



## International Association of Drug Treatment Courts

We all have stories of success, but some are more remarkable than others. Jack, the graduate who made the speech below, is a man with a significant social phobia, who initially found it very difficult to come into the court room, let alone speak with the judge.

By the time he graduated, you can tell by his lengthy and thoughtful speech, that he had taken great strides in overcoming that debilitating condition.

Before Drug Court, Jack had been convicted on dozens of occasions for 83 different crimes. There had been 205 interactions with Police.

Importantly, the Drug Court effect has been long-term. He started our Drug Court program in 2003, and graduated in 2005. He has remained away from crime, trouble and prison ever since.

This is the court transcript:

DRUG COURT  
OF NEW SOUTH WALES

SENIOR JUDGE DIVE

### **(EXTRACTS) FINAL SENTENCE**

PARTICIPANT:.....I would like to express my gratitude and honour to each and every one of my peers that guided me through to where I am now. There are many respected and trustworthy persons in my personal programme that I could not forget, nor ever want to, as without them I definitely would have been looking through bars or, at least, still on drugs, not even caring or thinking or anybody else.

Well if it is okay with everyone in this courtroom if I can please explain exactly how everybody changed my life and got me to wake up from a self-pitiful sleep that costly hurt everyone in my path.

...I was 13 and someone close and immediate to me showed me a joint telling me that it was a cigarette, and of course, being young and thinking I was tough, considered myself a cigarette smoker and jumped at the chance to try this special rollie.

The only thing was my father was a typical Army bloke with a no tolerance to drugs, and, of course, I could not explain exactly what happened, so on the streets I go and stayed until the Drug Court became my whole life.

The only time before Drug Court I ever lived in a house was when I got parole, but like most addicts I could not resist the temptation of the drugs and streets. The only other time my family knew exactly where I was, plus knew if I was safe and alive, was when I was in prison.

....I was in prison and awoken to go to court, and this is when my whole life changed for the best. I was taken to Parramatta Court where two detectives charged me with old DNA charges. Believe me I still regard this as one of my biggest miracles.

I was now here at Parramatta so I asked for Drug Court. In my head all I wanted to do was to get out any way possible to see my son born, and I would have used any excuse to get out. Well I got on Drug Court but did not take it very serious, and honestly thought I could beat the system, but to my huge amazement this was impossible and put me in a situation that meant snap out of it, or grow up and I'll lose my whole family again by going back to gaol.

So to sum things up I really want each and all of the Drug Court team to understand how special you all are to me and my family.

.....I would like if each of the pleasant people mentioned could accept the appreciation and gratitude that I will feel for the rest of my life, and my family's lives.

All of you lovely people probably cannot understand that only two years ago I was mentally dead, and everyone here made the backbone that woke me up and made me, and showed me more to life plus family, so thank you, thank you, thank you.

.....My quick summary of the past to the present. I am, I guess, a typical life of a drug addict.

Thirteen, on the streets, never lived in refuges or homes, then crime, crime and more crime, and this was without drugs.

Never spoke to parents until Christmas time, all I wanted was them, but grew to be rebellious.

Sixteen, girlfriend who had two abortions in three years, this drove me over the edge, I did not care about living for years, and started smoking pot with her at eighteen years old, broke up.

When I was twenty full of self-pity and anger, turned to heroin after parents refused to help my depression.

Twenty to twenty-six, crime, drugs, gaol, no family, living under Harbour Bridge, wood chips for four years, two to three years everywhere else....

Twelve months before Drug Court I awoke to three deaths, all within weeks of each other which saddened me again. It's not all negative. I have achieved little in a life up to this - I have achieved a little in life up to this such as still getting my Year 10 Certificate on the streets, also I did three and a half years of a chef apprenticeship which I couldn't finish due to hygiene and drugs.

Finally my favourite part of my whole life began on 5/11/03. I began Drug Court, which I believe was meant to be, and then the most wonderful thing happened - my son was born.

My parents are also special, and I am proud that we are what we should have been years ago, but my love for them will never fade again.

**So Drug Court has given me my Mum, my Dad, my brother, my sister, a son, a daughter, a fiancée, many assets, hobbies, some day soon a recognized business, true friends, almost beating a concerning phobia, a car, a permanent roof over my head, bills, my licence back within months, drug-free life, savings, and lastly the courage to wake up and face the world without hiding behind heroin.**

Thank you everyone and please forgive me if I forgot you as it was not intentional. Thank you, thank you, thank you everyone.

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