

SUPREME COURT OF THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

DRUG AND ALCOHOL SENTENCING LIST

SPEECH OF ACTING JUSTICE STEWART ON THE OCCASION OF
THE GRADUATION OF JOHNERIC BRYMER

22 September 2026

Johneric Brymer, today, Tuesday the 22nd of September 2026, is an amazing milestone in your life. Today we are celebrating your early graduation from this list. Today is all about your success in making huge changes to your life.

In fact, today is so special that you have two judges here to show just how proud you should be of yourself, your journey to graduation and what you have learned about you along the way.

Today we sit on the lands of others. The Traditional Custodians of this region enjoy a rich culture that extends back many tens of thousands of years.

This country extends south beyond Canberra to the land of the Ngarigo people, north up past Goulburn to the lands of the Dharug, west to the vast lands of the Wiradjuri and east out past Braidwood to the edge of where the lands of the Yuin people descend down to the cool and clear waters of the coast.

We live under the great sky and amongst the mountains, valleys and rivers of the Traditional Custodians.

Their land gives us food, water, shelter and places to live, work and play amongst the grass, water and sometimes, snow. They have never ceded sovereignty of this place.

I pay my respects to the Elders, past, present and emerging. I acknowledge my great fortune at being able to celebrate the culture and influence of our First Nations people. I welcome all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that are present today.

Prior to today I have read through many documents that have told a story about you and your progress. Two things stand out to me in all those pages – your enduring love for your two children and your work ethic.

You have strived to ensure that you are in the best position to be reunified with your children. In the fullness of time your children will appreciate just how many barriers have had to be overcome by you. You have shown by example what it means to be both a dad and a father and what it means to fight to spend time with your family. You should be proud of yourself for this. They are far more likely to be better parents themselves because of your persistence and patient love.

You have also consistently made it clear that you want to keep busy with work, study or volunteering. And you have achieved all of that. Once again, you have led by example. You will be able to demonstrate to your children the value of hard work and achieving goals.

Her Honour Justice McWilliam and now myself have travelled with you for this part of your rehabilitation journey.

The words in her Honour's sentencing decision show a genuine level of concern and care that is not often seen in judicial writing. You have received the great gift of her Honours' mercy in that decision and her guidance along the way.

The treatment team has been here every step of the way. The whole team has a genuine commitment to seeing success stories like yours. They work hard and they often see people at their rawest and at their lowest ebb.

And then the team gets to see results such as today. I thank them for their dedication, their genuine care and their persistence. This is a team effort and the treatment team are the engine room of this machine.

To the health team - for all of the check-ins, guidance and tests – thank you.

To the corrections team – for all of the guidance, support and input – thank you.

To housing for providing assistance where it is often needed so much – thank you.

To the AFP for leading a change in culture and showing the human face of policing – thank you.

To the advocates – thank you for also leading a change in culture and such a dramatic change in approach to entrenched offending driven by substance abuse.

Most importantly Johneric – thank you.

You did not have the best start to your own childhood. Your own father passed away when you were very young.

I am sure that this has had a huge impact on you and has driven you to ensure that you won't be absent from your own children's lives.

You have persisted through housing difficulties and have now set up your own home and built a space that is safe for you and your sons.

You have led by example and completed this part of your journey well ahead of the Court's initial expectations. Before you had come to this list you had tried your own path to rehabilitation. That was not immediately successful. I suspect that what you have achieved so quickly within this list could not have occurred without the work that you had already put in prior to joining us.

It really does demonstrate that every piece of rehabilitation has value and provides steps towards the end goal of success.

You have also demonstrated to me that success is possible even when residential rehabilitation is not available. You commenced on a day program and have done so, so well.

From my perspective you deserve to be considered a 'gold star' participant.

Your journey doesn't end here.

Your sentence continues through to 21 September 2029 and you are now entering the good behaviour portion of that sentence. You will have the benefit of supervision for as long as that is required.

Our commitment to you does not end on graduation day. Do not forget that we are here. Every day, someone is here that will happily speak to you. We will continue to do whatever we can to help you.

You have the experience and determination to succeed. You also have the collective good will of everyone in this room.

You have demonstrated an amazing capacity for change. You have demonstrated that you are not prepared to allow your past to define your future.

All of us wish you the very best for the future. Congratulations. Go well.

Acting Justice Stewart
ACT Supreme Court