old applicant had pleaded guilty to a rolled-up charges of causing child pornography material to be transmitted to himself and of engaging in conduct to procure children under the age of 16 to engage in sexual activity outside Australia. The charges related to the procuring by internet of child pornography constituted by live sex shows in the Philippines involving girls as young as 8 years of age. He was sentenced to IMP 7y/5y. The Court of Appeal held that it was not reasonably arguable that the sentence was manifestly excessive and dismissed his application. At [31] Neave & Osborne JJA and King AJA said:

“The young age of the children involved, the fact that both adults and children were involved, the likely psychological consequences to the children and the lack of insight on the applicant's part into the impact on the welfare of the children all bore on aspects of the offending which required a penalty reflecting adequate denunciation and general deterrence of like offending. Again, the ongoing back of insight involved bore on the need for specific deterrence.”

In *DPP (Cth) v D’Alessandro* [2010] VSCA 60 the 25 year old respondent, who had no prior convictions, had pleaded guilty to six counts of accessing, possessing and transmitting images of child pornography and child abuse. He had been sentenced to a total effective sentence of 2 years imprisonment but was granted immediate release upon him entering into a recognizance release order to be of good behaviour for a period of 3 years. The Court of Appeal, by majority, allowed a Director’s appeal and re-sentenced the respondent to a total effective sentence of 3 years imprisonment and required him to serve 2 years imprisonment before being eligible for release. At [22]-[23] Harper JA, with whom Williams AJA agreed, said:

[22] “When construing and applying Commonwealth legislation, this Court follows principles of comity in according respect to the decisions of intermediate appellate courts of other jurisdictions concerning the same legislation. It is therefore worth recording that there seems to be unanimous support across the jurisdictions for a number of propositions. First, that the problem of child pornography is an international one: *R v Jones* (1999) 108 A Crim R 50, 51 (Kennedy J). Secondly, that the prevalence and ready availability of pornographic material involving children, particularly on the internet, demands that general deterrence must be a paramount consideration: *Assheton v The Queen* (2002) 132 A Crim R 237, [35]–[36] (Malcolm CJ, Murray and Steytler JJ agreeing). Thirdly, that those inclined to exploit children by involving them in the production of child pornography are encouraged by the fact that there is a market for it: *R v C* [2004] QCA 469, [21] (McMurdo P). Fourthly, that those who make up that market cannot escape responsibility for such exploitation: *R v Gent* [2005] NSWCCA 370, [43] (Johnson J, McClennan CJ at CL and Adams J concurring). Fifthly, that limited weight must be given to an offender’s prior good character: *Ibid.* [65]. Sixthly, that a range of factors bear upon the objective seriousness of the offences to which the respondent in this case pleaded guilty: *Ibid.* [99]. They include:

(a) the nature and content of the pornographic material – including the age of the children and the gravity of the sexual activity portrayed;

(b) the number of images or items of material possessed by the offender;

(c) whether the possession or importation is for the purpose of sale or further distribution;

(d) whether the offender will profit from the offence.

[23] For reasons which to the ordinary lay mind are very hard to comprehend, there are those who have such lack of empathy that they cannot assimilate a simple truth: that what they see is not merely a titillating picture, but the degradation of human beings too young to avoid the exploitation to which they are being subjected. One must conclude that the respondent himself demonstrated this lack of empathy, given that the sentencing judge described the offending images as ‘certainly ... the worst that I have seen ... because of the level of exploitation of the defenceless that is involved’. And there is indeed something deeply inhuman in treating another human as the mere object by which one’s crudest and most selfish cravings are satisfied. The sentencing judge appreciated this when he added:

‘No matter where it occurs and no matter to whom it occurs, child sexual abuse cannot be tolerated. Australian courts must do their part to eliminate this horrendous activity ...

It was this attitude that resulted in the creation of these offences and has motivated the courts to enforce the attitude to the extent that they can. For this reason, a very significant sentencing factor in this instance is what is known as general deterrence; that is, the desire to point out to the community that accessing or processing or using child pornography in any way is simply beyond the pale. It will not be tolerated.’”

In *DPP v Smith* [2010] VSCA 215 the Court of Appeal dismissed a Director’s appeal against a wholly suspended 18 months sentence of imprisonment and a community-based order with 150 hours of community work and psychiatric treatment following a plea of guilty to one count of using a carriage service to access child pornography and one count of possession of a high volume of child pornography, the gravity of some of which was at the upper end of the spectrum. The respondent was a 28 year old single man with no prior convictions who had been raised in a ‘strict Christian household with limited information about sexual matters’, living with his parents in a ‘sheltered existence focussing on home life and his computer’. He had an excellent work ethic, he supported his family and had previously led a blameless life putting in and assisting others within the community. Nettle JA (with whom Harper & Hansen JJA agreed) said:

At [23]: “The precepts which apply to the sentencing of offenders for offences of possessing child pornography are tolerably clear.

1) First, the nature and gravity of the offending ordinarily falls to be determined by reference to the four criteria adumbrated by Johnson J in *R v Gent* [2005] NSWCCA 370 [99] (Johnson, McLelland CJ at CL and Adams J agreeing):

(a) The nature and content of the material, in particular the age of the children and the gravity of the sexual activity depicted.

(b) The number of images or items possessed.

(c) Whether the material is for the purpose of sale or further distribution.

(d) Whether the offender will profit from the offence.

In the case of child pornography for personal use, the number of children depicted and thereby victims is also regarded as a relevant consideration.

2) Secondly, general deterrence is regarded as the paramount sentencing consideration - because of the public interest in stifling the provision and use of child pornography; and less or limited weight is given to an offender's prior good character because it has been the experience of the courts that such offences are committed frequently by persons otherwise of good character. See *DPP v D’Allesandro* [2010] VSCA 60 [21] (Harper JA), where the cases are considered.

3) Thirdly, a sentence of immediate imprisonment would ordinarily be warranted {see *R v Jongsma* (2004) 150 A Crim R 386, 395; *Hill v The State of Western Australia* Unreported, WACA, 1 December 2008, [28] and the cases there cited; *R v Booth* [2009] NSWCCA 89, [48] (Simpson J); *R v Sykes* [2009] QCA 267; *DPP v Groube* [2010] VSCA 150, [24]} but it is recognised that there are cases where a sentence which does not involve a period of actual custody is not precluded: *R v Gordon ex parte DPP (C’th)* [2009] QCA 209, [43]; *R v Sykes* [2009] QCA 267, [24].”

At [28]: “I do not overlook that specific deterrence is also an important consideration. In many cases of this kind, it would be enough in itself to demand some time in prison. But I am not convinced that the judge was wrong not to think it so on this occasion. As his Honour observed, the respondent was genuinely remorseful and had genuine prospects of rehabilitation. They included the chance that, with time and appropriate care, he could be restored to a proper sexual orientation. Contrastingly, according to the uncontradicted expert evidence, his low chance of recidivism was likely to be exacerbated by any time in gaol. It seems to me, therefore, that the judge strove to fashion a sentence calculated to maximise the possibility of rehabilitation, and so, in the end, to minimise the risks of re-offending and thus maximise community protection.”

Although concurring, Harper JA did so only after “anxious thought”. At [32] he said:

“Taken by themselves the nature and content of the material found in the respondent's possession, in particular the age and number of the children and the gravity of the sexual activity depicted, indicate a term of immediate imprisonment of more than half the maximum sentence. It must never be forgotten that the children who are the pawns of those who create these images have for no better cause than selfishness and greed been treated as mere chattels. For these wholly unworthy ends lives have been ruined. The criminality involved in creating these images reflects the lowest depths of human depravity. The Courts must be every mindful of that fact, even when dealing with offenders who as is the present respondent merely consumers of the image makers' work.”

In *Carter v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 13 the 46-year-old applicant had pleaded guilty to an indecent act with a child under 16, to the production and possession of child pornography and with failing to comply with reporting obligations under the *Sex Offenders Registration Act 2004*. He had been sentenced to IMP5y/3y. The applicant had been in a consensual sexual relationship with the first complainant who was aged 17 at the time of the offending. The second complainant was aged 15y11m at the time of the offending. The images and videos were taken with the assumed consent of the complainants. Holding that the sentences were manifestly excessive and that the offending was at a “relatively low level of objective gravity”, the Court of Appeal allowed the appeal and re-sentenced the applicant to IMP3y, fixing no non-parole period because it was moot to do so. At [34]-[35] the Court commented:

“[T]here was some irony in the situation where the applicant was perfectly entitled, as a matter of law, to engage in sexual relations with Ms Pollock, given that she was over 16. Whatever might be thought of the morality of such conduct, there was no taint of illegality associated with it. That produced the paradoxical result that the applicant could have sex with Ms Pollock, but not photograph her in the course of doing so. It made no difference that she consented to being so photographed (assuming, as we must, that this was in fact so). It also made no difference that she was almost 18 when the photographs and videos were produced. Nonetheless, so it was submitted, this particular offending had to be viewed as, at the very least, ‘lower end’ conduct in terms of objective gravity.”

In *Trinh v The King* [2024] VSCA 61 following a guilty plea to 16 charges involving the possession and production of child abuse material and the use of a carriage service to transmit, solicit and access child abuse material as well as to engage in sexual activity with a person under the age of 16 years, a TES IMP7y6m/3y9m was imposed on the applicant. The Court of Appeal allowed his appeal, set aside the sentence on charge 12 [engaging in sexual activity with a person under 18 years of age using a carriage service) and substituted a TES IMP5y6m/3y. At [71]-[74] Taylor JA (with whom Priest & Kaye JJA agreed) said:

[71] “There can be no doubt that the charge 12 offending was very serious indeed. As found by the judge, the applicant effectively groomed Complainant 8 by causing her to transmit to him child abuse material over a three month period. He then, over 34 minutes, directed her to perform sex acts – apparently including penetration with multiple objects. He did so for his own selfish sexual gratification and without regard to the harm caused to the complainant. He also captured that performance on video (albeit that that act is the subject of charge 7).

[72] The Legislature has made plain the seriousness of such offending, not least by the imposition of the yardsticks of the minimum and maximum penalties. Section 474.25A(1) of the *Criminal Code* is part of a suite of offence provisions aimed to protect children from the sexual exploitation and abuse so easily accomplished by anonymous (adult) offenders online. The applicant himself recognised that younger girls are easier to control and manipulate. It follows that the paramount sentencing consideration for such offences is general deterrence: *The Queen v Leask* (2013) 236 A Crim R 1; [2013] WASCA 243, [92].

[73] It is to be noted that the applicant’s counsel correctly conceded on the plea that the applicant’s offending was in the ‘mid-range’ of objective seriousness. Ordinarily, such objectively serious offending would warrant a sentence in excess of the statutory minimum, notwithstanding the reductions available pursuant to s 16AAC(3) of the Crimes Act. However, the exceptional subjective circumstances of the applicant’s case, in combination with the reductions the applicant is entitled to in accordance with s.16AAC(3), have compelled me to reach the conclusion that in the unique circumstances of this case it is appropriate to impose a sentence that is less than the statutory minimum.

[74] Those subjective circumstances include that the applicant was an extremely immature 19 year old. His upbringing was notably difficult. He suffered sexual abuse as a child which precipitated a major interruption to his schooling and social development. His father had problematic gambling and alcohol addictions. The applicant’s attempted suicide by jumping off the roof of a building was no feint endeavour. He pleaded guilty, admitted his offending and provided passwords to his devices to the police. He expressed remorse. He had no prior criminal history and had refrained from further offending post arrest. The judge found his prospects of rehabilitation to be good. He was entitled to the benefit of delay.”

In *Crowder (a pseudonym) v The King* [2024] VSCA 211, following a guilty plea to charges of using a carriage service to access child abuse material, contrary to s 474.22(1) of the *Criminal Code (Cth)*, and one charge of possession or control of child abuse material obtained or accessed using a carriage service, contrary to s 474.22A(1) of the *Criminal Code (Cth)*, the applicant had been sentenced to IMP26m/12m. In refusing leave to appeal, the Court of Appeal (Macaulay & Kaye JJA) said at [39]‑[45]:

[39] “The two proposed grounds of appeal involve a consideration and application of the principles that apply to offences involving the accessing and possession of child pornography. The principles have been comprehensively discussed in a number of authorities, including the decision of this Court in *Director of Public Prosecutions (Cth) v D’Alessandro* (2010) 26 VR 477; [2010] VSCA 60 and the New South Wales Court of Criminal Appeal in *R v De Leeuw* [2015] NSWCCA 183. Before considering the proposed grounds of appeal, it is convenient first to outline the principles that apply to the offending in this case.

[40] The offences of access to and possession of child pornography are regarded as very serious, involving morally depraved conduct that is extremely harmful to children: *DPP v Garside* [2016] VSCA 74, [62]. Those who are inclined to exploit children, by involving them in the production of child pornography, are encouraged by the fact that there is a market for that material. In other words, the possession of child pornography material creates a market for the continued corruption and exploitation of children by fuelling demand for that material. In that way, it normalises behaviour, which is depraved and exploitive of children: *Garside* [2016] VSCA 74 [71]; *D’Alessandro* (2010) 26 VR 477, 483 [21]; [2010] VSCA 60; *R v Coffey* (2003) 6 VR 543, 552 [30]; [2003] VSCA 155; *R v Fulop* (2009) 236 FLR 376; [2009] VSCA 296 [20]; *De Leeuw* [2015] NSWCCA 183 [72].

[41] In that context, it is relevant that offending involving accessing or possession of child pornography occurs on an international level and is becoming increasingly prevalent, with the advent and proliferation of the Internet as a means of enabling people to access and retain child pornography: *De Leeuw* [2015] NSWCCA 183 [72]; *Assheton v The Queen* (2002) 132 A Crim R 237, 246–7, [35]–[36]; [2002] WASCA 209.

[42] In any case, the objective seriousness of the offending is ordinarily determined by reference to a number of different factors, a number of which were conveniently identified by Johnson J in *De Leeuw* at [72] in the following terms:

The objective seriousness of the offending is ordinarily determined by reference to the following factors:

(i) the nature and content of the material, in particular the age of the children and the gravity of the sexual activity depicted;

(ii) the number of items or images possessed;

1. whether the material is for the purpose of sale or further distribution;
2. whether the offender will profit from the offence;
3. in the case of possession or access of child pornography for personal use, the number of children depicted and thereby victimised;
4. the length of time for which the pornographic material was possessed.

[43] In recent times, offending involving child pornography has proliferated, and is difficult to detect in view of the anonymity that is provided by the Internet: *De Leeuw* [2015] NSWCCA 183 [76]. Its increasingly pervasive and toxic influence informs the inherent gravity of the offending and the importance of the role of sentencing in addressing the grave harm occasioned by it.

[44] It is for those reasons that the purpose of general deterrence is accorded primacy in sentencing offending involving child pornography. In essence, it is necessary that the sentences imposed by the courts are such that those persons, who might contemplate being involved in the depraved and pernicious reception of child pornography, well understand that if their offending is detected, they will lose their right to be at liberty within society for a substantial period of time. It is only in that way that the courts can perform the vital function of providing protection to vulnerable children: *De Leeuw* [2015] NSWCCA 183 [72]; *D’Alessandro* (2010) 26 VR 477, 483 [21]; *R v Gent* (2005) 162 A Crim R 29, 44 [65].

[45] In *R v Booth* [2009] NSWCCA 89 Simpson J (with whom McClellan CJ at CL and Howie J agreed) expressed that principle in the following terms at [39]-[44]:

A number of previous decisions of this and other appellate courts have found that, in respect of offences of child pornography, general deterrence is, at least, a significant element of the sentencing process: *R v Gent*; *Assheton v R* [2002] WASCA 209; 132 A Crim R 237; *Mouscas v R* [2008] NSWCCA 181. In *Assheton*, indeed, general deterrence was said to be “the paramount consideration”. This view was endorsed in *Gent*.

I would add my further endorsement to that view. It seems to me that possession of child pornography is an offence which is particularly one to which notions of general deterrence apply. Possession of child pornography is a callous and predatory crime.

In sentencing for such a crime, it is well to bear firmly in mind that the material in question cannot come into existence without exploitation and abuse of children somewhere in the world. Often this is in underdeveloped or disadvantaged countries that lack the resources to provide adequate child protection mechanisms. The damage done to the children may be, and undoubtedly often is, profound. Those who make use of the product feed upon that exploitation and abuse, and upon the poverty of the children the subject of the material.

What makes the crime callous is not just that it exploits and abuses children; it is callous because, each time the material is viewed, the offender is reminded of and confronted with obvious pictorial evidence of that exploitation and abuse, and the degradation it causes.

And every occasion on which an internet child pornography site is accessed (or when such material is accessed by any means at all) provides further encouragement to expand their activities to those who create and purvey the material.

It is for that reason that this is a crime in respect of which general deterrence is of particular significance. In my opinion the sentencing judge too readily dismissed from consideration the need to convey the very serious manner in which courts view possession of child pornography.

In *Cairncross v The King* [2025] VSCA 117 the applicant – who was aged 20 & 21 at the time of the offending – had pleaded guilty to nine charges involving possession, transmission and soliciting of child abuse material and two charges of using a carriage service to procure a person under 16 years for sexual activity. Some of the victims were aged 16 or 17. The TES imposed was IMP3y10m/2y3m. In refusing leave to appeal – and holding that the sentences imposed did not offend the principle of totality – Taylor JA (with whom Priest & Kidd JJA agreed) discussed *Clarkson v The Queen* (2011) 32 VR 361 at [54]-[57] and *Adamson v The Queen* (2015) 47 VR 268; [2015] VSCA 194 at [58] & [68]-[75] and held that:

* The presumption of harm with respect to child abuse material applies to children aged 17 years or under.
* Child abuse material offending involving children aged 16 or 17 years was not inherently less serious. However, objective gravity and moral culpability is to be assessed considering all relevant circumstances including the age of the victim, with her Honour noting at [75]:

“It does not follow, however, that the age of the victim is irrelevant in formulating the sentence in any given case. As submitted by the respondent, a sentencing judge must analyse all the relevant circumstances. The significance of the age of the minor depicted in a child abuse material offence is to be determined in the context of all other factors. The point is easily illustrated. Offending involving a particularly graphic image of a 16-year-old engaged in an act of sexual penetration might be more serious than that involving an image of the breast area of an eight-year-old girl. Factors other than the characterisation of a particular image might bear upon that assessment, including the age of the offender, the method by which such images were solicited, the number of images involved, the length of time over which the offending occurred and the like. Each case will be fact specific.”

See also *Legal Services Board v McGrath* [2010] VSC 332 per Warren CJ, in particular her Honour’s reference to the observations of Simpson J, McClellard CJ at CL and Howie J concurring, in *R v Booth* [2009] NSWCCA 89; *R v EDM* [2010] VSCA 308; *DPP v SJ* [2012] VSCA 237; *R v Gibbs* [2012] VSCA 241; *Warren v The Queen* [2013] VSCA 372; *DPP v Guest* [2014] VSCA 29; *DPP (Cth) v Zarb* [2014] VSCA 347; *Adrian Robert Finley v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 202; *Hawke v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 287; *DPP v Ramos* [2018] VSCA 290; *DPP v Watton* [2019] VSCA 10; *Chenhall v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 175; *Hutchison v The King* [2022] VSCA 217; *Phibbs v The King* [2023] VSCA 123; *Hulsman v The King* [2025] VSCA 63; *Heels v The King* [2024] VSCA 133 & *Cullinan-Smayle v The King* [2025] VSCA 109.

### **11.15.4 Other sexual offending against children**

In *R v Richardson* [2008] VSCA 7 the appellant had pleaded guilty to six counts of sexual penetration of a child under 16. The offences had been committed in one 24 hour period against two 14 year old school girls whom the 31 year old appellant had met at a railway station. The Court of Appeal held that a sentence of 6y6m/5y was manifestly excessive and substituted a sentence of 3y6m/27m.

In *R v James & Witbeck* [2010] VSCA 341 the 45 year old applicant had pleaded guilty to two counts of committing an indecent act with or in the presence of a 16 year old child. The Court of Appeal held that a sentence of 21m of which 12m was suspended was not manifestly excessive.

In *R v Maurice* [2011] VSCA 197 the 31 year old applicant – who lived 50 metres away from the victim’s house – had entered the bedroom of a sleeping 10 year old child with the intention to commit indecent assault. He pleaded guilty to one count of aggravated burglary and one count of sexual penetration of a child under 16. He was sentenced to 7y imprisonment on the first count and 5y imprisonment, of which 2y was cumulative, on the second count. A non-parole period of 7y was set. The Court of Appeal held that the 9y/7y sentence was not manifestly excessive.

In *DPP v HRJ* [2011] VSCA 217 the 74 year old accused – who was a next-door neighbour of the 3 to 4 year old victim – was found guilty of two counts of committing an indecent act with a child under 16 years. He had rubbed the inner thigh of the victim and licked her vagina. He received a total effective sentence of IMP 3y2m/18m. Leave to appeal was refused. The sentence was not manifestly excessive and there was no error in the sentencing judge’s refusal to suspend the sentence.

In *R v Griffin* [2011] VSCA 304 the 34 year old accused was found guilty of two counts of sexual penetration of a child under 16. The victim was a 14 year old girl in school uniform who attended at the accused’s home, was given both alcohol and a pill and then agreed to have oral sex in exchange for cannabis. After that incident she began playing with a gaming device in the lounge room. Her evidence was that at that stage her intoxication was such that she could not even stand up whereupon the applicant proceeded to have sexual intercourse with her. He received a total effective sentence of IMP 5y6m/3y6m. Leave to appeal was refused.

In *Tuting v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 250 Tate JA refused leave to appeal against a sentence of IMP 3y/15m imposed on a 36YO man who had pleaded guilty to one count of grooming a 14YO girl for sexual conduct. He had sent hundreds of explicit messages and images to the girl, had made an arrangement to meet for sex and had attended the arranged meeting with condoms to carry out his intention. At [2018] VSCA 338 Priest & Beach JJA reconsidered the application on the papers and came to the same conclusion.

In *R v Kunsevitsky* [2020] VSC 41 Champion J sentenced the 53-year-old offender to IMP35y/28y on 59 charges, involving 43 child victims, of maintaining a sexual relationship with a child, producing child pornography, sexual intercourse/sexual conduct with a child outside Australia, inducing a child to engage in sexual intercourse with a third person outside Australia, persistent sexual abuse of a child outside Australia and producing child pornography material outside Australia. This very serious offending occurred over 15 years and spanned 4 different countries.

In *Sims v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 114 the 47 year old appellant had been sentenced to IMP5y6m/3y6m on offences of enaging in sexual activity in presence of a child, sexual penetration of child (rolled up charge), supplying drug of dependence to a child and producing child abuse material. The complainant was a 15-year-old girl under the care of DFFH and living in a residential care unit. In refusing leave to appeal the Court of Appeal (Maxwell P & Beach JJA) held that the applicant’s moral culpability was very high and the sentences were well open.

In *Adam Rose (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 112 the 18 year old applicant had pleaded guilty to 4 charges of indecent act with a child under 16 and 5 charges of sexual penetration of a child under 16 and was sentenced to IMP2y5m/1y3m. The complainant was aged 14 and was a pupil at the same school as the applicant. The applicant had served approximately 7m IMP. Holding that insufficient weight had been given to the applicant’s youth and immaturity, the Court of Appeal (T Forrest & Emerton JJA) allowed the appeal and resentenced the applicant to a 1y CCO. At [70]-[73] the Court said:

[70] “It is apparent that the applicant took advantage of his position as the older and more experienced person in the relationship to put pressure on the complainant to engage in sexual acts with him, and that he dictated their form and frequency. As a result, we do not accept that his relationship with the complainant fits tidily into the ‘exceptional case’ category described in *Clarkson v The Queen* (2011) 32 VR 361. However, we do not consider the gravity of the offending and the applicant’s moral culpability to be such as to warrant a term of imprisonment, let alone a term of over two years. There is substance to the applicant’s contention that his conduct fell within the bounds of teenage sexual exploration and experimentation, albeit that he exploited the power imbalance between them and failed to grasp that the complainant felt pressure to oblige him and was not an enthusiastic participant in the activities that he initiated.

[71] The relationship between the applicant and the complainant was a relationship between two adolescents who were pupils at the same school. The relationship lasted for some four months and was not without mutual affection and care. While there was an imbalance of maturity and power, it was far from the worst kind of conduct involving an indecent act with a child under 16 or sexual penetration of a child under 16. Those offences can and often do involve a much larger age difference, and the exploitation of young children by much older, predatory men who are sometimes in a position of trust. This is not such a case.

[72] It is clear that the applicant is no longer a threat to the community, if he ever was. He is not a sexual predator. He has taken steps to recognise and deal with the unhealthy aspects of his adolescent relationships and has good insight into why his conduct involved the mistreatment of the complainant. He is capable of leading a productive and purposeful life, and of sustaining meaningful and supportive relationships. It is in the interests of the community that this potential be fostered, not compromised by the brutality of a prison environment.

[73] Aside from his young age and very good prospects of rehabilitation, the applicant pleaded guilty, made significant admissions and has demonstrated genuine remorse for his actions. In our view, a community correction order was well within the range of sentencing options available to the judge. Having regard to the availability of such a sentencing option, the sentence imposed of 2 years, 5 months’ imprisonment with a non-parole period of 1 year, 3 months must be seen to be not only very stern, but also as being outside the range.”

See also *R v NJ* [2012] VSCA 256; *DPP v Macfie* [2012] VSCA 314; *R v Chatterton* [2014] VSCA 1; *McPherson v The Queen* [2014] VSCA 59; *DPP v Clinton James Osborne* [2018] VSCA 160; *Lugo (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 75; *Schembri v The Queen* [2020] VSC 217; *Conor Meyer (a pseudonym) v The Queen [No.2]* [2020] VSCA 206; *McPherson v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 53; *DPP v Spottiswood* [2021] VSCA 146; *Hinch (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 214*; Stanczewski v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 232; *Bouris v The Queen* [2021] VSC 245; *DPP v Smith* [2022] VSCA 4; *O’Brien v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 11; *DPP v Hum Howard (a pseudonym)* [2022] VSCA 57; *Webb v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 85.; *Clifton Snyder (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 140; *Nuramin v The King* [2022] VSCA 215 at [86]-[98]; *Roberts v The King* [2023] VSCA 92 at [16]-[17]; *Nathan Davies (a pseudonym) v The King* [2023] VSCA 225; *Clifton v The King* [2024] VSCA 82; *Nuramin & Anor v The King* [2024] VSCA 117, esp at [7], [12]-[15], [49] & [53]; *Fisher (a pseudonym) v The King* [2025] VSCA 131 at [22]-[29].

### **11.15.5 Relevance of consent in sentencing for unlawful sexual activity with a child**

In *R v Clarkson*; *R v EJA* [2011] VSCA 157 a 5-member Court of Appeal (Maxwell ACJ, Nettle, Neave, Redlich & Harper JJA) discussed the relevance of consent in sentencing for the offences of:

* sexual penetration of a child under the age of 16 [s.45 *Crimes Act 1958*];
* committing an indecent act with or in the presence of a child under 16 [s.47].

For neither of these charges is consent a defence.

Their Honours approved a number of judgments of the English Court of Appeal and various Australian courts, especially the Western Australian Court of Criminal Appeal. They noted at [54]-[62] that their approach was consistent with the course of decisions in the Victorian Court of Appeal, including *R v Nguyen* (2001) 124 A Crim R 477 at 481-2; *R v Magner* [2004] VSCA 202 and *R v Jongsma* (2004) 150 A Crim R 386. They concluded at [8] that “to ask whether consent is a mitigating factor is to ask the wrong question. It is only when the circumstances in which the consent was given are properly understood that the court can appropriately assess the offender’s conduct and, hence, determine the appropriate sentence.”

In reaching this conclusion, their Honours noted in their summary at [2]-[7]:

* The absolute prohibition on sexual activity with a child is intended to protect children from the harm presumed to be caused by sexual activity before the age when a child can give meaningful consent and to that end protect them from their own immaturity: *R v G* [2009] 1 AC 92; *R v Williams* (1990) 53 SASR 253, 254; *Marris v The Queen* [2003] WASCA 171 at [12]; *Simon v Western Australia* [2009] WASCA 10 at [23].
* ‘Consent’ for this purpose has its statutory meaning of ‘free agreement’, but is broad enough to include instigation and encouragement, as well as willing participation or co-operation: *R v Woods* (2009) 195 A Crim R 173 at 185. References to ‘consent’ in the judgment should be understood as having the connotation of ‘apparent’ or ‘ostensible’ consent.
* A child’s consent can never, of itself, be a mitigating factor. Proof that a child consented will not, of itself, differentiate the case for sentencing purposes from one where the child’s consent cannot be established. However, proven absence of consent significantly increases the seriousness of the offending and the culpability of the offender.
* Proof that the child consented is the beginning, rather than the end, of the sentencing court’s enquiry. In assessing the gravity of the offence and the offender’s culpability, the court’s attention will be directed not at consent as such but at the circumstances in which the consent came to be given.
* Typically, the giving of the consent will be a reflection of the relationship between the child and the offender*: Riggall v Western Australia* (2008) 37 WAR 211. In very many cases, the consent will be seen to reflect a significant age difference and/or power imbalance between offender and victim. In such cases – for example, the consent given by a pupil to her teacher, or by a daughter to her mother’s partner – the circumstances will usually reveal the offender’s abuse of a position of trust or authority, rendering the offence more grave and his culpability greater. At the other end of the scale, there are exceptional cases – for example, in a relationship between a 15-year-old girl and an 18-year-old boy – where the consent is, relatively speaking, freely given and genuine and a reflection of genuine affection between the two. In such circumstances, as the cases illustrate, the sentencing court is likely to view the offence as less grave and the offender’s culpability as reduced. In such a case, too, the offender may be able to establish, by appropriate evidence, that the victim is not likely to suffer the harm which the law presumes to flow from premature sexual activity.

The Court also noted at [52]-[53] that is open to an offender to seek to demonstrate, to the requisite standard of proof, as to which see *R v Storey* [1998] 1 VR 359, that the sexual activity in question did not have (or is unlikely to have) the harmful impact on the victim which the law presumes it to have. It added that independent expert evidence to that effect would ordinarily be essential and that rebuttal of the presumption is likely to succeed only in very limited circumstances.

Applying these principles, the Court of Appeal dismissed appeals against sentences of:

* IMP 7y/4y on Clarkson (aged 41 at the time of the offences) who had pleaded guilty to 4 counts of sexual penetration of a child under 16 and one count of committing an indecent act with the same child, a 15 year old who was a friend of his 2 step-daughters; and
* IMP 2y6m/1y6m on EJA (aged 31 at the time of the offences) who had been acquitted of 5 counts of incest but in respect of one incident had pleaded guilty to the statutory alternative of committing an indecent act in the presence of his 12 year old step-daughter.

In *A D A v Bruce & Anor* [2011] VSC 338 the 16 year old accused had pleaded guilty to three charges of sexual penetration of a 14 year old child. The prosecutor concluded the summary by stating that the accused says that he believed there was consent to the acts in issue but that was not accepted by the victim or the prosecution. Counsel for the defence submitted that applying the principles of *R v De Simoni* (1981) 147 CLR 383, the Court could not sentence on the basis of aggravating features which constituted evidence of the more serious offence of rape. Subsequently the prosecution filed two charges of rape in relation to the same incident. This occurred prior to the decision of the Court of Appeal in *R v Clarkson*. On the appeal, the accused and the informant accepted that the original sexual penetration charges provide an adequate vehicle for the resolution of the Crown case against the accused if the principles articulated in *Clarkson* are applied to it and they agreed that the rape charges should be struck out upon completion of sentencing on the sexual penetration charges. At [16] Osborne J summarized the relevant evidentiary principles deriving from *R v Clarkson*. At [17] his Honour said:

“It follows from these principles that in the present case the further resolution of the sentence hearing will require either: (a) further and better agreement of the facts; or (b) evidence of aggravating circumstances from the Crown; or (c) acceptance by the Crown that in the absence of further evidence it cannot rely on aggravating circumstances which are in issue and have not been proved beyond reasonable doubt.”

In *Best v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 124 the applicant had been sentenced to IMP5y3m21d/3y after pleading guilty to 3 representative counts of sexual penetration of a child under 16 years. He was aged 17 & 18 at the time of the offending. There were 3 separate complainants who were aged 14, 13 & 14 respectively. The 13 year old had fallen pregnant and ultimately gave birth to a baby boy whom she raised with the assistance of her mother. At [40] & [42] Beach, Kyrou & Kaye JJA said:

“In *Clarkson* (2011) 32 VR 361 at 364, the Court gave consideration to the question whether, in respect of such offences, consent given by the complainant who is under the age of 16, may be a mitigating factor. In essence, the Court considered that, of itself and without more, consent can never be a mitigating factor in the sentencing synthesis…

In *Clarkson* at 375, the Court noted that, even where the offender is youthful and the age difference relatively small, the sentencing court should be astute to observe the legislative policy that children are to be protected against the harms associated with premature sexual activity.”

However, the Court ultimately allowed the appeal, holding that in light of the applicant’s age, early guilty plea, remorse, low risk of recidivism, family support and need for protective custody in an adult jail the sentences were manifestly excessive. He was re-sentenced to IMP2y10m21d/1y9m. The Court had raised with counsel for the applicant whether it ought seek a report as to the applicant’s suitability for a YJC order. Counsel responded that it would be more appropriate if that decision were left to the Adult Parole Board under s.471 of the CYFA to direct that the applicant be transferred to a YJC. At [61] the Court concluded:

“While, under s 471, it is a matter for the Adult Parole Board to decide whether it is in the interests of the applicant that he be transferred to a youth justice centre, we would respectfully endorse the making of any such decision by the Board in order to enhance the prospects of the successful rehabilitation of the applicant into the community upon his release from custody.”

See also *Treloar v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 6.

### **11.15.6 Physical abuse**

In *DPP v Ripper* [2006] VSCA 282 the Court of Appeal allowed a DPP appeal against a sentence of 2 years imprisonment with a non-parole period of 1½ years on one count of recklessly causing serious injury and increased the sentence to 4½ years with a non-parole period of 2½ years. The victim was a 5 year old child who had suffered multiple injuries to many parts of his body. The respondent admitted 270 prior convictions and 27 prior findings of guilt from 32 previous court appearances between 1994 & 2004, including 7 counts of assault. At [22] King AJA, with whom Vincent & Nettle JJA agreed, said-

“The courts have an obligation to protect children from harm, be it physical sexual or psychological. Accordingly, sentences in cases of this kind should send a message which is clear and unequivocal. As Tadgell JA put it in *R v Thompson* [unreported, Court of Appeal, 21/04/1998, pp.7-8]: ‘The courts must do what they can to send to the community a message of crystal clarity that conduct of this kind is intolerable in a civilised society.’ Save for the most unusual circumstances, the infliction of serious injury on young defenceless children will be visited with condign punishment.”

In *R v Hollingsworth* after a trial the accused was convicted of one charge of intentionally causing serious injury to his six-week old daughter who had been treated urgently by a number of specialists, including by surgery at the Royal Children’s Hospital, for what were regarded as life threatening conditions. Investigations revealed that she had suffered a number of injuries including a fracture to the right parietal bone, tearing of the bridging veins passing from the surface of the brain to the layers closer to the skull, associated bleeding and haematomas in the scalp and throughout the brain, diffuse axonal swelling, spinal cord injury and multiple leg fractures with associated swelling. A number of these injuries were either acute — that is, believed to have been inflicted within the hours or up to a day prior to the child’s admission to hospital — or at least had an acute component or had been exacerbated within that period. Some other injuries, however, were thought to have been of longer standing. forensic opinion later indicating that the child’s acute injuries were not accidentally occasioned but were consistent with her having been shaken and blunt force trauma having been applied to her head. There was no witness to these injuries being inflicted. The accused was sentenced to IMP14y/11y. His appeal against conviction was dismissed: see *Hollingsworth v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 354.

In *Kellway (a pseudonym) v The King*; *Donald (a pseudonym) v The King* [2023] VSCA 109 the applicants were the partner and the mother of a 4 year old child who had pleaded guilty to negligently causing serious injury to the child, the serious injury charge being based on a combination of injuries inflicted over a 4 month period. They were sentenced to IMP6y3m/4y6m and IMP3y9m/2y6m respectively. The Court of Appeal held that the sentences were not manifestly excessive nor – despite categorising the mother’s sentence as “lenient” – was the disparity between the sentences of sufficient magnitude to justify appellate intervention. The partner had argued that deprivation he had suffered as a child necessarily operated to reduce his moral culpability but the Court of Appeal held it was open to the sentencing judge to conclude that there was no reduction, any such reduction being offset by other sentencing considerations. In categorising the offending as “particularly serious”, Emerton P, Niall & Kaye JJA said at [95] & [140]-[141]:

[95] “Kellway’s offending was based on criminal negligence, the essence of which involved a criminal departure from the standard of care owed to the vulnerable boy in his care. The gross extent of the departure and the consequences for the child made the offending particularly serious. Kellway’s conduct itself involved a very high degree of blameworthiness. It occurred over a period of four months and involved the repeated and cruel mistreatment of a small and vulnerable child in respect of whom he stood in loco parentis. Kellway was not incapable of exercising rational thought and moral judgement. He did not suffer from a severe personality disorder or a seriously distorted world view like Mr Herrmann. Notwithstanding his difficult childhood, he had been able to maintain a reasonably stable life, at least in regard to his employment. He did, however, engage in drug use, and it may reasonably be inferred that his negligent conduct, and the complete absence of moral judgment during the relevant period, reflected this fact.”

[140] “The judge recognised that Donald was not the person principally responsible for the assaults on Charlie, but sentenced her on the basis that she was directly responsible for some of the assaults. For the assaults perpetrated by Kellway, Donald stood by and did nothing. The judge said that it ‘[beggared] belief’ that she could be complicit in injuring her own child.

[141] As he had for Kellway, the judge assessed Donald’s offending to be a very serious example of the offence of negligently causing serious injury. The degree of negligence was high. The duty of care that Donald owed to Charlie was a high one, particularly after DHHS had removed him from his biological father’s care and placed him into her care and the care of Kellway. She had not merely failed to protect Charlie from harm by Kellway, but she had also been actively causing harm, albeit by negligent conduct. This made her breach of duty grave.”

### **11.15.7 Causing death [including infanticide]**

In *DPP v Arney* [2007] VSCA 126 the defendant had pleaded guilty to one count of recklessly causing serious injury and one count of manslaughter caused by his punching of his 5 month old daughter, not as an isolated incident arising from a momentary loss of self control, but one of a number to which the respondent admitted. The killing thus involved a degree of deliberation which is lacking in most cases of this kind, the defendant having admitted that he had deliberately punched his daughter in the abdomen so that the injury would not be detected by others. In allowing the appeal, the Court of Appeal accepted the DPP’s categorization that the case “was at the worst end of the spectrum of unintentional homicide by a parent of his or her child, and that accordingly it warrant ed a sentence of considerably more than the 7 years imprisonment which was imposed”. A nine year sentence was substituted on the manslaughter count. The total effective sentence was 11y with an 8y non-parole period.

At [15] Nettle JA said:

“In sentencing offenders in cases of the kind with which we are concerned, it has been common for courts to refer to the gross breach of trust which is involved in the offence and to speak in terms of the need for a sentence which is adequate to express society's abhorrence and denunciation of homicidal offences against defenceless children, and which will provide a level of just punishment and specific and general deterrence sufficient to guard against re-offending and similar offending by others.”

At [20] Vincent JA said:

“I agree, and specifically wish to associate myself with the views expressed by Nettle JA concerning not only the abhorrence with which the conduct of the respondent is to be considered, but also the importance of vindicating the values of this community and the rights of a dead child. It is deeply saddening to have to accept that any human being could engage in the kind of abuse that led to the death of a five-month-old infant in this case.”

In *R v McMaster* [2007] VSC 133 the defendant pleaded guilty to manslaughter of his partner’s 5 year old son by inflicting severe abdominal injuries. In sentencing him to 12y6m imprisonment with a 10y non-parole period, Harper J said at [33]-[34]:

“This was a killing the nature and gravity of which can hardly be over-emphasised. You were in a position of trust, and of power. You abused both, at the cost of a young child’s life. The act of standing over a five year old child who is seated on the ground, and then partially standing on his abdomen or pushing your feet into his stomach, with such force as to do fatal damage to his abdominal cavity, is one that - even when seen outside the brutal context in which it took place - is of itself utterly abhorrent.

All life must be protected. Because of their vulnerability, young lives demand special measures to ensure their safety. The death of a child as the result of an assault by a mature adult in the context of a sustained period of abuse is an affront to any civilised community. One measure open to the courts is to impose sentences that will act as a general deterrence to those who might be tempted to abuse the young and powerless. The systematic cruelty to which you subjected Cody is absolutely and unequivocally intolerable. In my opinion, the appropriate sentence on the count of manslaughter is twelve years and six months’ imprisonment.”

On appeal in *DPP v McMaster* [2008] VSCA 102, describing the reasons of Harper J as “exemplary” and in the course of detailing 12 reasons why an appeal by the DPP should be dismissed, Ashley JA (with whom Lasry AJA agreed and Neave JA grudgingly agreed) said at [5]:

“[I]n *R v AB (No.2)* [2008] VSCA 39 this Court upheld a sentence for a provocation manslaughter of 15 years imprisonment…[G]iving *AB* full weight and recognising the awful crime which McMaster committed, I find it difficult to see how the learned judge could have imposed a sentence in excess, or at least significantly in excess, of that which he in fact imposed. Counsel for the Director, faced with the obligation of showing that the sentence was inadequate to the extent necessary to enable the appeal to succeed, submitted that his Honour ought to have imposed a sentence of 15 years’ imprisonment or upwards. Having regard only to the mitigating circumstance constituted by the plea of guilty, counsel’s submission implied that if McMaster had been convicted of manslaughter after a trial at which he had pleaded not guilty, the sentence should have been something in the order of 17 – 18 years. Not even in a case of provocation manslaughter such as *AB* has such a sentence, it seems, been imposed.”

In *R v D’Aloisio* [2006] VSC 216 a father who was suffering from an obsessive compulsive disorder and an obsessive compulsive personality disorder pleaded guilty to manslaughter of his 6 week old son by assaulting him. Eames JA said at [5]:

“Your mental illness, however, is not the whole explanation for your conduct. By your plea, you admit that when you assaulted your son you knew the nature and quality of the acts you were performing, and that they were wrong. The expert evidence confirms that awareness on your part. As your counsel frankly acknowledged, the death of a defenceless child is among the most serious of the categories of the offence of manslaughter, and he accepted that a significant sentence of imprisonment was inevitable, notwithstanding your mental illness.”

In *R v Farquharson* [2010] VSC 462 Lasry J imposed a sentence of life imprisonment with a non-parole period of 32 years on a 41 year old man who had been found guilty – at a second trial – of murdering his three children aged 10, 7 & 2 by driving them into a dam in a staged motor vehicle accident. His Honour said at [3] that “the tragedy of this case almost defies imagination” and that “these were crimes committed against three vulnerable, helpless and wholly innocent children”. His Honour held at [15] that “the reason or reasons why you determined to murder your three children were connected with the separation between you and your wife in November 2004”.

In *R v Acar* [2011] VSC 310 Curtain J imposed a sentence of life imprisonment with a non-parole period of 33 years on a 24 year old offender who had pleaded guilty to one count of murdering his 3 year old daughter when acting out of spite and revenge directed at his child’s mother. An appeal against sentence was dismissed: [2012] VSCA 8.

In *R v Freeman* [2011] VSCA 214 Maxwell P affirmed a sentence of life imprisonment with a non-parole period of 32 years on a 37 year old man who had pleaded not guilty to one count of murdering his 4 year old daughter by throwing her off Westgate Bridge. In the course of sentencing [2011] VSC 139 Coghlan J had described the killing as involving “a most fundamental breach of trust and…an attack on the institution of the family which is so dear to the community” and had found that it was related to the accused’s “increasing anger towards [his] former wife over the Family Court proceedings”. See also *R v Freeman* [2011] VSCA 349.

In *R v Ta Vuong* [2014] VSC 574 after a 20 day trial the 29 year old accused was found guilty of the murder of his partner’s 12 month old infant. He had maintained that the infant’s death was accidental but the jury had accepted confessional evidence from two prison informers. The accused’s expression of remorse over the child’s “accidental death” was held by Emerson J to be irrelevant in the sentencing exercise for murder. In sentencing the accused to IMP 25y/20y her Honour said at [51]:

“The murder of Silas Leithhead was brutal. It took place while you were entrusted with his care and involved a gross breach of trust. You used this tiny, dependent and defenceless child to vent your anger towards his mother. Punishment and general deterrence are important in sentencing in this case, as is specific deterrence.”

In *DPP v UA* [2018] VSC 423 the accused had pleaded guilty to one count of infanticide, having slashed the throat of her 13-month old daughter. She had a history of schizophrenia and had an acute worsening of psychotic and depressive symptoms *post partum*. She had received treatment at Thomas Embling Hospital while on ermand. The Crown conceded that imprisonment was inappropriate. Coghlan JA sentenced her to a community correction order of 30 months duration with, *inter alia*, a mental health assessment and treatment conditions imposed.

In *Akon Guode v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 205 the appellant had pleaded guilty to infanticide, murder and attempted murder, having caused the death of three of her children (twins aged 4y and an infant aged 16m) and having attempted to kill a fourth (aged 5y) by driving her car into a lake. The Court of Appeal accepted that she had had a traumatic life, had suffered a major depressive illness as a consequence of having given birth to her youngest child, and was also suffering from a post-traumatic stress disorder. TES IMP26y/20y was held to be manifestly excessive and a TES IMP18y/14y was substituted. But for the guilty plea she would have been sentenced to IMP33y/27y. At [73]-[74] Ferguson CJ, Priest & Beach JJA said:

“[A]lthough it must be recognised that the applicant owed a separate obligation to each victim not to cause them harm {*R v Bekhazi* (2001) 3 VR 321, 330 [14] (Winneke P)}, it must also be recognised that there is a commonality between the four offences embraced by the indictment, in that it was the single act of driving the motor vehicle into the lake which constituted the criminal act common to each offence. Therefore, despite there being a necessity for there to be some cumulation between the sentences on each charge {in another context, see *DPP v Solomon* (2002) 36 MVR 425, 429–30 [19] (Winneke P); *DPP v Whittaker* (2002) 5 VR 508, 514 [25] (O’Bryan AJA); *R v Izzard* (2003) 7 VR 480, 485 [23] (Callaway JA); *Towle v The Queen* (2009) 54 MVR 543, 571–2 [95]–[97] (Maxwell P); *Vasilevski v The Queen* (2018) 83 MVR 351, 362 [25], [45] (Priest and Santamaria JJA)}, that cumulation should be moderate…

It should not be thought that, in reaching these conclusions, we have lost sight of the fact that three vulnerable children lost their lives (and that a fourth nearly did). Adjectives such as ‘tragic’ are inadequate to convey the depth of emotional response provoked by the destruction of such innocent lives. Each of the applicant’s children had a right to expect that she would protect them and keep them safe from harm. The applicant fatefully and irredeemably, however, breached their trust. But it must also be remembered that, when she did so, her capacity to make calm and rational decisions was severely compromised by a mental condition which was not of her own making. Her situation is pitiable. And although the Court must avoid being weakly merciful, principle nonetheless demands that the punishment inflicted upon the applicant must be mitigated by, and justly reflect, her diminished moral culpability. See *R v Radich* [1954] NZLR 86, 87; *R v Williscroft* [1975] VR 292, 298 (Adam and Crockett JJ). See also *R v Miceli* [I998] 4 VR 588; Richard G Fox, *When Justice Sheds a Tear: The Place of Mercy in Sentencing*, (1999) 25 Monash University Law Review 1, 3.”

By a majority of 3:2 the High Court in *The Queen v Guode* [2020] HCA 8 allowed a Crown appeal, quashed the sentences imposed by the Court of Appeal and remitted the matter to that court for further determination according to law. The majority held at [31] that the Court of Appeal had erred by taking into account – as a relevant consideration in the determination of whether the sentences imposed on the charges of murder and attempted murder were manifestly excessive – that the Crown had accepted the respondent's plea of guilty to the charge of infanticide and thus that the charges of murder and attempted murder were to be viewed "in light of the statutory definition of infanticide in s.6(1) of the *Crimes Act 1958*".

In *DPP v Lindsey (Sentence)* [2018] VSC 239 the 34YO accused had pleaded not guilty but had been found guilty of murder of his 6 month old step-son who had sustained significant and ultimately fatal head injuries whilst in his care. There had been extensive methylamphetamine use and sleep deprivation leading up to the offence. He had been subject to a community corrections order at the time of the offence. In imposing a sentence of IMP34y/27y, Kaye JA said at [34]-[36]:

“You have been convicted of the most serious crime in our legal system, the murder of another human being. The maximum sentence for that offence is life imprisonment. Your offending in this case falls within one of the highest categories of seriousness of the crime of murder. At the time of his death, CD was just six months old. He was entirely harmless, helpless and vulnerable, being at an age at which he was totally dependent on adults for protection and care. At the time at which he was murdered, CD had been entrusted to your care by his mother, and as such it was your responsibility to keep him safe and secure while his mother was absent from the unit. In gross violation of that special trust, you subjected CD to a series of brutal acts of cruel, vicious and sickening violence, which resulted in a number of severe injuries to him, including those from which he died.

The law regards all human life as unique and sacred. However, the life of an infant or a young child is especially precious, because children are so vulnerable and defenceless. The ordinary, natural instinct of any decent human being is to feel tenderness and protectiveness to an infant or young child. The brutal assault by you on Chayse was so contrary to the fundamental values of our society as to defy any comprehensible explanation. What you did to Chayse was an act of total and unmitigated evil. As such, your culpability, for the crime that you have committed, is of a particularly high order.

The direct victim of your crime was, of course, the infant Chayse Dearing. At his age, he had the whole of his life before him. As a result of your cruel crime, he will never grow into childhood, never experience his teenage years, or mature into adulthood. Your senseless and vicious crime deprived him of his most basic right, his right to life.”

In *DPP v Noy* [2018] VSC 466 the 26YO accused had pleaded not guilty but had been found guilty of murder of his 11 month old step-son who had sustained very severe blunt force trauma causing transection of the abdominalaorta, spinal fractures and laceration of the right kidney whilst in his care. He had an antisocial/borderline structure of personality, a deprived and difficult childhood, a history of depression, a lack of insight and no remorse. His prospects of rehabilitation were guarded. In imposing a sentence of IMP30y/26y, Coughlan JA said at [65]:

“I regard this as a particularly serious example of the crime of murder. Although the killing was swift, its circumstances were extremely brutal. The principles of retribution, just punishment and general deterrence are very important. As the matter stands, the principle of specific deterrence also carries some weight.”

In *DPP v MA* [2022] VSC 170 the accused had killed her 3m old daughter whilst also attempting suicide. She was suffering severe postpartum depression at the time of the offending. She was educated to the tertiary level, had no prior criminal history and had displayed ongoing compliance with mental health treatment. She had also pleaded guilty at an early stage. At [60] Jane Dixon J said: “It was common ground between the parties that general deterrence and specific deterrence were not relevant to your case. I agree with this approach which is consistent with sentencing jurisprudence in relation to this offence.” A conviction was recorded and MA was released on an adjourned undertaking for 3 years.

In *DPP v Nguyen* [2023] VSC 325 the accused had killed her 6m old son whilst also attempting suicide. She was suffering severe postpartum depression at the time of the offending. She had no prior criminal history, had displayed remorse and entered an early plea of guilty. A conviction was recorded and the accused was released on an adjourned undertaking for 3 years.

In *DPP v Pallant* [2024] VSC 397 the accused had been convicted after trial of the murder of the 2 year old child of the woman with whom he had been living. He maintained his innocence and therefore disputed the jury verdict. The Crown alleged two previous occasions on which the accused had assaulted the deceased child. The accused had a relevant prior criminal history. Jane Dixon J imposed a sentence of IMP32y/25y, in her judgment referring, *inter alia*, to the issues of delay, rehabilitation, just punishment, denunciation, general and specific deterrence and community protection.

## **11.16 Sentencing for child sexual abuse committed as a child**

In *DPP (Cth) & DPP v Dylan Hutchison (a pseudonym)* [2018] VSCA 153 the Court of Appeal dismissed Crown appeals against sentences of two community correction orders each for 3½ years and a good behaviour bond for 3 years imposed on a 20 year old man who had committed most of the offences when he was 16 years of age. On 3 days in May & June 2013 the respondent performed a number of indecent acts with his half-sisters then aged 3 & 16 months. Video images of his actions were captured on a camera used by him and then produced during online conversations with an adult male named Orr who was claiming to be a 17 year old girl. Categorizing the offending as “very serious” the Court of Appeal said at [54]-[55]:

“If all one knew were the objective facts of his offending then one would almost certainly conclude that the only sentence open was one of immediate imprisonment. Sentencing, however, is not nearly so simple. In this case, like many others, there were a myriad of competing considerations that had to be synthesised by the sentencing judge in order to arrive at a result that was just in all the circumstances.

As the appellants properly conceded, there were powerful mitigating circumstances that the judge was required to give appropriate and proper weight to in arriving at a sentence that satisfied all of the legitimate purposes for which sentences are imposed.”

The 8 mitigating circumstances were summarized by the Court of Appeal at [56]-[63] as follows:

1. The respondent was only a little over 16 years of age at the time he committed the offences in relation to his half-sisters. Rehabilitation was a powerful mitigating factor in relation to such a young offender, notwithstanding the objective seriousness of his offending: see *R v Mills* [1998] 4 VR 235, 241; *Azzopardi* (2011) 35 VR 43, 55 [37] and 57 [44]. If the respondent’s offending had been detected at or about the time of its commission, he would have fallen to be sentenced under the provisions of the *CYFA*, where general deterrence would have played no part in the sentencing process: see *CNK* (2011) 32 VR 641. As the judge put it, there was every prospect that the respondent would have received ‘some form of order without conviction’.
2. The respondent was himself a victim of Orr’s serious offending, having been groomed and encouraged in his offending by Orr.
3. The respondent’s early life and formative years were “clearly traumatic” because of the separation of his parents. Being taken to another country and the sudden death of his mother.
4. Upon being arrested, the respondent co-operated fully, refusing legal assistance and making full admissions.
5. The respondent did not deliberately seek out child pornography. Rather, “it came with other material” and the fact that that material had not been accessed in the 18 months before the respondent’s arrest was of some moment.
6. The extent of the respondent’s shame and remorse was exemplified by the fact that he had originally pleaded guilty to incest, an offence involving sexual penetration, when no such penetration was shown on the videos and in circumstances where any penetration as originally alleged by the prosecution was in fact highly unlikely.
7. The respondent had excellent prospects for rehabilitation.
8. The consequences of the respondent’s offending against his half-sisters were, as the judge found, devastating for the respondent, in that he had lost his close relationship with his father’s family and was no longer a part of his immediate family group.

In finding no sentencing error on the part of the judge, the Court of Appeal said at [64] & [66]-[68]:

“All of these matters had to be balanced against the very serious nature of the respondent’s offending — offending, the likes of which this Court has been at pains for some time to say is ordinarily deserving of severe punishment by way of significant sentences of incarceration. Some of the most difficult sentencing decisions, however, concern cases where the offending is very serious and the mitigating factors very powerful. Such cases require a synthesis of relevant matters that often pull in completely different directions. This was the difficult task faced by the sentencing judge in the present case….The judge’s sentencing reasons disclose that she was alive to all of the competing considerations competing considerations that she was required to take into account in imposing a just sentence on the respondent. The reasons do not disclose any error in point of principle. The sentence may properly be regarded as a merciful one, given in circumstances that were exceptional. That is, again however, not to say that the sentence imposed was wholly outside the permissible range so as to bespeak error in the exercise of the sentencing discretion: see *DPP v Hayes* [2017] VSCA 285 [47].

As we have already observed, the offending that constituted charges 1 to 4 was committed when the respondent was a little over 16 and 2 months of age. When he was sentenced, the respondent was 20 years and 9 months of age. In *R v Boland* (2007) VR 300 at 304 Nettle JA (with whom Ashley and Dodds-Streeton JJA agreed) said:

‘Decisions of this court in *R v Nutter* and *R v Better* recognised that where offences which have been committed while an offender is a child or immature and are not prosecuted until many years after the event, there is good reason to mitigate penalty, or at least to do so where the offender has achieved a significant degree of rehabilitation and there has been no further offending. Although such an offender falls to be sentenced as an adult, common sense and fairness dictate that the assessment of the nature and gravity of the crime and of the offender’s moral culpability, take into account that what was done was done as a child, or as a person of immature years, and not as an adult or a person of greater maturity. See also *Sherritt v The Queen* [2015] VSCA 1 [34]–[35] (Priest JA, with whom Maxwell P agreed).’

In the present case, while the respondent’s offending that constitutes charge 5 cannot be disregarded, common sense and fairness did require consideration to be given to the fact that the respondent was plainly a more mature person at the time of sentencing than he was at the time of his initial offending. He was entitled to be sentenced for his offending in relation to charges 1 to 4 on the basis that the assessment of the nature and gravity of this offending, and of the respondent’s moral culpability in respect of it, took into account that what he had done was done as a child. This constituted an additional reason why the penalty to be imposed upon the respondent might be mitigated.”

## **11.17 Sentencing of adults for offence against protective worker**

In *R v Gibson* [2006] VSCA 258 the Court of Appeal imposed a sentence of 9 months imprisonment in respect of a charge of threatening to inflict serious injury on a protective worker. The defendant’s children were in the custody of DOHS. The defendant had not had access to his children for 3 months as a consequence of the protective worker being on sick leave, causing the defendant to become increasingly resentful and distressed. When the worker ultimately returned to work she called the defendant to arrange access. During that phone conversation the defendant lost his temper and said: “I’m going to come down there and cut your head off.”

## **11.18 Relevance of prospect of deportation**

In *Guden v The Queen* (2010) 28 VR 228; [2010] VSCA 196 the Court of Appeal held that the prospect of an offender’s deportation was a factor which could bear on the impact a term of imprisonment would have on that offender, both during the period of actual incarceration and upon release. And, where appropriate, it would also be proper to consider the fact that a sentence of imprisonment would result in the offender losing the opportunity of settling permanently in Australia.

In *Mohamed Allouch v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 244 the Court of Appeal allowed an appeal against a aggregate sentence of 12 months’ imprisonment with a non-parole period of 6 months imposed on the appellant on nine fraud and theft related offences and substituted an aggregate sentence of 7 months imprisonment. At the time of sentencing it was believed that the appellant was an Australian citizen but it was disovered during the hearing of his leave to appeal that he was in fact a permanent resident. At [39]-[41] Beach & Weinberg JJA said:

[39] “The prospect that an offender is liable to deportation following sentence is, of course, a relevant sentencing factor: see *Guden v The Queen* (2010) 28 VR 288, *Konamala v The Queen* [2016] VSCA 48 and *Da Costa Junior v The Queen* (2016) 307 FLR 153. As the respondent properly conceded, the relevance of an offender’s immigration status, as regards the possibility of deportation, is twofold:

(a) it may be relevant to the hardship that will be felt by an offender, uncertain as to whether at the end of the sentence, he (and perhaps his family as well), will be required to uproot themselves, and return to his country of origin; and

(b) it is additionally punitive because it destroys the opportunity to settle permanently in this country.

[40] Of course, a court should only reduce a sentence based upon the prospect of deportation where there is sufficient evidence of both the risk, and the impact of that risk, under s 501(3A) of the *Migration Act 1958* (Cth) (‘the Act’). That section, in combination with other subsections [ss.501(6)(a), 501(7)(c), 501CA],relevantly provides that a ‘non-citizen’ is liable to deportation where he or she is convicted of an offence and sentenced to a term of imprisonment of at least one year. A person is similarly liable to deportation if they have been sentenced to two or more terms of imprisonment, where the total of those terms is 12 months or more [s.501(7)(d)].

[41] On 11 December 2014, amendments to the Act came into force which made visa cancellation mandatory for an offender sentenced to imprisonment of one year or more, unless the Minister is later satisfied, by the applicant, that there is a reason to revoke the cancellation decision. In other words, the effect of the amendment is to require a permanent residency visa to be cancelled, and to impose upon the ‘noncitizen’ whose visa has been cancelled, the obligation to dissuade the Minister from deporting him or her. The net effect may be to cause the offender to be put into migration detention pending the lengthy period that it is likely to take before a final resolution of the matter has been achieved. In some cases, that may be months, if not years.”

In *R v Kumar* [2018] VSC 241 – in sentencing the accused to TES IMP7y/4y on charges of aggravated burglary of his ex partner’s home, intentionally causing serious injury to a male guest at her home, contravention of a family violence safety notice and commiting an indictable offence while on bail, Croucher J noted at [68]:

“[M]ost importantly, there is evidence before me that Mr Kumar’s visa lapsed in August last year and that, as an ‘unlawful non-citizen, [he] would be subject to removal from Australia as soon as reasonably practicable’. The parties accept that this means that Mr Kumar faces a significant risk of deportation, particularly given the length of the sentence I am about to impose as well: see, for example, *Schneider v The Queen* [2016] VSCA 76 at [16]-[26] (per Priest JA, with whom Coghlan and Kyrou JJA agreed). Mr Brown, who appeared for the Director at trial and on the plea, accepts that the uncertainty of Mr Kumar’s fate in view of the significant risk of deportation makes his time in custody all the more onerous. This, it is also accepted, is particularly so in circumstances where Mr Kumar has been here for nine years, has three children born in this country and has a grave and justifiable concern that he will be unable to have access to those children if he is deported…In my view, this is a very significant additional punishment to Mr Kumar.”

In *AS v The Queen* [2019] VSC 260 the appellant – aged 17 at the time of the offending – had pleaded guilty to charges including **assault with intent to commit a sexual offence** and aggravated burglary. He was born in Samoa but he and his parents had moved to New Zealand when he was 3 years old. He was a non-citizen under the *Migration Act 1958* and had received a notice of intention to consider cancellation of his visa. He had written a letter of appeal and was awaiting a response from the authorities. At [54] Champion J said:

“I am not in a position to make a clear determination of the likelihood of the appellant’s deportation, however I am prepared to accept that the uncertainty of his situation is likely to weigh heavily. I have taken this into account my determination of the appropriate sentence.”

In *Hague v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 17 the applicant had pleaded guilty to a single charge of dangerous driving causing death and had been sentenced to IMP5y/2y6m. The applicant had come to Australia with his mother at the age of 12 but by an oversight the fact that the applicant is a non-citizen liable to deportation was not raised before the sentencing judge. The Court of Appeal (T Forrest & Walker JJA) granted leave to appeal, allowed the appeal and resentenced the applicant to IMP3y/18m, saying at [28]:

“It is well accepted that the prospect of an offender’s deportation is a relevant consideration in the sentencing process: *Guden v The Queen* (2010) 28 VR 288, 294 [25] (Maxwell P, Bongiorno JA and Beach AJA); [2010] VSCA 196. It may bear on the impact a sentence of imprisonment will have ‘both during the currency of the incarceration and upon … release’. In an appropriate case, ‘it will be proper to take into account the fact that a sentence of imprisonment will result in the offender losing the opportunity of settling permanently in Australia’: *Guden* at [27]. Assuming the case is appropriate, and albeit the applicant’s immigration status is not finally determined, we consider there is no reason in principle why this Court, if the evidence allows it, cannot take into account the real chance of deportation as a relevant factor to be considered in mitigation. In this case, as a consequence of his offending, the applicant’s residency visa has been cancelled. He will certainly be deported unless his request for revocation of that cancellation decision is successful at some future undetermined date. It requires no prohibited ‘speculation’ {*Guden* at [28]; *R v Khem* [2008] VSCA 136 at [31]} to conclude that there is a real prospect that the applicant will be deported either at the conclusion of his sentence or at some earlier date as determined by the Adult Parole Board.”

In *Ater v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 90 at [44]-[65] the Court of Appeal (Maxwell P, Macaulay & Whelan JJA) said at [48]:

“The potential for an offender to be deported at the completion of a sentence is relevant to the sentencing process as it may render imprisonment more onerous, and may constitute additional punishment in that it destroys the opportunity to settle permanently in Australia: *Allouch v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 244, [39] (Beach and Weinberg JJA). Whether it does so, and the extent to which it does so, depends upon the prisoner’s personal circumstances: *Konamala v The Queen* [2016] VSCA 48, [34] (Maxwell P, Redlich and Priest JJA). Where a person has come to Australia at an early age, and has no apparent ties with the country to which they are likely to be deported, general conclusions as to the likely impact of deportation can be drawn even in the absence of evidence directed to that issue: *Loftus v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 24, [71] (Whelan AP and Niall JA).”

In *DPP v Al-Hasan* [2023] VSC 376 the 50 year old accused man had pleaded guilty to a rolled-up count of making a threat to inflict serious injury, conduct endangering life, conduct endangering persons and damaging property constituted by the accused driving his motor vehicle at his wife’s brother and then into the front of the house. The victims of the crimes were the accused’s wife and members of her family. The accused had no prior convictions and was ‘stateless’ with a refugee background. In imposing a sentence of IMP4y3m/2y10m, Fox J said at [43]-[44] in relation to the risk of deportation:

[43] “The prospect of deportation is a significant matter in your case. Your current visa remains valid, and I am prohibited from having regard to any possibility or likelihood that the length of your sentence will be affected by executive action of any kind: Sentencing Act 1991 (Vic) s 5(2AA)(a). The parties agree that pursuant to s 501 of the Migration Act 1958 (Cth), if you are sentenced to a single sentence of more than 12 months, you will not pass the ‘character test’ and face mandatory cancellation of your visa. If that were to occur, you would then be almost certainly deported, unless you request revocation of that decision and your request is successful. In all the circumstances, given the sentence I will impose, I accept there is a real prospect you will be liable to deportation. As recently set out in *Hague v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 17, [28]-[31] {see *DPP v Karpis* [2005] VSCA 119, [15] per Callaway JA}, the Court may consider the considerable chance you will be deported in a number of ways. First, the prospect of deportation is a form of extra-curial punishment. This is particularly so when your four young children live here, and if you are deported, there is a real chance you will lose the opportunity to have a meaningful relationship with them or play any real role in their lives. You have endured a great deal throughout your life, and are now nearly 50 years old. As a result of this offending, you may have lost your chance to settle in the only peaceful country you have ever known. Second, your time in custody will undoubtedly be more burdensome than it is for other prisoners, due to your anxiety about the prospect of future deportation. This is particularly acute in your case, given you are a non-citizen, and the Australian Government cannot deport a stateless person. Such a scenario could result in you languishing in immigration detention after your sentence expires, until you are granted a visa by another country. For these reasons, the prospect that you will not be able to remain in Australia constitutes substantial extra-curial punishment and meaningfully mitigates the sentence I would otherwise impose.

[44] Your counsel also argued that if your visa is cancelled, it may reduce or eliminate your prospects of being granted parole, and in turn your concern about whether you will be granted parole will also add to your burden of imprisonment. In my view, in the circumstances here, that factor is of little weight for two reasons. First, a court fixes a head sentence on the assumption that a prisoner may serve every day of that sentence. In Hague v The Queen, the question of whether the applicant’s perception of his reduced parole prospects added to the burden of is incarceration arose. Without deciding, the Court at [32] noted that the question was ‘subsumed by the other more prominent factors that add to the applicant’s custodial burden’. Second, given the magnitude of the other matters that make the prospect of deportation additionally burdensome in your case, this additional factor is really subsumed by those other matters.”

In *Tufue v The King* [2024] VSCA 22 the applicant had pleaded guilty to attempted aggravated burglary, intentionally damage property, recklessly cause injury, reckless conduct endangering serious injury and related summary offences and had been sentenced to an aggregate IMP572d plus a 2y community correction order. Holding that the sentencing judge had made an error in his approach to considering the risk of deportation, the Court of Appeal granted leave to appeal, allowed the appeal and resentenced the applicant to an aggregate IMP16m plus a 2y community correction order. At [28]-[31] Beach & Macaulay JJA said:

[28] “Sections 501(3A)(a)(i), (6)(a) and (7)(c) of the *Migration Act* *1958* (Cth) together provide that the Minister must cancel a visa that has been granted to a person if that person does not pass the character test on the basis that they had been sentenced to a term of imprisonment of 12 months or more. Upon representations made to the Minister by the person whose visa has been cancelled, the Minister may revoke the cancellation: s.501CA(4) *Migration Act*. If the Minister does not revoke the cancellation, the affected person may apply to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal for a review of that decision.

[29] When sentencing an offender who is not an Australian citizen but the holder of a visa issued under the *Migration Act*, the court may take into account the prospect of deportation following the sentence as a relevant sentencing factor in two ways: first, that the expectation of being deported following release may mean the burden of imprisonment will be greater for that person than for someone who faces no such risk; and secondly, in an appropriate case, it will be proper to take into account the fact that a sentence of imprisonment will result in the offender losing the opportunity of settling permanently in Australia: *Guden* (2010) 28 VR 288, 295 [27]; [2010] VSCA 196. A sentencing court should not speculate as to the risk of deportation or its impact; evidence is required to permit a sensible quantification of the risk: *Guden* (2010) 28 VR 288, 295 [29].

[30] Further, it has been held on a number of occasions that it is erroneous for a sentencing court to artificially lower a sentence to avoid the consequences of the *Migration Act*: *Loftus v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 24, [81]; *Matamata v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 253, [75]; *Tuare v The King* [2023] VSCA 303, [79].

[31] In addition, and regardless of any consideration of the risk of deportation, the calculation of pre-sentence detention has no bearing on the determination of the appropriate sentence. As this Court explained in *DPP v TY (No 2)* (2009) 24 VR 705; [2009] VSCA 226 at [53]:

*‘*The appropriate sentence is arrived at by the application of conventional sentencing principles to the circumstances of the case. It is only after the sentence has been determined — and pronounced — that the question of PSD arises.’

See also *WCB v The Queen* [2010] VSCA 230 at [58]-[59].”

See also *Loftus v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 24 at [65]-[83]; *Magedi v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 102 at [55]-[60]; *R v Shoma* [2019] VSC 367 at [100]-[105]; *Foley v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 99 at [21]-[25]; *Akot v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 55 at [33]-[40]; *DPP v Jayadev Patil (a pseudonym)* [2020] VSCA 337 at [60]; *Hatzis v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 43 at [27]; *Eustace v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 142 at [7/27] & [28]; *Matamata v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 253 at [28]-[31], [71]-[80] & [90]-[93]; *Goh v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 24 at [37]‑[39]; *R v Lu* [2022] VSC 258 at [30]; *R v Tafa* [2022] VSC 466 at [57]-[58]; *Ong v The King* [2023] VSCA 116 at [35]-[58]; *Varghese v The King* [2024] VSCA 115 at [70].

In relation to the relevance to a non-parole period of the likelihood of the applicant’s deportation after serving his sentence, see *R v Mann* [2011] VSCA 189 at [36]-[43] and the cases cited therein – *Guden v The Queen* at [15] & *R v Strestha* (1991) 173 CLR 48, 57 (Brennan & McHugh JJ). See also *R v Hutton* [2011] VSC 484 at [41]-[42].

In *R v Wunan Yu* [2005] VSCA 18 Winneke P (with whom Charles & Buchanan JJA agreed), referring to the judgment of Marks J in *R v Binder and Langer* [1990] VR 563 at 569-570, to *Shrestha v The Queen* (1991) 173 CLR 48 and to s.5(2AA)(a) of the *Sentencing Act 1991*, held at [11] that the sentencing judge was wrong to take into account the possible effects of executive action or policy (namely the prospect of the appellant being deported to China) in determining not to set a non-parole period.

## **11.19 The ‘standard sentence’ scheme**

The ‘standard sentence’ scheme applies only to offences committed on or after 01/02/2018. It applies only to offenders sentenced under the *Sentencing Act 1991*. It does not apply to children or young persons sentenced under the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005*, to offenders under the age of 18 at the time of the commission of the offence or to offences heard and determined summarily.

*Brown v The Queen* [2019] VSCA 286 was the first case in which the Court of Appeal considered the standard sentence provisions which were inserted as ss.5A & 5B of the *Sentencing Act 1991* by the *Sentencing Amendment (Sentencing Standards) Act 2017.* At [1]-[8] the Court (Maxwell P & Priest, Kaye, T Forrest & Emerton JJA) described the operation of the provisions and ruled on the key issue whether the standard sentencing scheme required or permitted the sentencing judge to assess the seriousness of the subject offence “taking into account only the objective factors” defined in s.5A(1)(b):

[1] “In 2017, the Victorian Parliament legislated to establish what was described as a ‘standard sentence scheme’. The new scheme replaced the ‘baseline sentencing’ provisions which this Court in 2015 had found were ‘incapable of being given any practical operation’: *DPP v Walters (a pseudonym)* (2015) 49 VR 356, 360 [9] (Maxwell P, Redlich, Tate, Whelan and Priest JJA).

[2] As the then Attorney-General said in his second reading speech, the new legislation prescribes standard sentences for 12 serious crimes, including murder, rape and sexual offences involving children. The Minister explained the concept:

‘The standard sentence represents an offence at the mid-point of objective seriousness, and is calculated at 40 per cent of the maximum penalty. For example the standard sentence for rape is 10 years as it has a maximum penalty of 25 years. For offences with a maximum penalty of life imprisonment, an offence-specific approach has been adopted, with the standard sentence for murder being 25 years’: Victoria, *Parliamentary Debates*, Legislative Assembly, 25 May 2017, 1509 (Mr Martin Pakula, Attorney-General).

[3] This is the first occasion on which the Court of Appeal has had to consider the standard sentence provisions. To facilitate that consideration, three appeals (including the present) were heard together concerning sentences imposed for standard sentence offences, being (respectively) murder, rape and sexual assault…

[4] For the most part, the provisions are clear and the approach required is not in dispute. The key new requirement is that a judge when sentencing for a ‘standard sentence offence’ must ‘take the standard sentence into account as one of the factors relevant to sentencing’. This requirement:

* is to be treated as a ‘legislative guidepost’, having the same function as the maximum penalty; is to be treated as a ‘legislative guidepost’, having the same function as the maximum penalty;
* does not affect the established ‘instinctive synthesis’ approach to sentencing;
* does not require or permit ‘two-stage sentencing’; and
* does not otherwise affect the matters which the court may, or must, take into account in sentencing.

[5] The only area of uncertainty concerns the judge’s assessment of the seriousness of the offence before the court (‘the subject offence’). The ‘standard sentence’ is defined by s.5A(1)(b) as “the sentence for an offence that, taking into account only the objective factors affecting the relative seriousness of that offence, is in the middle of the range of seriousness”. The provisions then specify in s.5A(3) that those ‘objective factors’ are to be determined:

1. without reference to matters personal to a particular offender or class of offenders; and
2. wholly by reference to the nature of the offending.

[6] It is not in doubt that those specifications apply to the identification of the hypothetical ‘middle of the range’ offence. The question which was explored at the hearing of these appeals was whether the new scheme required (or permitted) the sentencing judge to assess the seriousness of the subject offence ‘taking into account only the objective factors’ as thus defined.

[7] **The submission of senior counsel for the Director was that, on their proper construction, the scheme provisions neither required nor permitted such an assessment. For the reasons set out in Part I, we would uphold that submission. In our opinion, the standard sentence provisions do not have any bearing on the judge’s obligation to assess the seriousness of the subject offence. That assessment remains a necessary part of the process of instinctive synthesis and it is not constrained by the legislative definition of ‘objective factors’. Those constraints are referable only to the assessment which gives content to the hypothetical offence as an offence ‘in the middle of the range of seriousness’.**

[8] In our view, this conclusion is required by the language of the standard sentence provisions. It is also consistent with the express policy of the legislation, which is to preserve instinctive synthesis and prohibit ‘two-stage sentencing’. Finally, this construction of the provisions reflects their legislative history, based as they are on the analysis — and the language — in the unanimous judgment of the High Court in *Muldrock v The Queen* (2011) 244 CLR 120.”

In *Julian Lockyer (a pseudonym) v The Queen* [2020] VSCA 321 at [67]-[69] the Court of Appeal (Maxwell P, Beach & Weinberg JJA) said:

[67] “It must be understood that the standard sentencing regime, so recently introduced, does not in any way diminish the importance of giving proper weight to relevant mitigating factors. These include the personal circumstances of the offender, his or her prospects of rehabilitation and, where appropriate, the need to give due weight to a plea of guilty (particularly if coupled with remorse).

[68] If the standard sentencing regime is not approached in accordance with the principles laid down in both *Drake* and *Brown*, it will have replaced ‘instinctive synthesis’ with ‘two-tiered’ or ‘starting point’ sentencing. It is clear that this was not the intent of the Parliament: *Sentencing Act 1991* s.5B(3)(b).

[69] A standard sentence of 10 years’ imprisonment, for rape, represents a ‘legislative guidepost’ {*Brown* (2019) 59 VR 462, 464–5, [4]}, and is to be understood as but one factor to be taken into account in what is obviously a far more nuanced, and careful, process than one which is crudely arithmetic: *Sentencing Act 1991* s.5B(2).”

In *McPherson v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 53, the Court of Appeal, allowing an appeal against a sentence of IMP9y/6y imposed after trial on one charge of “relatively fleeting digital penetration” of a child under 12, substituted a sentence of IMP6y6m/4y. The ‘standard sentence’ for this offence was IMP10y. At [31] Priest & T Forrest JJA spoke of the difficulty faced by judges when considering the standard sentence for this type of offending [emphasis added]:

“Before concluding we should mention the difficult task with which sentencing judges are confronted when considering the standard sentence for this type of offending. The standard sentence is designed to represent a ‘mid-range’ example of this offence, however, the offence covers such a wide range of sexual misconduct as to make the notional ‘mid-range’ very difficult to identify. The misconduct can be penetration by finger, penis or tongue, or by an object. It can be momentary or protracted. It can be committed on all ages up to 12. The impact on the victim can be manageable or catastrophic. This is not to say the phrase is meaningless — it must be given its place in the sentencing calculus — but it is an intangible concept, and judges ought to be wary of affording it too much weight in the sentencing exercise. In particular, as this Court has said, **judges must avoid engaging in ‘twostage’ sentencing, whereby a vague, essentially intangible concept is used as a starting point from whence the sentence is adjusted upwards or downwards as the case dictates. It is a factor in the application of the intuitive synthesis, in the same way that the maximum sentence is. No more, no less.**”

In *DPP v Sako* [2024] VSC 77 the offender had pleaded guilty to the stabbing murder of a 23 year old victim following breaking into the victim’s home in the context of an obsessive fixation on the victim who was the offender’s team leader at his previous workplace. In imposing a sentence of IMP36y/30y Jane Dixon J said at [105]-[106]:

[105] “I have had regard to the maximum sentence as well as the standard sentence for murder: see *Sentencing Act 1991* (Vic), ss 5(2)(a), (ab), 5B(2)(a). Consideration of the standard sentence does not impact the accepted ‘instinctive synthesis’ approach to sentencing and is to be treated as a ’legislative guidepost’ only, having the same function as the maximum penalty: *Brown v The Queen* (2019) 59 VR 462, 464 [4]. As noted by Hollingworth J in *Herrmann*, a standard sentence looks at the objective factors affecting the relative seriousness of the offence and excludes any matters personal to the offender: *Sentencing Act 1991* (Vic) ss.5A(1)(b), (3). Justice Hollingworth said at [104]:

‘A standard sentence is not the same thing as a mandatory sentence. Nor is a standard sentence the primary sentencing consideration, or the starting point from which to add or subtract time. It is just one of the many matters to be taken into account by a court in performing the instinctive synthesis method of sentencing.’

[106] In my view, the objective factors attaching to your offence place it well above the ‘middle of the range’ of seriousness. However, in sentencing you, I am required to synthesise all of the matters I have discussed, including matters personal to you.”

The case of *DPP v Pualic* [2025] VSCA 178 involved a Director’s appeal against a sentence of IMP24y6m/19y imposed on the offender who had pleaded guilty to murder: see the summary of the judgment of Incerti J in **section 11.2.36**. The respondent – who was subject to an intervention order at the time – had stabbed his former intimate partner to death in her home in front of her 8-year old daughter. The offender had suffered profound childhood disadvantage and was intoxicated and suffering from mental impairment at the time of offending. The standard sentence for murder is IMP25y. The Court of Appeal dismissed the appeal, holding that the sentence was lenient but within range. At [98]-[100] Emerton P, Kennedy & Orr JJA concluded:

[98] “Finally, we reject the appellant’s submission that intimate partner murders should be understood as a category of murder that will always necessitate a higher sentence than the standard sentence. Rather, the plain legislative intention is that the standard sentence for all murders is 25 years’ imprisonment. That means that 25 years is the sentence for a murder that, taking into account only the objective factors affecting the relative seriousness of that offence, is in the middle range of seriousness: *Sentencing Act 1991*, s.5A(1)(b).

[99] The standard sentence, like the maximum penalty, is a legislative guidepost that must be taken into account as one of the factors relevant to sentencing: *Sentencing Act 1991*, s.5B(2)(a); *Brown* (2019) 59 VR 462, 464–5 [4], 479 [55]; [2019] VSCA 286. However, the requirement to take the standard sentence for an offence into account does not require or permit ‘two-stage sentencing’, by which a starting sentence or range of sentences is determined and then adjusted up or down by reference to particular features of the case, including matters personal to the offender: *Brown* (2019) 59 VR 462, 465 [4], 468 [17]; [2019] VSCA 286.

[100] We accept the respondent’s submission that treating the murder of an intimate partner as a category of the offence of murder that always requires a sentence above the standard sentence would be an impermissible two-stage approach to the sentencing task. It would also be antithetical to individualised justice.”

*See also DPP v Drake* [2019] VSCA 293 at [14]-[17]; *R v Pozzebon* [2019] VSC 631 at [39]-[44]; *R v Eckersley* [2020] VSC 22 esp. at [68]-[69]; *Quah v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 164 esp. at [18]-[32]; *Phongthaihong v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 317 at [40]-[44]; *R v Wilio* [2022] VSC 86 at [93]-[100] – leave to appeal refused *Wilio v The King* [2023] VSCA 88 at [93]-[98]; *Weir (a pseudonym) v The King* [2023] VSCA 113 at [26]-[27]; *Nelis v The King* [2023] VSCA 128 at [18]-[27]; *DPP v Pallant* [2024] VSC 397 at [149]-[152].

## **11.20 Alcohol exclusion orders**

Alcohol exclusion orders [AEOs] were introduced as and from 01/09/2014 by the *Summary Offences and Sentencing Amendment Act 2013* and are governed by ss.89DC-89DH in Part 4 of the *Sentencing Act 1991*. It is not entirely clear whether the Children’s Court has power under these provisions to make an AEO.

On the one hand, s.4 of the *Sentencing Act 1991* provides: “This Act applies to all courts except the Children's Court.” Further, s.89DD expressly provides for an application for an AEO to be filed in the Magistrates’ Court:

(1) If a person has been charged with a relevant offence, the Director of Public Prosecutions or a police officer may make an application for an alcohol exclusion order.

(2) An application for an alcohol exclusion order under this section must be filed and served on the accused who is the subject of the application—

(a) in the case of a proceeding listed for a summary hearing in the Magistrates' Court, before the first mention hearing, or later with the leave of the court; or

(b) in the case of a committal proceeding, before the committal mention hearing, or later with the leave of the court; or

(c) in any other case, before the first directions hearing, or later with the leave of the court.

(3) An application for an alcohol exclusion order may be withdrawn by the Director of Public Prosecutions or a police officer at any time before it is determined.

(4) A court may also make an alcohol exclusion order in respect of an offender on the court's own motion if it is satisfied that the circumstances set out in section 89DE(1) apply to the offender.

(5) When making an alcohol exclusion order, the Supreme Court may direct that any application for the variation of that order is to be made to the Magistrates' Court for determination.

On the other hand s.417 of the CYFA provides:

1. The provisions in Part 4 of the *Sentencing Act 1991* apply to a proceeding in the Criminal Division [of the Children’s Court] with any necessary modification and as if in ss.85H(1), 86(2) and 87J(1) for ‘may’ there were submitted ‘must’ and as if in s.85C(1)(b)(iii)(B) the reference to the Magistrates’ Court were a reference to the Criminal Division.”
2. The maximum amount that the [Children’s] Court may order an offender to pay under Part 4 of the *Sentencing Act 1991* is $1000.

Further, s.528(1) of the CYFA provides: “The [Children’s] Court has and may exercise in relation to all matters over which it has jurisdiction all the powers and authorities that the Magistrates’ Court has in relation to matters over which it has jurisdiction.”

The wording of s.417 might – on one reading – imply that it is intended to be limited to those provisions in Part 4 that relate to

* restitution (Division 1);
* compensation (Division 2);
* recovery of assistance paid under the *Victims of Crime Assistance Act 1996* (Division 2A); and
* recovery of costs incurred by emergency service agencies (Division 2B).

This restricted reading is supported by s.418 which relates to enforcement of orders in addition to sentence and refers specifically to “jurisdiction to enforce a debt”.

However, there is nothing in the Explanatory Memorandum that accompanied the *Summary Offences and Sentencing Amendment Bill 2013* which would suggest that s.417 was intended to exclude the other Divisions of Part 4 and specifically the AEO provisions in Division 4. Further, the purpose of AEOs was described by the Attorney-General in the Second Reading Speech in terms which are equally applicable to adults and juveniles, apart from the peripheral reference to general deterrence:

“A high proportion of violent behaviour is caused by people who have had too much to drink. These measures will better protect the public from the recurrence of such behaviour and create a strong deterrent to the offender and to others. …

[AEOs] will send a clear message that drunken, violent behaviour will not be tolerated in Victoria and that those who engage in it will face significant consequences for their personal and social life, in addition to whatever other sentence they receive.”

Accordingly, the writer believes that it is more likely that the AEO provisions apply not only to adults but also to children and young persons sentenced under the CYFA.

Section 89DE(1) provides that a court **must** make an AEO in respect of an offender if–

1. the court records a conviction against the offender for a **relevant offence**; and
2. the court is satisfied on the balance of probabilities that-

(i) at the time of the relevant offence the offender was intoxicated; and

(ii) the offender’s intoxication significantly contributed to the commission of the offence; and

1. the offender is not, or has not been, the subject of a previous AEO in relation to the circumstances that gave rise to the relevant offence.

Section 89DE(3) provides that the duration of an AEO is 2 years.

Under s.89DC a ‘**relevant offence**’ for the purposes of the AEO provisions is an offence against any of 48 listed sections of the *Crimes Act 1958*, all of which involve actual or threatened physical harm to other persons.

Section 89DE(4) provides that subject to the exemptions referred to in s.89DE(5), an AEO prohibits an offender from–

1. entering or remaining in any licensed premises characterised as a nightclub, bar, restaurant, cafe, reception centre or function centre; and
2. entering or remaining in the location of any major event; and
3. entering or remaining in a bar area of any licensed premises to which paragraph (a) or (b) does not apply; and
4. consuming or attempting to consume any liquor in any licensed premises to which paragraph (a) or (b) does not apply.

In *Frecker v The Queen* [2021] VSCA 331 the AEO made by the judge reflected the prohibitions set out in s 89DE(4) and did not contain any exemptions under s 89DE(5). The Supreme Court has not previously considered how AEOs can inform the exercise of the sentencing discretion, Kyrou & T Forrest JJA noting at [62] that in *Robson v The Queen* [2018] VSCA 256, in the context of a sentencing appeal which relied upon the ground of manifest excess, the offender submitted that an alcohol exclusion condition attached to a CCO involved a punitive element but, in upholding the appeal, the Court did not analyse the punitive aspects of the alcohol exclusion condition.

After discussing the cases of *Boulton v The Queen* (2014) 46 VR 308, *Akoka v The Queen* [2017] VSCA 214 and *R v McLeod* (2007) 16 VR 682, their Honours held at [66] that the following principles apply to AEOs made under ss.89DC-89DH of the *Sentencing Act 1991*:

“(a) As is evident from the second reading speech for the Bill and the nature of the offences falling within the definition of ‘relevant offence’ in s 89DC, the primary purpose of an AEO is to protect the community. It does so by limiting the opportunity for the offender — whose intoxication significantly contributed to the commission of a relevant offence — to consume alcohol in venues at which other persons are present and who may be harmed by the offender if he or she becomes intoxicated.

(b) An AEO may also facilitate the offender’s rehabilitation by addressing one of the underlying causes of his or her offending.

(c) An AEO is also capable of being punitive because it imposes restraints upon the offender’s liberty which are in addition to the sentence of imprisonment. Those restraints form part of the circumstances which the sentencing court will take into account in a general way in the intuitive synthesis.

(d) Whether an AEO has a punitive element that extends beyond the deprivation of liberty that necessarily arises from its provisions and, if so, the extent to which it does so, will depend upon the individual circumstances of the offender. For example, an AEO may have a greater impact upon a chef who operates his or her own licensed restaurant which is the sole source of his or her income, than an offender whose livelihood does not depend upon licensed premises. However, the adverse impacts of an AEO may be ameliorated by an exemption granted under s 89DE(5). For example, the sentencing court could grant an exemption permitting the offender to enter and remain in particular licensed premises or bar area for the purposes of employment.

(e) As we have stated, an AEO is relevant to the exercise of the sentencing discretion. However, if the offender wishes to contend that an AEO will have an additional punitive impact upon him or her so as to warrant discrete moderation in sentence, he or she must do so expressly and support such a contention with evidence. The offender should also address whether an exemption under s 89DE(5) may ameliorate particular punitive features of an AEO.

(f) Where the offender expressly contends that his or her sentence should be moderated on account of an AEO, ordinarily the sentencing judge should make a finding on the extent (if any) to which the AEO is punitive and explain how the AEO has informed the exercise of the sentencing discretion.”

Counsel for Mr Frecker had submitted that the sentencing judge erred in failing to take into account, as a form of additional punishment, the AEO imposed on the appellant. In dismissing the appeal, Kyrou & T Forrest JJA held at [80] that “the judge was entirely justified in treating the AEO as part of the mix of factors which were to be taken into account in the exercise of the sentencing discretion in a general way without singling it out for special mention.”

## **11.21 Mandatory sentencing**

In *Beau Buckley v The Queen* [2022] VSCA 138 the Court of Appeal reluctantly refused leave to appeal a sentence of IMP3y6m/3y imposed on an 18 year old offender who had pleaded guilty to a charge of aggravated carjacking. Maxwell P & T Forrest JA were highly critical of the concept of mandatory sentencing, saying at [1]-[14] [emphasis added]:

[1] “Over the past decade, the Victorian Parliament has introduced mandatory sentencing provisions for a range of offences. In a case to which one of these provisions applies, the sentencing court is effectively compelled — by law — to impose a custodial sentence and to fix a minimum term of imprisonment. The court is prohibited from making a non-custodial order, even as part of a combination sentence with a term of imprisonment. The obligation to imprison applies where the offender is aged 18 or over, and it therefore applied to the present applicant, who was barely 18 at the time of the offence. Under s 10AD(2) of the *Sentencing Act 1991* (as amended), the mandatory sentence does not apply to an offender who is under 18 at the time of the offence.

[2] Each of the mandatory sentencing provisions includes what purports to be an exception to the obligation to imprison. That exception applies if the sentencing court is satisfied that ‘a special reason exists which would justify’ a different disposition. A judge can only find that a ‘special reason’ exists if he or she is satisfied (relevantly) that there are ‘substantial and compelling circumstances which are exceptional and rare’ and which would justify a different disposition.

[3] As this Court said recently, ‘that requirement is — no doubt quite deliberately — almost impossible to satisfy’: *DPP v Bowen* [2021] VSCA 355, [11] (Maxwell P, Priest, McLeish, T Forrest and Walker JJA). Assuming that there is a difference between ‘exceptional’ and ‘rare’, the inclusion of both words exposes the legislature’s clear intention that, in nearly every case to which the mandatory sentencing provisions apply, the offender should go to gaol.

[4] In deciding whether this near-impossible test is satisfied, the court is expressly prohibited from taking into account the offender’s previous good character, prospects of rehabilitation and (if relevant) early plea of guilty, and must disregard ‘parity with other sentences’: s.10A(2B) *Sentencing Act*. In any other case, those considerations would be of critical importance to the determination of a sentence which punishes the offender ‘to an extent and in a manner which is just in all of the circumstances’, as referred to in s 5(1) of the *Sentencing Act*.

[5] **Mandatory minimum sentences are wrong in principle. They require judges to be instruments of injustice: to inflict more severe punishment than a proper application of sentencing principle could justify, to imprison when imprisonment is not warranted and may well be harmful, and to treat as identical offenders whose circumstances and culpability may be very different:** see e.g. *Trennerry v Bradley* (1997) 6 NTLR 175, 187 (Mildren J)**. Mandating imprisonment in this way must be seen to reflect the ascendancy of a punitive sentiment and a disregard of the demonstrated benefits of non-custodial orders and — in cases like the present — the vital importance of rehabilitating young offenders.**

[6] **In our view, mandatory sentencing reveals a profound misunderstanding of where the community’s best interests lie, especially in the sentencing of young offenders. As has been pointed out repeatedly, sending young people to adult gaol is almost inevitably counterproductive:** see, eg, *DPP v Tokava* [2006] VSCA 156 [22]–[24]; *Azzopardi v The Queen* (2011) 35 VR 43, 46–7 [4] (Redlich JA); [2011] VSCA 372; C Cunneen, B Goldson and S Russell, ‘Juvenile Justice, Young People and Human Rights in Australia’ (2016) 28 Current Issues in Criminal Justice 173, 176–7.  **It also reveals a wholly unjustified mistrust of those on whom the sentencing discretion is conferred. Sentencing courts are much better equipped, and much better placed, than legislators to determine what type and length of sentence will satisfy the sentencing objectives in a particular case.**

[7] The present applicant committed the serious offence of aggravated carjacking, to which a mandatory minimum of 3 years’ imprisonment applies: s.10A(2B) *Sentencing Act*. He committed the offence just four weeks after his 18th birthday. The unchallenged expert evidence provided to the sentencing judge showed that the applicant was exceptionally immature and would be vulnerable in prison, having never been in detention before. Since, however, those circumstances could not be described as ‘exceptional and rare’, the judge was obliged to send him to gaol for a minimum of 3 years. The head sentence was 3 years and 6 months.

[8] This was a case which, in our view, called for a disposition directed at the applicant’s rehabilitation. The community expects, and needs, sentencing courts to fashion dispositions which will minimise the risk of re-offending. The link between rehabilitation and risk reduction is axiomatic, as is the paramount importance of rehabilitating young offenders: *R v Mills* (1998) 4 VR 235, 242 (Batt JA, Phillips CJ and Charles JA agreeing). In this case, had it not been for the constraints of the legislation, that objective could have been achieved either by an order detaining the applicant for a period in a Youth Justice Centre (‘YJC’), or by a community correction order (‘CCO’) with tight therapeutic conditions. Neither a CCO nor a YJC order is a ‘term of imprisonment’ for the purposes of s 10AD(1) of the *Sentencing Act*.

[9] A YJC order would have resulted in the applicant being detained in one of Victoria’s two youth justice facilities, for a period that could theoretically have been as long as four years. Typically, young offenders are released on parole after serving a portion of their detention period. While detained, young offenders are educated; required to participate in rehabilitation programs (for example, specialised violence programs, drug rehabilitation programs and youth-focussed sex offender programs); subject to mental health assessment, and treatment if necessary; offered cultural support; and individually prepared for release on parole.

[10] The Youth Parole Board has arrangements with a number of service providers, including Jesuit Social Services and Anglicare, to assist in the implementation of these measures. These programs continue during the parole period and participation in them is usually a condition of youth parole. Relatively small numbers of young persons are serving youth parole (under 50 at present) and parole is closely supervised. Youth Justice Centres are certainly not problem-free, but they provide young offenders, often from very troubled circumstances, with a pathway to a useful and fulfilling life. Importantly, young detainees are not exposed to the corrosive influence of older, hardened criminals.

[11] In *Boulton v The Queen* (2014) 46 VR 308; [2014] VSCA 342 at [104]-[105] & [107]‑[108] this Court (Maxwell P, Nettle, Neave, Redlich & Osborn JJA) explained the serious disadvantages of a term of adult imprisonment, as follows:

‘There is the loss of personal autonomy and of privacy, and the associated loss of control over choice of activities and choice of associates. The prisoner is subject to strict discipline, restriction of movement, forced association with other prisoners and — for a substantial part of each day — confinement in a small cell (in many instances, a cell shared with a cellmate not of the prisoner’s choosing). There is, moreover, exposure to the risks associated with the confinement of large numbers of people in a small space — violence, bullying, intimidation.

…

Importantly for present purposes, these features of the restrictive prison environment also have the consequence that the opportunities, and incentives, for rehabilitation are very limited. For example, there is no access to sustained treatment for psychological problems or addiction. Access to anger management and sex offender treatment programs is rationed, and such programs are often unavailable to those sentenced to short prison terms.

… In addition, imprisonment is often seriously detrimental for the prisoner, and hence for the community. The regimented institutional setting induces habits of dependency, which lead over time to institutionalisation and to behaviours which render the prisoner unfit for life in the outside world. Worse still, the forced cohabitation of convicted criminals operates as a catalyst for renewed criminal activity upon release. Self-evidently, such consequences are greatly to the community’s disadvantage.’

[12] By contrast, a CCO obliges the offender to take responsibility for his/her life, while at the same time enabling sometimes quite intensive treatment conditions to be attached, designed to address the causes of offending including drug addiction and, importantly, psychological instability. As the Court said in *Boulton* at [113]-[116]:

‘The availability of the CCO dramatically changes the sentencing landscape. The sentencing court can now choose a sentencing disposition which enables all of the purposes of punishment to be served simultaneously, in a coherent and balanced way, in preference to an option (imprisonment) which is skewed towards retribution and deterrence. The CCO option offers the court something which no term of imprisonment can offer, namely, the ability to impose a sentence which demands of the offender that he/she take personal responsibility for self-management and self-control and (depending on the conditions) that he/she pursue treatment and rehabilitation, refrain from undesirable activities and associations and/or avoid undesirable persons and places. The CCO also enables the offender to maintain the continuity of personal and family relationships, and to benefit from the support they provide. In short, the CCO offers the sentencing court the best opportunity to promote, simultaneously, the best interests of the community and the best interests of the offender and of those who are dependent on him/her.’

[13] Neither a term of detention in a YJC nor the imposition of a CCO is a ‘soft’ sentencing option. Both involve significant punitive sanctions, but leave open a clear pathway to rehabilitation, should the young offender wish to make that journey.

[14] In this case, the judge was prevented by law from considering either a period of detention in a YJC or a CCO appropriately conditioned. This blunt, oppressive sentencing regime is contrary to the public interest and incompatible with modern sentencing jurisprudence.”

In holding that ‘exceptional and rare’ circumstances were not made out, Maxwell P & T Forrest JA said at [43]-[46]:

[43] “The principal matters relied on by the applicant, both at first instance and in this Court, were his youth, his significant immaturity, his difficulties during adolescence and his likely vulnerability in prison. On ordinary principles, those matters taken in combination might well constitute ‘substantial and compelling circumstances’ justifying a non-custodial order. But the sad reality of our criminal justice system is that such circumstances — whether alone or in combination — simply could not be described as ‘exceptional and rare’. On the contrary, they are all too common.

[44] As we have said, the legislative intention could not be clearer. By adding the words ‘that are exceptional and rare’, the Parliament intended to make the test ‘almost impossible to satisfy’: *Bowen* [2021] VSCA 355, [11]. The express exclusion from consideration of the offender’s prospects of rehabilitation bespeaks a deliberate rejection of well-established and well-understood principles about the vital importance — to the community — of rehabilitating young offenders: *Mills* (1998) 4 VR 235, 242 (Batt JA, Phillips CJ and Charles JA agreeing); *Azzopardi* (2011) 35 VR 43, 53–57 [34]–[43] (Redlich JA, Coghlan AJA and Macaulay AJA agreeing); [2011] VSCA 372.

[45] As to immaturity, counsel for the respondent pointed out that until 2018 it was possible to satisfy the ‘special reason’ requirement — in the case of an offender aged between 18 and 21 — if it were shown that the offender had ‘a particular psychosocial immaturity that [had] resulted in a substantially diminished ability to regulate his or her behaviour’: s.10A(2) *Sentencing Act*. That provision was repealed in 2018, at the same time as the ‘substantial and compelling circumstances’ test was made much more stringent by the addition of the words ‘that are exceptional and rare’.

[46] It follows, in our view, that the sentencing judge was correct to conclude that the exception was not engaged. Indeed, given the language of the provisions, no other conclusion was reasonably open.”

At [47]-[50] Maxwell P & T Forrest JA concluded with a recommendation for legislative reform and a particularly powerful rebuke of the legislature:

[47] “We would echo the view, expressed by a five member Bench of this Court in *Bowen* last December, that these provisions should be reviewed. In [2021] VSCA 355 at [13] the Court said:

‘As this Court explained in *Boulton*, a CCO with appropriately tailored conditions can advance the interests of the community in ways that a prison sentence cannot. Given the priority which governments quite properly attach to community safety, consideration should be given to lowering this legislative barrier, so that judges are better able to advance that objective.’

[48] The effective prohibition of non-custodial orders and YJC orders indicates that a preoccupation with being, and being seen to be, punitive has obscured a proper appreciation of the public interest. The Parliament appears to have ignored the incontestable evidence about the adverse impact of adult gaol on young offenders and, equally, the opportunities which non-custodial orders and YJC orders provide for minimising the risk of reoffending.

[49] In relation to young offenders, we would endorse the following observation by Redlich JA in *Azzopardi* at [36]:

‘Courts sentencing young offenders are cognisant that the effect of incarceration in an adult prison on a young offender will more likely impair, rather than improve, the offender’s prospects of successful rehabilitation. While in prison a youthful offender is likely to be exposed to corrupting influences which may entrench in that young person criminal behaviour, thereby defeating the very purpose for which punishment was imposed. Imprisonment for any substantial period carries with it the recognised risk that anti-social tendencies may be exacerbated. The likely detrimental effect of adult prison on a youthful offender had adverse flow-on consequences for the community.’

[50] For these reasons, the application for leave to appeal must be refused. In refusing this application we have been compelled to do the applicant an injustice, and the community a disservice.”

There are a number of statutory offences which provide for minimum terms of imprisonment. There are also some general statutory provisions in the *Crimes Act 1914* (Cth) which allow for a sentence of less than the prescribed minimum in certain circumstances. In *Trinh v The King* [2024] VSCA 61 the applicant had pleaded guilty to a charge of engaging in sexual activity with a person under 18 years of age using a carriage service contrary to s.474.25A(1) of the *Criminal Code (Cth)* which provided a statutory minimum of 5 years imprisonment. The Court of Appeal allowed an appeal against a sentence of IMP6y6m imposed on this charge and substituted a sentence of IMP4y6m which was less than the prescribed statutory minimum. At [73] Taylor JA (with whom Priest & Kaye JJA agreed) said:

“It is to be noted that the applicant’s counsel correctly conceded on the plea that the applicant’s offending was in the ‘mid-range’ of objective seriousness. Ordinarily, such objectively serious offending would warrant a sentence in excess of the statutory minimum, notwithstanding the reductions available pursuant to s 16AAC(3) of the *Crimes Act 1914* (Cth). However, the exceptional subjective circumstances of the applicant’s case, in combination with the reductions the applicant is entitled to in accordance with s.16AAC(3), have compelled me to reach the conclusion that in the unique circumstances of this case it is appropriate to impose a sentence that is less than the statutory minimum.”

At [40]-[44] Taylor JA detailed the general approach to sentencing for Commonwealth offences with statutory minimum terms of imprisonment as follows:

[40] Following *Hurt v The King; Delzotto v The King* [2024] HCA 8 (‘*Hurt*’), it is beyond doubt that the correct approach to statutory minimum sentences is the ‘double function’ approach. That is, the minimum sentence restricts sentencing power to the minimum period of imprisonment, subject to the exceptions, and provides a yardstick representing ‘the least worst possible case warranting imprisonment against which the case before the court at the time can be measured’ {*Hurt* at [39]} or ‘the offence in the least serious circumstances’ {*Hurt* at [54]}. Thereby the statutory minimum operates to increase the appropriate term of imprisonment generally for that offence {*Hurt* at [43]}.

[41] Nonetheless, in very limited circumstances, where an adult under s.16AAC(1) *Crimes Act 1914* (Cth) falls to be sentenced for an offence which attracts a minimum term, sub-section 16AAC(2) of the *Crimes Act* allows a court to impose a sentence of imprisonment of less than the prescribed minimum. Those circumstances arise ‘only if the court considers it appropriate’ because that person has pleaded guilty or cooperated with law enforcement agencies or both. Sub-section 16AAC(3) then prescribes the manner in which any such reduction is to be made. For either a plea of guilty or cooperation, the court may reduce the sentence by an amount that is up to 25% of the prescribed minimum. If both factors are operative, the court may reduce the sentence by an amount that is up to 50% of the prescribed minimum: s.16AAC(3)(c).

[42] It follows that the reductions available for a plea of guilty and/or cooperation with law enforcement agencies do not automatically result in a sentence below the statutory minimum. A plea of guilty and cooperation are matters which if ‘relevant and known to the court’ must always be taken into account in passing sentence ‘of an order that is of a severity appropriate in all the circumstances’ {s.16A(1)} pursuant to paragraphs 16A(2)(g) and 16A(2)(h) of the *Crimes Act* respectively. As explained by Gageler CJ and Jagot J in *Hurt* at [39]:

the reduction in s 16AAC(2) and (3) is available to all offenders who have pleaded guilty or who have cooperated with law enforcement agencies whether that reduction would decrease the sentence below the statutory minimum or not.

[43] Thus, as stated by Edelman, Steward and Gleeson JJ at [104]:

‘The exceptional circumstances in which a discount can lead to a sentence of imprisonment below the minimum prescribed sentence do not detract from the role of the minimum sentence as a yardstick. Rather, the process contemplated by s 16AAC reinforces the yardstick role of the minimum sentence. The discretion in s 16AAC(2) applies where it is ‘appropriate to reduce the sentence’, implying that a legitimate procedure will involve determining a prima facie sentence with the use of the prescribed minimum sentence as a yardstick, prior to considering the discount. The subsequent and transparent consideration of the discounts in s 16A(2)(g) (plea of guilty) and s 16A(2)(h) (co-operation with law enforcement agencies) reinforces the utilitarian goals underlying those considerations.’

[44] In other words, an offender who has neither pleaded guilty nor cooperated in the relevant sense cannot receive a sentence that is less than the statutory minimum. Because of the practical benefits to the legal system of an offender pleading guilty and/or assisting authorities in the investigation of their own offending or child sexual offending generally, an offender who has done one or both of those things may, but not must, receive a sentence less than the statutory minimum. The sentencing process requires the judge to determine a prima facie sentence – which involves (but is not limited to) consideration of the offending measured against the yardstick minimum term which is for the ‘least worst possible case’ deserving of imprisonment – and then to overtly consider whether the fact and quality of either the plea or cooperation or both renders it ‘appropriate’ in all the circumstances to impose a sentence less than the prescribed minimum. This does not involve ‘double counting’ of a guilty plea and/or cooperation. Rather, it requires a sentencing judge to separately and expressly consider whether the instinctive synthesis of all relevant sentencing considerations has given adequate expression to those matters if the sentence remains at or above the statutory minimum. In all cases an offender who has pleaded guilty and/or cooperated with law enforcement agencies will receive a benefit for the plea and cooperation. In only some cases will that benefit extend to a sentence of imprisonment of less than the minimum term.”

