

Wedding guest shoved, choked and tackled ex-girlfriend

COURT

Allison Hore

WHAT was meant to be a joyous occasion took a dark turn when a wedding guest choked and tackled his ex-girlfriend to the ground.

A 23-year-old faced Dubbo Local Court on Wednesday, January 8, for sentencing over one count of choking without consent and one count of domestic violence-related common assault.

Legal counsel for the south Dubbo man - who cannot be named to protect the identity of the victim - told the court his client was "provoked" when the victim showed up to the wedding uninvited.

But magistrate Aaron Tang said there was no excuse for the man's violence.

According to court documents, the man and the woman, 25, were in a relationship for a number of years but it ended about three months before the day of the wedding.

The pair were both guests at a wedding but they did not attend together. The court heard the woman was asked not to attend the wedding but decided to go along anyway.

They began drinking

alcohol on arrival at the wedding and drank throughout its duration.

As the party continued into the early hours of Sunday morning, around 4am, the woman was standing outside the main venue using her mobile phone when the man walked over and demanded to see it. She refused to give it to him.

He became enraged, grabbing the woman by her neck and shoving her into the

side of the building with so much force her body "jolted" against it and her breathing became restricted.

The woman struggled and was able to fight her way out of the man's grasp, making a run from him.

The man chased her for about 20 metres before he caught up, tackling her to the ground from behind and pinning her down using his body weight on her back.

Another woman saw what

was going on and grabbed the attention of a male wedding-goer, who pulled the man off of his ex and walked him away from the location.

Later that afternoon, at about 3.50pm, the woman went to Dubbo Police Station and provided police with a statement.

At 4.30pm officers approached the man and he was cautioned and arrested.

He was charged with

choking without consent and domestic violence-related common assault.

He pleaded guilty to both charges.

On sentencing, the man's legal counsel asked the court to consider a non-conviction for his client as the victim was "not injured" by the attack.

He said his client was "not a big drinker" but had been drinking on the day and was angry his ex-girlfriend had

showed up to the wedding unexpectedly.

But Mr Tang hit back, saying the claim of provocation "amounted to victim blaming".

"The community has zero tolerance for domestic violence," he said.

"Everyone is entitled to feel safe in their relationships, even when they come to an end... most people deal with [the stress of break ups] without resorting to violence."

He also rejected the defence's assertion the victim was unharmed, saying that it would leave her with "trauma" and that it was only "luck" that she wasn't seriously injured.

"People go to jail for these kinds of offences... even a short duration of choking can have serious consequences," he said.

He convicted the man of both counts and sentenced him to a 12-month community corrections order for choking and a nine-month community corrections order for assault.

As conditions of his order, he must attend drug and alcohol counselling and a men's behaviour change program targeted at domestic violence offenders.



Dubbo Courthouse. Picture from file

NO AGE LIMIT FOR EDUCATION With hard work and determination, she did it

Tiffany's inspiring five year job journey

Ciara Bastow

FOR many people, pursuing higher education later in life can feel like an insurmountable challenge, but Tiffany Findlay is living proof that it's never too late to follow your dreams.

After years of focusing on raising her two daughters, Ms Findlay decided to return to study and fulfill her long-held ambition of becoming a pharmacist.

Her journey began when her youngest daughter started preschool.

"I was a stay-at-home mom for eight years," she said.

"When my youngest went to preschool, I realised it was time to do something for myself."

Ms Findlay enrolled in a science course with the plan of eventually transferring to pharmacy course.

However, her path wasn't without its challenges - just as she was beginning to get settled in her studies, the COVID-19 pandemic turned her world upside down.

"I was homeschooling at the same time as studying, working and living through COVID, it was chaos," she said.

But with hard work and determination, she did it.

"It's taken me five years to finish, and now I'm doing my internship for a year. It was tough, but I'm finally here," she said.

While her peers in the pharmacy program

often had prior experience in the field, Ms Findlay was starting from scratch.

"A lot of people in my course had worked in pharmacies before," she said.

"I was behind, so I started working here [Orana Mall Pharmacy] in my second year of uni."

Pharmacy had always been Ms Findlay's goal, even back when she was finishing school.

"I wanted to do pharmacy when I finished school, but life got in the way," she said.

"I had to work to support myself, then got married and had kids. I just got distracted."

But now, with her qualifications in hand, she's ready to fully embrace her career.

While it may have been financially easier to continue helping her husband run his businesses, Ms Findlay knew she would never be satisfied.

"It would have been smarter to stick to that, but I wouldn't have been happy just doing his thing," she said.

"I needed to do something for myself."

Now that she's in the field, Ms Findlay finds herself enjoying aspects of her job she never fully appreciated before.

"It's more than just dispensing medication, we offer so many services that people don't realise - vaccinations, cholesterol tests, sleep support, and more," she said.

"We're community-focused and provide support for people who need it."

The job is far more demanding than she



New pharmacist Tiffany Findlay at Orana Mall Pharmacy. Picture by Amy McIntyre

anticipated, especially after years of working in the pharmacy while still a student.

"University was a breeze compared to this, now, I have more responsibility," she said.

"I'm learning all the time."

She highlights how quickly the industry evolves, making continuous learning a necessity.

"There's always something new - whether it's a service we offer, a new medication, or

new guidelines. It keeps you on your toes."

Ms Findlay's journey has had a profound impact on her family, particularly her daughters.

"My youngest used to say she wanted to be a vet, but not to go to uni, now, after watching me, she says, 'I guess I'll have to go to uni,'" she said.

"It's good for them to see that it's possible to chase your dreams no matter how old you are."

Her husband and extended family have been a pillar of support throughout her journey.

"I couldn't have done it without them, my husband has been incredibly patient, and my mother-in-law, sister-in-law, and sister helped out with the kids whenever I needed to travel for school or study.

"It's been a real team effort."

Ms Findlay has some advice for anyone considering returning to study later in life.

"It's never too late, there's no age limit for education."

"There were people older than me in my class, and they're doing it. If you want to do something, go for it. It's worth it."

With her internship underway, Ms Findlay is excited for the future. While she admits that the journey has been exhausting at times, she's proud of what she has accomplished.

"I'm glad I did it, it's been hard, but it's been so worth it," she said.