

SUPREME COURT OF THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

DRUG AND ALCOHOL SENTENCING LIST

SPEECH OF ACTING JUSTICE STEWART ON THE OCCASION OF  
THE GRADUATION OF JOE DANIEL ROSE

16 October 2026

Joe Rose, today, Friday the 16th of October 2026, is Joe Rose day. Today we are celebrating your graduation from this list. Today is all about your success in making huge changes to your life.

Today we sit on the lands of the Aboriginal Nation - your own people. 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 your mob, the Wiradjuri, and east out past Braidwood to the edge of where the lands of the Yuin people descend down to the coast.

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

Your land gives us food, water, shelter and places to live, work and play amongst the grass, water and sometimes, snow. Your people 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. Most especially I welcome you Joe and your family to celebrate your success as a proud Wiradjuri Gamilaroi man.

Prior to today I have read through many documents that tell me about you and your life. One document stands out above them all – it was an email that you sent to her Honour Justice McWilliam prior to your sentence.

In that email you set out that you wanted to change your life. How much you regretted your previous life and the mistakes you had made. How you wanted to make amends to your mother. How you did not want to miss any more Christmas celebrations with your family. You asked for the chance to beat your addiction and change your life forever.

Baker Boy, Kev Carmody or Paul Kelly could write a song about that email. Maybe Kev and Paul could collaborate again. They probably should.

Her Honour has travelled with you for your journey. I'm glad she believed your email and gave you a go.

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 in a pretty sad state.

And then the team gets to see results like today. What a great day it is for them today as well.

I thank the treatment team for their dedication, their genuine care and their persistence. This really is a team effort and the treatment team are the engine room of this machine.

All of them have been here for you - the health team, the corrections team, housing, the AFP and the advocates from the DPP, the ALS and Legal Aid.

Most importantly Joe – thank you. Thank you for “keeping on punching” in your own way. For not giving up the fight. You went the distance and you definitely beat a mean, tough and nasty opponent.

Your journey doesn't end here.

Your sentence continues through to 3 January 2027 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 or at the end of your sentence. Do not forget that we are here. Every day, someone is here that will happily speak to you and do what they 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 lived out an amazing journey of change. You have demonstrated that you are not prepared to allow your past to define your future. People like us learn from your journey and learn to change our ways of thinking about past behaviour being a predictor for the future.

You have also done something for your own people. You no longer make up the numbers of the too many that are in custody. Instead, your number is now one of those who have made change. You are one of the sober, one of the righteous and one of the proud.

You stopped the revolving door that you were stuck in.

You are now a promise keeper.

And, your Mum's dream has now come true - you are drug and crime free.

All of us wish you the very best for the future. Congratulations. Stay proud and keep staying on the good side of those numbers. You can do it.

Acting Justice Stewart

ACT Supreme Court